

counter productive. Within each skill set, different people should be given relevant and achievable performance goals, and these need not necessarily be compared to those of others. In this way everyone becomes an achiever, like at Jobcentre Plus, which since its formation in 2002 has succeeded in "promoting a culture where people are encouraged to express their views and ideas and have them acknowledged, creating a common culture based on shared values."(5). An environment which offers "learning and development to improve performance levels, rewarding and recognising contributions made and results achieved by individuals and teams."(6). Is this where your company is heading?

Ultimately, it's happy people that drive profits, and any competency model should reflect this in its commitment to nurturing staff with relevant and attainable indicators. As Ruth Spellman, Chief Executive of Investors in People observes, "Yes, we need to measure the return on investment in people from the point of view of an employer trying to get the best out of its workforce. But the most important thing is to understand the function of whatever you are measuring and keep it simple."(7).

Your managers undoubtedly possess "The Right Stuff" already – it's just down to you to get it out of them, for as Ruth Spellman acknowledges, "Investing in human beings is not the same as investing in IT or capital stock. They are the only dynamic resource we have."(8).

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'Do Your Managers Have "The Right Stuff" For Leadership?'

'Redefining Your Competency Models To Nurture Internal Talent...'

Unlike the daring pilots of Tom Wolfe's bestseller, who rocketed the United States into first place in the space-race, finding "The Right Stuff" in your managers here on terra firma is less clear-cut.

You know your people have talent, but is your current competency model geared up to make the most of it? The answer in many cases we have seen across Scottish business, is no. Competency modelling can work, but is often so unrealistic in the goals it sets as to leave you searching for the unattainable: super humans with otherworldly powers. And that leaves us firmly back in the realms of outer space again. So if Wolfe can identify clear-cut competencies, why are we so often left assessing "The Wrong Stuff" in our managers?

When executives make competency lists, "it's not uncommon to end up with anywhere from 50 to 150 items. The irony is that although each top performer only does one or two things well, everyone is expected to perform all 50 items excellently."(1). Do you recognize this scenario? Searching for the best of everything in your people can often be counter-productive – after all, it could be the few things a manager is doing really well that ultimately makes them so outstanding. Trying to force people to meet unachievable performance goals is not the point; best realizing their core skills and nurturing them is. To do otherwise actually holds your people back, and research has shown that "Force-fitting an executive competency template limits talent, subjectively reduces the candidate pool, fuels artificial performance accountabilities, and narrows business perspective."(2). So what's the solution?

Identifying and growing leadership potential is all about the flexibility of your competency model. A prescriptive regime can often damage performance and morale, but an inclusive and adaptable model with clear and attainable aims can work wonders. Remember this the next time you're strolling down the aisles in Tesco. Many companies could learn from the retail giant in the way it positively involves its people, and this has a great deal to do with the organic competency targets that form a core part of the company's business strategy. For when it comes to negotiating the twists and turns of their own store's direction, it seems that all Tesco staff are given an inclusive, hands-on role...

...The Tesco "Steering Wheel" strategy "has four quadrants: People, Customer, Operations and Finance," and encompasses an organic competency model that brings the best out of its staff. The approach defines key deliverables that are "(connected) to every person's objectives, linking strategy to their day-to-day work and so making it meaningful."(3). The result of this is a model of staff competency that changes with the needs of the business, its customers and its people, which combined with other positive staff initiatives leaves everyone as a stakeholder in the success of the company. The lesson here being in Tesco's own words that, "in keeping our people at the heart of all we do (we achieve) the right emphasis and the finance delivers itself."(4). So on final analysis it seems that a successfully thought-out competency model can nurture your people whilst also delivering "The Right Stuff" to your bottom line.

If nurturing human capital can increase margins, it's essential that your staff are fulfilled at work. Seems obvious? Apparently not. Our experience has shown that many Scottish businesses are also missing this fundamental link. A collection of fulfilled individuals who feel they have a say in their company's future, will work more productively as a team. But employing traditional competency indicators that continually highlight the track record, commitment and downright brilliance of particular staff members over others can again be