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Building World-Class Workforces

Competency Management becomes an essential tool

International oil and gas companies are challenged to realise strong returns on their assets while maintaining the highest standards of safety and operating performance. To achieve these goals a leader must build and maintain a competent and skilled workforce throughout the organisation. That task is becoming ever more difficult because of the impact of an ageing workforce, competition for new hires and the need to meet expanding compliance regulations just when everyone is busy with the challenges of daily operations. To solve this dilemma many petroleum companies are turning to competency management to help them implement and manage a competent workforce solution.

A competent workforce can be described as one that has demonstrated, through an audited assessment, that all employees have the skills at the appropriate level of competency necessary for effective performance in their respective jobs. The International Human Resources Development Corporation (IHrdc) helps its clients to achieve a competent workforce solution.

IHrdc learning specialists can then link appropriate learning resources, such as classroom teaching, e-learning, on-job assignments or mentoring, to each competency model entry. These models serve as the foundation of employee competency assessment, with self-assessment being performed by the employee and a confirming assessment completed by his/her supervisor. If there is a deviation between these two on any competency, an audit is performed to confirm the proper level to record. New employees usually complete an intensive and organised orientation programme and at least one year of service before being asked to undertake a competency assessment. Experienced employees complete their assessments as soon as possible as part of their ‘skills enhancement’ process.

The recorded competency profile of an individual is then compared to the job competency requirements to identify any competency gaps, and training organised for the employee to achieve the required competence level. This becomes part of each employee’s Individual Development Plan (IDP) which represents a priority list of the learning that he/she must complete before the next assessment. In this way, each employee, relying on his/her own IDP, moves expeditiously to become fully competent, which, in time, means that the whole workforce will achieve this goal.

CMS Online

The foundation of the IHrdc Competency Management Process is CMS Online, a widely used and respected competency management and reporting system. It captures competency models, records the assessment process, prepares the IDPs and tracks the progress of employees as they make efforts to become fully competent. Its reporting and recording system allows management, at a glance, to monitor results on an individual or organisation-wide basis and accelerate the development of its workforce.

The efficiency of the competency management process is demonstrated by a project undertaken by IHrdc to implement a full-scale competency management system for a national oil company, using CMS Online to manage the entire process. It built competency models, managed employee and supervisor assessments, and created individual development plans for 500 employees. CMS Online housed the competency models, was used to administer assessments, store the results, and track the progress of each employee. Two years after the initial assessment, IHrdc and the company reassessed the workforce to determine the current workforce competency levels, measure its progress in eliminating competency gaps, identify the competencies that needed further development, and refine Individual Development Plans. Progress was impressive and the competencies level had increased significantly throughout the workforce.

Dr. David A.T. Donohue, PhD, JD.