Development of organizational competencies in the light of individual development plans: A case study in a consulting company

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ABSTRACT

The concept of competence is closely related to the possession of theoretical knowledge and ability to perform a certain activity, whether or not linked to specific behaviors and previous experiences (Silva, 2019). Understanding the breadth of the concept of competence helps us realize that competence can be created or perfected according to the context and specificity of the situation to which the person is subjected in order to apply what they know.

Keywords: Development, Consulting, Competence.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of competence is closely related to the possession of theoretical knowledge and ability to perform a certain activity, linked or not to specific behaviors and previous experiences (Silva, 2019). Understanding the breadth of the concept of competence helps in the perception that competence can be created or improved, according to the context and specificity of the situation to which the person is subjected in order to apply what he or she knows.

There is a school of thought that divides the development of a competence into three dimensions: knowledge (theoretical knowledge), *know-how* or ability (know-how) and attitude (behavior and predisposition to do) (Durand, 1998, cited by Silva, 2019). This means that, ideally, a competence can be constructed by one or more reported dimensions to prove that someone has mastered a given topic.

After the advancement of competence studies over the last few years, the corporate world decided to use them as premises for the creation of management models based on the alignment of precepts, knowledge, behaviors and attitudes, linked to the organizational culture, with the objective of ensuring greater predictability of employees' performance and professional performance (Mcclellan, 1973, cited by Silva, 2019).

The adoption of HR strategies focused on the identification, management and development of competencies allows organizations to remain competitive in the long term, based on the moment that has

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internal intelligence about what knowledge (technical or behavioral) the staff has, directly related or not to the company's business (Bahry and Tolfo, 2004).

The fourth edition of the Future of Work report, issued by the World Economic Forum, provides key information on the 26 most in-demand skills in the coming years by the global market in the context of the fourth industrial revolution, from 2023 to 2027. It was built from information collected via a form, consolidating the perspectives of 803 companies, more than 11 million employees, distributed in 27 groups of market segments and in 45 economies with different characteristics (WEF, 2023).

The report adopted the taxonomy, as shown in figure 1 below, of framing the prioritized competencies into eight groupings: ethical; Efficacy; working with other people; cognitive abilities; engagement skills, management skills; physical skills and technology skills.

Figure 1 - Grouping of prioritized competencies in the Future of jobs report

Grouping	Skills
Ethical	Environmental responsibility
	Global citizenship
	Curiosity and continuous learning
Self-efficacy	Reliability and attention to detail
	Motivation and self-awareness
	Resilience, flexibility and resilience
Work with other people	Empathy and active listening
	Leadership and social influence
	Learning and teaching
Cognitive abilities	Analytical thinking
	Creative thinking
	Multilingualism
	Reading, writing and mathematics
	Systems thinking
Engagement Skills	Marketing and Media
	Customer service and service orientation
Management skills	Quality management
	Resource and operations management
	Talent management/ People management
Physical abilities	Manual dexterity, resistance and precision
	Sensory Processing Skills
Technology skills	AI and big data
	Design and user experience
	Network and Cybersecurity
	Schedule
	Technological literature

The Competency Management Model (MGM) is an approach that aims to identify, develop, and manage competencies necessary to achieve organizational goals. It involves the clear definition of the competencies required for each function or area of activity within a company, as well as the implementation of management practices that promote the development and continuous improvement of

these competencies among employees. MGM seeks to align the individual competencies of employees with the needs and strategies of the organization, thus contributing to the improvement of organizational performance and competitiveness in the market.

MGM, as a people strategy aligned with the business, requires respect for some premises for its creation and implementation, such as: considering the specificity of the context that is being applied; the understanding that each position in the organization may require the development of particular skills; and the empowerment of managerial functions as responsible for offering and updating positions that require specific competencies and, therefore, need to be aligned with HR and its sub-processes responsible for attracting, developing and retaining talent (Gramigna, 2007).

