



Birds of a Feather...

Using Employee Success Profiling as a continuous improvement practice

The following Success Profiling process was accomplished by Parker Staffing Services while serving a large gaming company in the Seattle area. The steps detailed herein have been implemented for the past four years. The success of this process has resulted in a current employee turnover rate of <10%.

Introduction

A job profile is a benchmark against which all steps of the hiring process are evaluated. The profile is accessible to every staff member involved in the hiring and employee management roles to help replicate hiring success. This process can remove significant ambiguities related to skill sets, qualifications, and competencies.

Companies can often find successful candidates based on certain profiles of their current employees. The process described below is used as a case history of successful employee profiling using employee performance data during the past four years. The job examples used in this document are Consumer Service Representatives and Product Testers for a large gaming company.

Key components in the success of this process are commitment and consistency. By following the process, companies are better able to identify success factors, thereby increasing the number of newly hired employees who will be successful on the job. Commitment to the process will also result in more accurate data used for tracking and continuous improvement.

The tools used in success profiling include:

- Job Description
- Assessment Results
- Performance Standards
- Habits and interests of successful employees (used for recruiting similar candidates)

Job Description:

A good job description is foundational to employee success. It provides clarity for both the employee and their supervisor, keeping the job functions as objective as possible. There are multiple aids available to creating a good job description. Resources such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and others provide templates for job descriptions. Included in the job description should be the following:

- Essential responsibilities
- Secondary responsibilities
- Technical skills

- Experience
- Education/Certification
- Competencies (essential behavior on the job)
- Environmental Factors (Travel, working conditions etc.)

The following are job summaries used in our case history.

Consumer Service Representative:

Summary of Job Duties:

- Updating consumer account information
- Recording consumer feedback
- Collects, documents, and researches technical problems to develop solutions and resources for the department

Product Testers

Summary of Job Duties:

- Identify programming errors and anomalies
- Evaluate product for content guidelines
- Document testing phases of bug checks

Assessment Results:

Testing should be selected based on the skills, knowledge, abilities and personal characteristics required for the job. This empirical data is an objective method of establishing a benchmark for successful candidates.

Many skill measurement tools exist for both hard and soft skills testing. To ensure the fairest evaluation possible, only tools validated in accordance with the American Psychological Association and EEOC guidelines should be used. Tests created using these guidelines protect employers giving them the most accurate assessment of results for each candidate as well as litigation protection from discriminatory evaluation practices.

There are multiple ways of establishing a testing success profile. Depending on the testing system your company utilizes, your testing vendor may have a method for creating position profiles. If your testing provider does not have a profile process, you can establish a benchmark using a minimum of ten *successful* employees (not top performers only) per position, then averaging their test results. Regardless of how you establish your success profile, accomplished correctly, it will result in an objective tool for use in selecting new employees.

Types of testing included for the Consumer Service Representatives includes basic keyboarding skills, listening skills, and technical support skills testing.

Note: Testing for Product Testers has proven to be ineffective. Instead, a profile has been developed based on strong communication skills through behavioral interviewing. Questions are designed to uncover troubleshooting ability, attention to detail, and tolerance for repetition, among other characteristics.

Performance Standards:

The model used in our case study is similar to the method described in the University of California at Berkeley's, Guide to Managing Human Resources. Describing performance management, this source describes states:

Overseeing performance and providing feedback is not an isolated event, focused in a performance assessment or evaluation. It is an ongoing process that takes place throughout the year. The performance management process is a cycle, with discussions varying year-to-year based on changing objectives. The cycle includes Planning, Checking-In, and Assessment.

- To begin the planning process, you and your employee review overall expectations, which include collaborating on the development of performance objectives. Individual development goals are also updated. You then develop a performance plan that directs the employee's efforts toward achieving specific results to support organizational excellence and employee success.
- Goals and objectives are discussed throughout the year, during check-in meetings. This provides a framework to ensure employees achieve results through coaching and mutual feedback.
- At the end of the performance period, you assess the employee's performance against expected objectives, as well as the means used and behaviors demonstrated in achieving those objectives. Together, you establish new objectives for the next performance period.

As described above, performance management in both the Product Testing and Consumer Service Representative positions is an ongoing activity with weekly meetings to discuss objectives, performance, and expectations of workflow changes for upcoming products or services.

These one-on-one meetings help reinforce positive performance while keeping communication lines as open as possible. This type of performance management process is also helpful in retention because employees are kept abreast of upcoming changes as well as how their individual performance affects overall company performance.

Habits and Interests of Employees:

The final component of success profiling in our case study is a Habits and Interests Survey completed by our selected success group of ten employees per position. In these surveys, we asked questions related to internet usage, job hunting resources they would use, social networking for employment purposes, future plans and dreams (i.e., education and ideal job), and spare time activities.

Our purpose in asking these questions is to reach individuals who might have similar qualifications as our success group. While no two survey responses are identical, we did discover some interesting information. There was one popular job board used

significantly more than the rest and, for the Product Testers, their spare time activities were similar to their work – gaming.

We also gained demographic information which helped us identify certain areas (i.e, geographic, economic, and social interest) on which to focus our recruiting efforts.

Conclusion

Through the process described above, we have been able to identify even subtle changes in the success profile from project to project, quarter to quarter, and year over year. The process of Employee Success Profiling is ongoing.

Employee performance and retention is considered a reflection of overall company performance. Success profiling is one way of capturing those factors which help companies work more efficiently in the recruitment and retention of employees. Using a continuous improvement approach, analyzing empirical data such as performance and skill assessment results, and anecdotal data such as job descriptions and surveys, companies can increase performance output over time, keeping pace with changing company objectives.