



The next time someone comes to you trying to sell the benefits of implementing a competency framework tell them not to waste their time. Adrian Smith explains why

Competencies fall short of Darwin's expectations for growth and innovation. Yes, they capture the behaviours

Competencies may well be the 'Can Do', but they need to leverage the 'Know How' that comes from rounded business experience and business knowledge, the personal attributes and motivation, the 'Want To' to really define the drivers of personal and therefore organisational success.

Competencies alone do not allow people to be automatically and instantly successful in their roles. People often are promoted on the basis of their capabilities at more junior levels, but they need significant support until they gain the relevant experience and business knowledge to give their behaviours or competencies traction in these new challenging roles.

There are four crucial plateau steps in most leaders'

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and managers' careers. These steps are significantly different from their previous roles and require a whole new skills set and, most importantly, a totally different perspective to their duties. These plateau steps are:

- when a person moves from being an individual contributor to a people manager role
- when they take on cross functional management responsibilities
- when they take on more strategic, and less operational responsibilities
- when they are involved in emerging work environments such as virtual teams, long distance management and globalisation.

Competencies alone do not prepare people to take these plateau career steps!

...drive effective workforce planning, talent management and succession management strategies!

It is self evident that HR professionals best serve their client base, which includes the board, the executive team, leaders and staff, by ensuring all their actions are aligned to organisational needs and best practice activities.

Alignment of people strategies to meet strategic capability requirements involves general workforce planning, in particular current and future skills and resources needs, but also in the leadership context critical aspects of longer-term talent management and succession planning.

This means identifying key knowledge, experience and capabilities requirements across the organisation to deliver on the vision, support the organisational values, meet anticipated challenges and deliver on the strategic (or transformational) agenda set by the board and senior executives. It is not just the 'Can Do' – it's also the 'Know How', particularly at more senior levels where, for example, deep industry and market knowledge and experience are critical to success.

...facilitate an integrated learning environment!

Traditionally, business learning and education has been driven by annual performance reviews, sometimes using competencies and measurement of performance against these as a trigger for development – normally attendance at a formal, classroom-based training program. With low learning retention rates of between five and 20%, the benefit of these is questionable, as is the fact they often do not provide experiential learning opportunities or provide relevant 'use it straight away' skills.

Moving towards a structure that also concentrates on the 'Know How' allows for a more rounded, vibrant and personalised approach to learning and unleashes a range of opportunities including, for example, blended learning, on the job training & development, learning through social media, learning by doing, and situational coaching. Not only is this a highly impactful way of spending on

training, it also has great appeal to participants and can be an important part of the organisation's attraction and retention strategies.

SO WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

Let's first look at integrated people strategies. An example of an approach to people management appears in the flowchart below, which shows how critical organisational aspects such as recruitment, performance management and learning & development can be integrated into a structure that also supports personal career management and individualised L&D.

Integrated people strategies revolve around Career Maps which help people identify the range of career options available to enable them to build careers in the organisation and focus on their long-term capability development in line with their aspirations and to assist organisations in career pathing and talent management. They help identify the job experiences, business challenges, and special projects that facilitate the gaining of knowledge and rounded business experience that assists in progressing a career journey.

It is also beneficial to consider development of Success Profiles at key points on the career journey. These are future focused views of the experience, knowledge, personal attributes, and competencies required for high performance in individual roles.

Amongst the many benefits of this integrated people approach our observations are that organisations can:

- Drive higher retention levels of high potential and talented staff and managers
- Ensure higher engagement from staff through

▼ Success Profiles and Career Maps



talent management

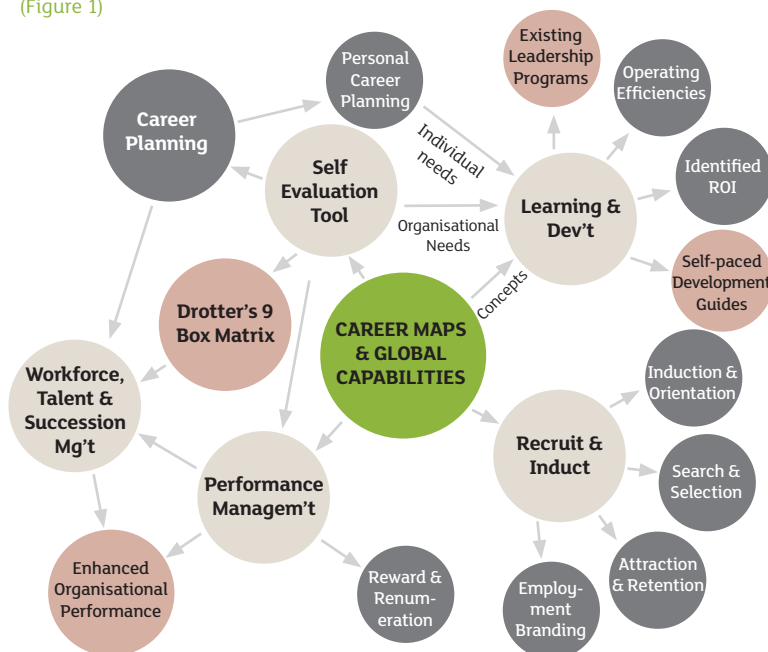
recognition of the value of their skills and improved career pathing

- Ensure they have the capability and skills available to meet future needs
- Facilitate development of more focused and impactful skills statements, leading to better skills gaps identification therefore facilitating the development of strategies to develop or recruit to fill the gaps
- Facilitate focused training courses on real rather than perceived development needs

An integrated people strategy addresses critical issues around attraction and retention requirements. Career pathways and success profiles which are central to the integrated model facilitate these, and can become a major differentiator to current and potential staff as they create a great environment for personal and career development.

