

# **Multi-Skilling**

In today's modern business environment the companies that are getting the most success are those that have the most flexibility.

One area of "Flexibility" that is crucial for this is a multi-skilled workforce.

Long gone are the days (or they should be) where your staff just concentrate on one main activity day in, day out.

Instead, as a business, you need the flexibility to respond like a Chameleon during peaks and troughs. You need to be able to provide variety and if there is no defined career path for the staff that don't want to move into "management", then you need to offer them an alternative to keep them fresh and motivated.

Now, I don't mean that every member of staff has to be skilled in everything here!

But I'd bet that you don't really know the true potential that is waiting dormant in your staff?

If every member of staff could do just one more task or activity in another area, what would it mean to your business?

Maybe it would mean that when marketing send out a mailer and your applications rocket through the roof by 341% over planned, then you could call upon some additional staff to help out?

Flexibility is the key here.

I also heard of one recent example where a Spanish Broker called up one of our clients for some business but his English speaking skills were so poor that he had to cut his losses and put the phone down. Yet, we found out that in the very same department that there were 2 members of staff that could speak fluent Spanish!

That's the difference between getting the business and losing it to one of your competitors.

I'm not going to go into how to implement a multi-skilling programme, I'll save that for another day or you can call me.

But what I'm going to cover now is how to take an audit of the current skills that you have got within your workforce. By finding out this information you have a great baseline position from which to work on.

# **Types Of Multi-Skilling**

Businesses tend to implement multi-skilling to break down departmental barriers or to improve the flexibility of their workforce.

Multi-Skilling can either be:

## **VERTICAL MULTI-SKILLING**

Where managerial and supervisory tasks are learned by individuals

# HORIZONTAL MULTI-SKILLING

Where skills from another discipline/area are learned

#### **DEPTH MULTI-SKILLING**

Where more complex skills are acquired

## **Current Audit Of Skills**

In order to work out where your current areas of strength and weakness are, it is important to gather all of the skills of the workforce and put them into a skills matrix.

I recommend that you approach this in two ways.

Firstly, I would produce a matrix that gathers generic data like the following:

- Age
- Qualifications
- Degree
- Languages Spoken
- Previous Experience
- Outcomes From PDR's

Secondly, I would look across all of the roles within your company or in specific departments (depending on your size) and I would put list the skills going across the top of spreadsheet and the names going down the left hand side.

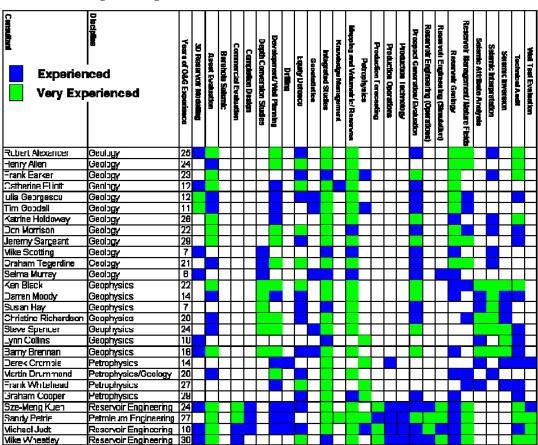
Next, decide on a colour-coded key.

A colour-coded key will show you at a glance where the areas of strength and vulnerability are.

For example, you could colour in the fields using:

COLOUR CODE	MEANING
	Fully competent in the skill
	Can complete the skill but needs help and guidance
	No experience or cannot complete

This is an example of what one looks like.



Source: PGL Engineering GeoScience

From this type of format it is very easy to identify skills gaps.

Try to keep your matrix as simple as you can – that is the key to success! When you have completed your matrix consider your current workforce skills profile to identify any future gaps in skills, knowledge and flexibility.

#### For example:

- Is there an age profile which indicates the requirement for succession planning? i.e future leaders etc
- Are your workforce geared up with the skills and knowledge to meet future business requirements?
- Operationally, can you cope with spikes in demand?
- Identify the areas of strength in your workforce

## What now?

After you have completed the audit you might have identified certain courses of action that you may wish to look at. These could include:

# - Skills Shortages

- · Multi-skilling programme implemented
- Job rotation
- Job re-design
- Work placements
- Secondments
- Workshops
- Recruitment process review
- Right person/Wrong role

# - Management Development

- Give your leaders of tomorrow the skills
- Secondments
- Shadowing
- "Acting Up"
- Vertical multi-skilling
- Management development programme
- Leadership coaching
- High flyers programme
- Mentoring
- Cross team working

#### - Employee Development

- Training courses
- E-learning
- Coaching
- Mentoring by peers
- Qualification courses

Running a successful training department is all about looking at the future needs of the business and matching current skill levels to what is required and taking action to address the gaps!

Good luck if you decide to implement something like this in your company and like always if you need any help you know where I am

Sean

Sean McPheat





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