

17 September 2006

Generic competency framework

Introduction

This white paper describes and presents the rationale for our generic competency framework. The stimulus for developing the framework was our desire to offer self-service 360 degree feedback in partnership with Bowland Solutions. This service will shortly go live under the name MyOwn 360.com.

The idea is that:

- People would be able to set up and run their own bespoke online 360 feedback process.
- The web site would offer a list of standard competencies each with several behavioural indicators.
- Customers would choose a selection of these competencies, probably up to eight: either by accepting/amending a pre-determined set or by building their own set from scratch.
- They would then have the opportunity to accept a default set of behavioural indicators for the chosen competencies or to selectively replace them with alternate indicators designed to highlight other aspects of the competency, allowing to be tailored to personal circumstances.
- Customers would enter details of who they wished to receive feedback from and the system would do the rest: issue invitations and reminders, process the feedback and produce report.
- The basic service would provide a report which consolidated the feedback from the people giving feedback and there would be an option (which we would strongly recommend) of a facilitated debrief.

We think there will be a number of potential customers for such a service, or ways in which it could be used:

- Self-employed professionals doing it for their own development.
- People whose organisation does not have a 360 process. An initial individual or small group feedback exercise could be a prototype for the whole organisation.
- People whose organisation has an annual 360 process, but who need a one-off 360 at a different time of year.
- People whose organisation has an annual 360 process, but who want one tailored to their role or one with more qualitative feedback.
- Executive coaches of any of the above.
- A group or team who want to undertake an ad-hoc exercise linked to team development. (We have a structured process for this – see elsewhere on our website.)
- Development providers who want participants on an event to receive feedback in preparation for it.

The trigger will often be a change or transition of some kind: a new role or challenge, a business challenge, a failure, a dip in performance.

Approach

The approach we adopted to developing the framework was a combination of top-down thinking from first principles and bottom-up examination of lots of individual organisational frameworks and the literature. The framework is not, it should be stressed, based on new empirical research. The emergent picture was validated against the competency literature, and against an extensive range of management and leadership and personal effectiveness literature (see reference list).

It has also been informed by 20 years' experience of developing training programmes and bespoke competency frameworks for individual organisations and roles.

We wanted to produce something which was:

- Intellectually rigorous.
- Highly face-valid.
- Comprehensive, but not overwhelming.
- Expressed in simple, straightforward language.
- Fit for its intended purpose of supporting self-service 360 degree feedback. So the framework does not include competencies which would not lend themselves to 360 degree feedback, numerical skills or IT proficiency for example.

We also felt it was necessary to limit the scope of the exercise and so its primary focus is on managerial and white collar work.

Our structure

The key challenge was how to organise the framework. After considerable deliberation, it seemed clear that the best way was in relation to the kinds of primary roles people play in organisations. There are, we thought, four basic roles:

- Leader.
- (Line) Manager.
- Team member.
- Individual contributor.

Of course, they are not entirely mutually exclusive. For example, leaders are usually also managers, and managers are commonly also members of teams. Both have some personal performance elements in their role. People who team members or individual contributors are more distinct in that they do not generally have significant leadership or management responsibilities: their key competencies focus on personal delivery. Competent performance in any role of course ultimately depends on self management.

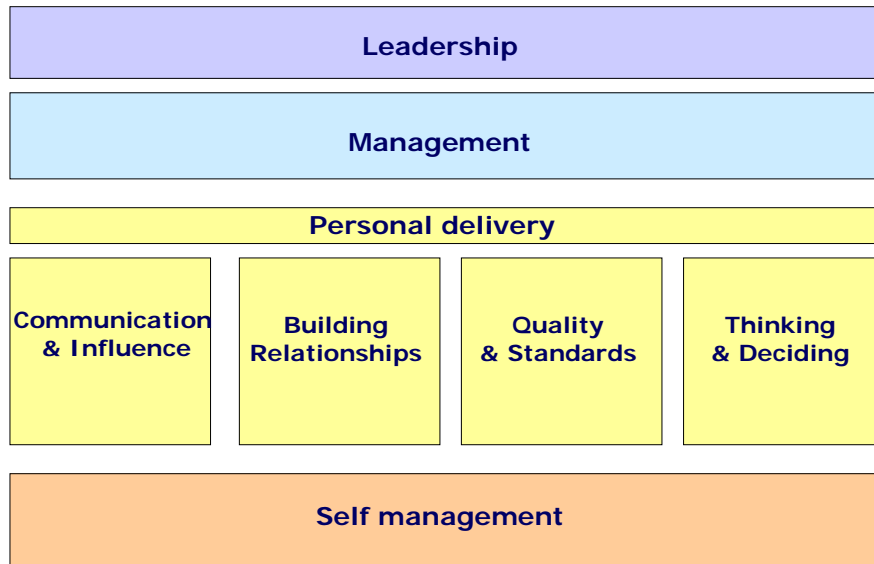
The framework also recognises that there are different types of team (management teams, operational teams and project teams) and different types of service delivery (ongoing,

transactional and project). (More information on these distinctions is available on our website.)

The competency framework

This approach enabled us to develop the overall structure shown below.

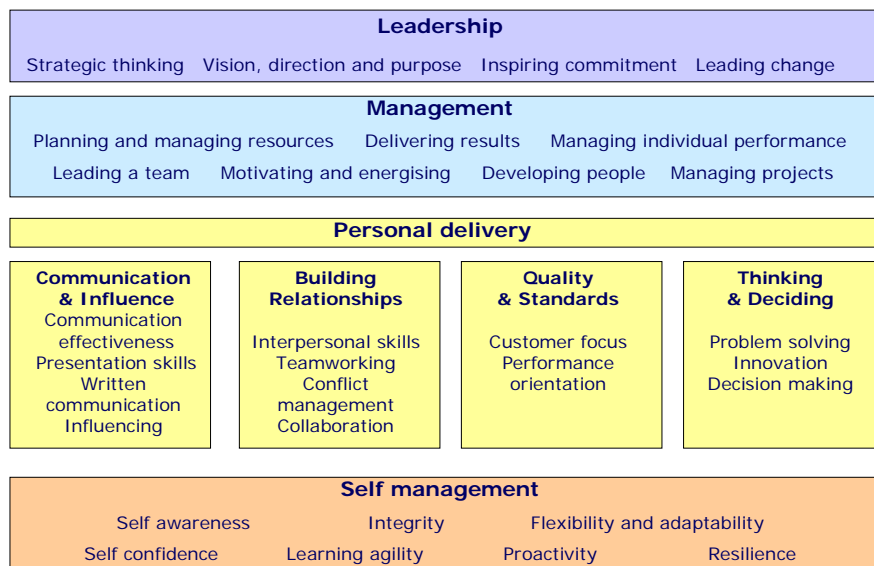
The structure of the competency framework



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Each of these broad areas is broken down into a number of individual competencies. The detailed framework which resulted is shown below.

The competencies



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The competencies

For each of the competencies there is:

- An essence statement which describes in a nutshell what the competency is about.
- Five core behaviours.
- A set of optional alternatives to allow the choice of behaviours to be tailored.

Using the framework

The framework can be tailored at two levels to meet individual needs.

The choice of **competences** can be made to reflect factors such as:

- What is most important in the individual role.
- Organisational priorities.
- Existing strengths and weaknesses.
- A current development plan.
- Previous feedback – which may need to be validated, or which may be sufficiently clear to not need repeating.

The choice of **behaviours** within each competency can similarly be personalised to reflect:

- The components of the individual role (e.g. managing an operational team or a project).
- The seniority and scope of the role.
- Organisational culture.
- What's important to the individual.

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