It is important to consider another complementary perspective that considers the competencies immersed in a People Management System capable of assisting in the planning of human resources with the mapping of the necessary characteristics of the workforce, considering the necessary competencies; in the provision of employees, based on the analysis of the curriculum, previous experiences and knowledge described and competency-based interviews; performance evaluation, through the analysis of individual and institutional results achieved in the exercise of the function and the practical application of knowledge on a daily basis; and in the training and improvement processes, based on the participation of synchronous and asynchronous continuing education actions (Silva and Costa, 2021).

The development of competencies starts from the identification of the learning gaps between those identified in each employee for the exercise of the function and the one considered as expected for optimal performance, linked or not to quantitative goals; commonly performed in performance evaluations (Brandão and Bahry, 2005). From there, the stage of building and/or updating the Competency Development Plans, also called the Individual Development Plan (IDP), is built or updated by the employee and monitored until the company's next evaluation cycle.

In order for the people management strategy to reinforce the importance of the IDP to be effective, working in partnership between HR and leadership becomes extremely valuable, considering that the latter needs to have all the necessary information to connect the evaluation process with the training and development process, in addition to knowing how to explain and guide the team members; while the former needs to propose a conceptual and methodological coherence that underpins and provides learning instruments capable of meeting the learning demand (Silva and Honório, 2021).

The context of the studied company is part of the Business Consulting segment, focusing on business management, information technology, agricultural and livestock activities, accounting, tax and related to HR processes. It has been in existence for 40 years in Brazil, with a portfolio of clients in large and medium-sized companies in more than 20 countries, with two headquarters in the country, accumulating approximately 1,000 employees, between front and back office. In this context, it is possible

to reinforce the strategic importance for the business with regard to mapping, evaluating and monitoring the development of skills; Considering that the company's *core business* consists of the creation and sale of knowledge.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this work is to present the main themes prioritized for training and development of the Operations team of the consulting company studied, based on the Individual Development Plans, and to carry out an analysis of the relevance of the five themes most demanded by the public of the studied company that built the PDI.

As a specific objective, this study seeks to relate the topics listed as training and development needs with the top 26 skills prioritized for the next 5 years (from 2023 to 2027) suggested by the World Economic Forum, according to the 2023 report.

METHODOLOGY

To carry out this study, we consulted the export database of the Individual Development Plans of the studied company, which contained the following information: employee's name, area, department, competence, competence learning objective.

In addition, the fourth edition of the World Economic Forum's report, called Future of Work, issued in May 2023, was used, considering the perspective of 803 companies and 11.3 million employees.

DEVELOPMENT

The result to be discussed represents the analysis of 21% of the total of 892 employees eligible to register an Individual Development Plan on the company's official platform. The analysis cut was adopted for the plans created between September and November 2023, a period that coincides with the disclosure of the result of the company's annual performance evaluation and general guidelines on the creation of the plan.

It is important to note that until the cut-off date of the analysis, it was possible to identify the engagement of 23% of the Backoffice team and 23% of the Front Office team (more specifically the Consulting team) which, in terms of total volume of employees, has, respectively, 215 and 677.

SURVEY OF TRAINING NEEDS FROM THE IDP

From the IDPs constructed, the themes mentioned in the open fields were tabulated and compiled in Figure 2 below. In all, 242 citations were categorized into 34 themes, with their respective counts and representativeness, in percentage, in relation to the total volume of mentions.

