



Improving Business Worksheet #6

Developing a Skills Matrix

A skills matrix is an easy way for you to assess the training needs in your business. This is not just a tool for large multi-national organisations. Even a small business will need to be sure that the right staff are trained in the right way for the right roles and responsibilities. If one of your employees was off work with a sickness are you prepared for someone else to step in and competently fill the gap? That is what a skills matrix is for.

This worksheet is concerned with

- Reviewing the skills required within your business or team
- Assessing the training needs in your business
- Identifying the gaps in skills which exist in your business
- Developing a culture where skills are naturally extended

Let's start by listing the people and then the responsibilities within your business or team. It is probably easier to think about particular roles, which are a collection of responsibilities and skills, rather than focus too narrowly right at the beginning on individual tasks.

Create a table and list your team members in the left-hand column. Identify up to 8 key tasks or roles that your team must fulfil to be effective and achieve its goals. It may help to use the following tips:

Ask yourself and your team "What are the main things that individuals in the team have to be able to do?"

- Refer to Job Descriptions for the team.
- Consider new tasks and skills that may be required of your team in the near future.
- If it gets too complicated, break the job roles down into some key areas, create a Skills Matrix for each.

Put these tasks or roles in the heading of each column. You now have the beginning of a matrix. Use a coding system to show clearly which person has which skills. There are many ways you could achieve this. If the skills are relatively straightforward then a simple cross in the box might be enough to show that person has the skill, with a blank box meaning that they do not. If there are different levels of ability then you could use a numbering system with zero meaning no skill, and ten meaning able to train someone else, with the variety of abilities being described by numbers in between zero and ten. You could even use a colour coding system with red for unskilled, yellow for some skill, and green for fully competent.

The aim of this analysis is not to train every employee in every skill, but to make sure that you have enough competence in your business so that if one or two key employees were to leave your employment, or be unable to work through sickness, your business would not suffer. It also ensures that employees with key skills do not find themselves overloaded and having to do more work than they can efficiently cope with.

When you have completed the matrix you will be able to easily find out which skills and roles are not very well supported. You need to decide for each role how many people need to be skilled in it within your business. Do you have someone whose job it is to open up your premises in the morning and secure them in the evening? How many other people would it be wise to know what this responsibility requires? One or two

perhaps, certainly not all of your staff. But if you are running a retail business it might well be useful to have most of your staff able to work at the cash register.

You should now have a list of people who require training in certain skills and roles. Do you have the resources to fulfil all of the required training within your organisation? Or will you need to draw on external trainers? You can use the skills matrix to identify those of your employees who could train others.

The skills matrix is not a static document, but should be updated as employees receive training, as new employees join your organisation, and as new roles and responsibilities are identified. It is the easiest way for you to identify weakness in your team and resolve them before they can become a problem.

Example Skills Matrix

Name	Order Processing	Invoice Processing	Despatch	Credit Control
John Richards				
David Howard				
Simon Press				
Jane Green				
Sarah Linkerman				
Terry Smith				

© Farrington Business Solutions, 2009

This worksheet is provided as a free service by Farrington Business Solutions and should not be considered as constituting any specific business advice to any particular business. This worksheet should not be considered as creating any business relationship between Farrington Business Solutions and any business or reader of this information. No liability will be accepted for any outcome associated with the use of the materials contained in this worksheet or on the Farrington Business Solutions website or in any other communication.