So whilst competency frameworks (the Can Do) are an integral part of an organisation's psyche, the advent of career maps and success profiles which incorporate business experience and knowledge (the Know How) and personal attributes and motivators (the Want To) adds another dimension to them. A dimension that provides rich information for staff and business leaders; that challenges the staff and organisation to be the best they can; that provides the HR professionals with a range of sophisticated tools to ensure people strategies facilitate the achievement of the organisational vision and strategic imperatives, and personal and organisational growth.

▼ Career Maps and Global Capabilities (Figure 1)



CASE STUDY

Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) is a professional services firm with global capability in strategic consulting, engineering and project delivery. To be successful in its strategic objectives, it was imperative to align its people actions. SKM wished to develop a robust career structure for all disciplines. It aspired to a global way of working, whilst reinforcing the positive elements of its existing culture (eg, strong sense of family) within a new line of business global structure. It wished to create an environment that encouraged a performance-based culture, and it aspired to be an employer of choice.

Talent Mondial has developed an integrated people strategy for SKM which leverages the strengths of existing HR documentation, systems and processes, for example, Leadership L&D programs, Role Profiles and talent management activities. The integrated approach appears in Figure 1 on this page.

Critically, the Career Maps identify the skills required at each level of the major disciplines in the group. The skills are defined in their Global Competency Framework which incorporates into each competency the traditional behavioural definitions and examples of positive behaviours, but also the business knowledge and experience, and the personal attributes that support this capability.

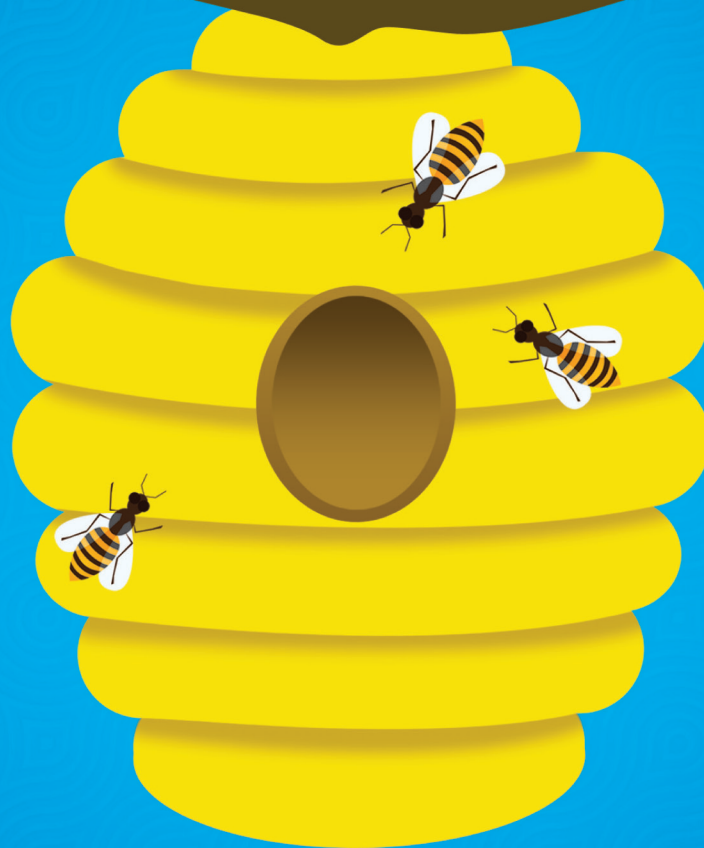
Response to this approach from HR leaders and line managers in SKM has been overwhelmingly positive, with a strong desire to see it take life in practical applications that assist career discussions and performance discussions. The next phase of this program is to take these building blocks and develop self-managed online evaluation tools to assist in career planning and personal development.

This is an exciting initiative which, in conjunction with the development of integrated recruitment tools and development guides, is an important part of SKM's attraction, retention and organisational development strategies.

DOWNSIDES OF CAREER MAPS AND SUCCESS PROFILES

In establishing career maps and success profiles, HR leaders and people leaders must ensure that they don't short cut the education and integration process. The concept of an integrated people strategy must be actively sold into the organisation. To do this, the concepts and tools must resonate with end users, and have strong and clearly articulated benefits to them. They must be simple and transparent whilst remaining aspirational and forward looking, and they must genuinely help people on their career journey.

A final note: Be prepared to constantly refresh these tools as your organisation grows and the marketplace evolves in our dynamic world. **HC**



IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW TO MAKE YOUR HIVE **STRONGER,** JUST ASK THE BEES.

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