Figure 2 - List of topics mentioned in the Individual Development Plans

Theme	Number of citations in PDIS	% representation of the theme
Communication / Storytelling	38	15.7%
Microsoft Tools	29	12.0%
Analytical thinking	21	8.7%
Data analysis	17	7.0%
PDCA/SDCA management methodology	16	6.6%
Consulting solutions studied company	16	6.6%
Problem solving	12	5.0%
Customer relationship and management	9	3.7%
Project management	8	3.3%
Systems thinking	7	2.9%
Self knowledge	6	2.5%
Diversity, equity and inclusion	6	2.5%
Finance	6	2.5%
Management and commercial performance	6	2.5%
Knime Tool	6	2.5%
Benchmarking/Market Analysis	4	1.7%
Developing people	4	1.7%
Time management	4	1.7%
Intraempreendedorismo	4	1.7%
Agile methodology	4	1.7%
Statistic	3	1.2%
SQL/Query programming language	3	1.2%
Machine Learning	2	0.8%
Python programming language	2	0.8%
Bizagi Tool	1	0.4%
Business Process Model and Notation	1	0.4%
Cyber Security Certifications	1	0.4%
English language	1	0.4%
Negotiation and conflict management	1	0.4%
Career path	1	0.4%
Process Mining	1	0.4%
Scrum agile methodology	1	0.4%
Supply Chain	1	0.4%

By way of a selection of themes for this study, the Microsoft Tool and Solutions competencies of the studied consultancy will not be considered in the prioritization of this study, because by addressing this it sets a precedent to reveal the confidentiality of the content addressed by the studied company; while talking about that one is a broad topic, considering the more than 16 solutions.

That said, the five main themes of the study are restricted to: Communication/Storytelling, Analytical Thinking, Data Analysis, PDCA/SDCA Management Methodology and Problem Solving.

With regard to Communication/Storytelling, the topic becomes relevant to be prioritized by the company studied, considering that such capacity allows interaction with people with ease to hear, process

and understand the message; in addition to having cohesion and coherence for its transmission and argumentation (Gramigna, 2007).

Communication competence can be considered as one of the specific skills that directly or indirectly influences the optimization of results, since active listening, as a variation of competence, will allow you to discover the needs and expectations of clients in relation to the execution of the project (Crocco & Guttmann, 2017).

Storytelling, on the other hand, can be considered as a tool linked to oral and visual communication that allows the consolidation of abstract ideas, based on the principle of prioritizing relevant themes and content with meanings for a given group (Valença & Tostes, 2019). This resource is used in the context of Consulting, especially with regard to the role of the consultant as a presenter of stories of problems similar to that of the client and what were the solutions applied; and as a translator and connector between the problem discovered in the client, the proposed solution, and the means of solving the problem identified in a narrative that encourages the participation and self-identification of the target audience (Barrios & Morales, 2023).

Analytical thinking consists of the ability to identify, filter, organize, and relate the variables that directly or indirectly impact the problem to be solved (Crocco & Guttmann, 2017). This competence is considered important in the context of the company studied, because as it is considered a managerial philosophy, it is possible to use it in the consulting segment as information modeling to improve the management of the clients' business in projects, without, however, trivializing the definition of indicators and monitoring them (Kugler, 2017).

Connected with the previous competence, data analysis provides the technical knowledge of analyzing large masses of data, techniques and approaches to perform the analysis, in partnership with the notion of which tools are capable of serving as support for the treatment and interpretation of data (Kugler, 2017). It is still possible to complement the conceptualization with the knowledge of methods used to collecting, organizing, describing and interpreting the data available to the client in consulting projects; be those that are readily presented; are those that are identified from the consultant's perspective (Silvestre, 2007).

The PDCA/SDCA Management methodology is closely related to the philosophy of continuous improvement in companies. This means that such an instrument can be used regardless of the context, size, market segment, or number of direct employees, based on the discrimination of specific activities that aim to plan, execute, verify, and act (Lazicki, 2011, cited by Santos, 2023).

The main difference between PDCA and SDCA is that the former is directly related to routine management and the latter applies to improvement management; both scenarios commonly found by consulting firms in projects (Souza, 2020).

Problem-solving competence involves a sequence of actions that are adopted by those who are faced with a problem, such as: identifying and defining the problem, categorizing the problem, building a strategy for resolution, organizing information, allocating resources, monitoring and evaluating the resolution (Sternberg, 2000, cited by Silvino and Abrahao, 2003).

It is important to consider that in the consulting role, the project team needs to ask the right questions and surround themselves with all the necessary information to ensure that the problem is being presented in a complete way, as the absence of data and information directly impacts the structuring of the resolution and influences the results presented for decision making.

