Assessment Services Review

Understanding Job Analysis

A job analysis is a process used to identify significant job tasks and the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other Characteristics (KSAOs) needed to complete critical tasks for a given job. It is used to demonstrate that there is a relationship between the tasks performed on the job and the KSAOs required to efficiently perform the tasks.

The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978) states, “There should be a review of job information to determine measures of work behavior(s) or performance that are relevant to the job or group of jobs in question.”

There are many methods that can be used to conduct a job analysis: direct observations of employees, interviews with incumbents and their supervisors, questionnaires, checklists, subject matter expert (SME) conferences, and many more. IPMA-HR does not promote one method of job analysis over another; it is important that one select the method most appropriate for one’s agency (See “references” for more detailed information on different types of job analysis.)

As an example of a job analysis technique, IPMA-HR uses job observations, SME, as well as job analysis questionnaires. IPMA-HR begins the job analysis by conducting research on past studies focused on the target position. Additionally, IPMA-HR gathers job descriptions from jurisdictions around the country as well as using on-line resources such as O*NET OnLine (http://online.onetcenter.org/). Using this information, preliminary task and KSAO lists are developed. Next, job observations and SME interviews are conducted to add to, as well as verify, the task and KSAO information. Job observations and SME interviews allow for more in-depth questioning about the target position as well as provide a forum for incumbents and supervisors to suggest important features of the job that may have been overlooked.

After the task and KSAO lists have been modified, a job analysis questionnaire (JAQ) is developed. The JAQ is used to collect importance and frequency ratings of the tasks.

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Understanding Job Analysis continued:

IPMA-HR’s JAQs use Likert-type scales to gather ratings on how critical each KSAO is for effective job performance and if the KSAOs are needed by newly hired incumbents. A Likert-type scale assigns numerical values to item responses. IPMA-HR uses a five-point Likert-type scale with the low anchor, one, representing a rating of not critical or not needed. The high anchor, five, represents a critically important or essential rating.

IPMA-HR also gathers information on the linkages between the tasks and KSAOs. Specifically, identifying what KSAOs are needed to effectively perform a specific task. Decision rules are set to be applied during the data analysis phase in order to determine which tasks and KSAOs are the most critical to effective performance.

Finally, the JAQ’s are distributed to incumbents in the target position. Following the completion of the JAQ’s, IPMA-HR analyzes the data and applies the pre-set decision rules to determine which KSAOs should be assessed by the written examination.

Reference List


A total of 300 new items have been added to the customized examination item bank, including 150 new Police items and 150 new Fire items. These questions cover a range of police and fire knowledge areas, such as: general police procedures, operational field activities, police supervision, firefighting concepts and techniques, fire department role in the community, and fire supervision.

The Customized Promotional Examination Service enables test users to tailor upper level police and fire promotional examinations using their own job analysis information.

Customized examinations are appropriate for upper level positions such as: Captain, Major, Deputy Chief, Battalion Chief, Assistant Chief, and Chief.

A Standard Test Security Agreement must be on file at IPMA-HR before an agency can request Customized Promotional Examination development.

Please contact Kathleen Pierce, IPMA-HR Assessment Services Manager, for more information on beginning the Customized Examination process at (703) 549-7100, ext. 252.

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**ASK ASSESSMENT SERVICES**

**Q.** Can an agency look at an inspection copy of an exam?

**A.** Yes. We do require that a current Standard Test Security Agreement be on file before obtaining an inspection copy of one of our tests. Inspection copies are free and available for a 60-day period.

**Q.** How does IPMA-HR’s test rental policy work?

**A.** All tests are rented on a 60-day period. All unused exams, study guides, scoring instruments and test administrator copies must be returned by the end of the 60-day rental period. All materials must be returned in order for test credits to be applied. Once all materials are returned we will credit your account for unused exams minus our restocking fee of $2.50 per test.
If you participate in either of these studies and then purchase the new exams, IPMA-HR will offer a 20% discount on your first test order. If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the enclosed participation form and return it to:

Kathleen Pierce  
IPMA-HR Assessment Services Manager  
1617 Duke Street, Alexandria VA 22314  
Phone: (703) 549-7100 Fax: (703) 684-0948

The first phase of development for both exams consists of the completion of job analysis questionnaires (JAQs) by either entry-level telecommunicators or first-line supervisors. JAQs require respondents to rate critical job tasks and the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed to complete those tasks.

**Public Safety Telecommunicator Exam:**

To be included in this study, entry level public safety telecommunicators need to have completed all necessary formal on-the-job training and have been on the job a minimum of six months.

The second phase will include a criterion-related validation study and will take place in August 2005. The validation study will include two phases: 1) administering the new forms of the to current telecommunicators, and 2) having supervisors evaluate the telecommunicator’s job performance using an evaluation form provided by IPMA-HR.

**Generic Supervisory Examination:**

This multiple-choice exam will assess supervisory-based competencies needed for effective performance as a first-line supervisor across various public sector departments. The public safety field will be excluded from this study. First-line supervisors are considered the first line of management responsible for the direct supervision of a group of personnel (two or more) who have been on the job a minimum of six months.

The second phase will include a Subject Matter Expert (SME) review of the actual exam questions. This review will be completed by both first-and second-line supervisors. Each SME will be asked to complete an evaluation form about the clarity of each question, the importance of the knowledge assessed by each question and the appropriateness for its inclusion on the exam.
We hope you enjoyed the second edition of IPMA-HR’s Assessment Services Review (ASR).

If you wish to opt-out of receiving further editions, please email your request to kpierce@ipma-hr.org.

If others at your organization would like to receive the ASR, please send an email request to: assessment@ipma-hr.org.

We always welcome your feedback!

Please indicate which study you are interested in participating:

Contact Person: _________________________________
Title: _________________________________
Agency: _________________________________
Address: _________________________________
City: ____________ State: ________ Zip Code: ________
Telephone: ______________ Fax: _______________
Email: _________________________________

☐ Yes, we would like to participate in the job analysis phase of the
   entry-level public safety telecommunicator examination
development project (spring 2005).
   Yes, we would like to participate in the criterion related
   validation study phase (August 2005)?

   ________ (fill in number) entry-level public safety
telecommunicators will be available to take the exam and
have supervisors rate their job performance.
   ________ (fill in number) entry-level public safety
telecommunicators will be available to complete Job
Analysis Questionnaires (JAQ).

   The JAQ will be available over the web for incumbents to complete.
   Would your incumbents have access to the web in order
   to complete the questionnaire?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes, we would like to participate in the Generic First-Line
Supervisory examination development project.

   Please indicate the position titles you want to include in the study and
   the number of incumbents in each position.
   How many positions? Position titles? _________________________________

☐ Yes, we would like to participate in the Subject Matter Experts
review of the exam questions (June 2005)?