The World Economic Forum presented in the fourth edition of the Future of jobs report 26 skills suggested as the main themes required in the next 5 years. Of the total presented, the company studied is 42% aligned with the themes, considering the main issues extracted and cited in the company's PDI, as shown in Figure 3.

The competencies that were not mentioned in the report that correspond to the remaining 58% were: communication/storytelling, Microsoft tools, customer relationship and management, diversity, equity and inclusion, time management, negotiation and conflict management, career planning and supply chain.

Figure 3 - Relationship of the skills extracted from the IDP with the clusters of the Future of jobs report
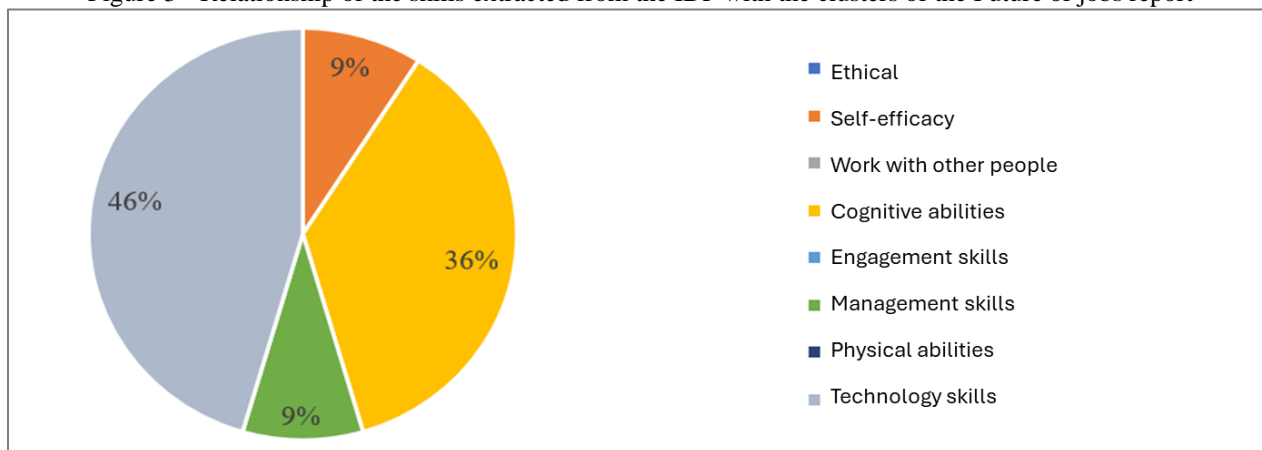
From figure 3 above, it is possible to conclude that the studied company has, as most of the competencies mapped for development, based on the PDI, competencies focused on technology skills and such orientation can bring positive impacts on business decision-making, promote an environment of greater innovation for the operation and bring improvements to the company's strategic management with Foresight. for example (Souza and Janissek-Muniz, 2023).

FINAL THOUGHTS

The analysis carried out in the context of the company under study highlights the urgent need to remain aligned with the demands of the market, especially with regard to the skills of the employees involved in the provision of consulting services. Given that the product offered by the company is based on the practical and theoretical application of concepts in various contexts and business sectors, the constant understanding and updating of skills become crucial to ensure the excellence and relevance of the services provided.

Research on competencies emerges, therefore, as a priority theme in this business segment, not only to identify strategic competencies aligned with organizational objectives and knowledge solutions currently available, but also to recognize and value latent competencies in employees, which have not yet been incorporated into the company's production processes. This approach can be facilitated through instruments such as the Individual Development Plan (IDP).

To this end, the existence and promotion of a culture of continuous learning combined with the recognition and appreciation of skills considered peripheral to the main business, can represent a significant competitive advantage, capable of ensuring the sustainability and success of the company in the medium and long term. Having the support of the leadership, in addition to the participation of the entire technical staff, is essential to ensure the effective implementation of these strategies and the consolidation of an organizational culture that emphasizes the development of human capital as an essential pillar for the success of the organization.

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