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The competency architecture as error limiting element and efficiency enhancer in business processes

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Abstract

Currently the environment surrounding organizations forces them to constantly change themselves, in order to allow them to keep competitiveness, effectiveness and to adapt to new markets.

The introduction of competencies in human resources management is one of the changes that organizations are making, with the purpose of picking the most competent workers for each position in the organization.

The competency architecture allows the introduction of the term competency in the organization culture and sets the way how competencies should be managed and how organizational positions must be filled according to demanded competencies for that position and the workers competencies.

Currently, in the Portuguese Air Force, human resource management is done according with the rank, specialty and qualifications. As for structure, the organization is not fully prepared for competency management.

This paper presents an ongoing study on the introduction of competencies in human resources management in the Portuguese Air Force, through the application of a competency architecture, in order to minimize error occurrence and enhance efficiency in business processes. A model of a competency architecture is developed to introduce, define and organize competencies in the organization, manage personnel competencies and select the right worker for each position.

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1. Introduction

The Portuguese Air Force (PRT AF) is a high value organization for Portugal. Like the other Armed Forces branches, they "serve the Portuguese people"[1], are responsible for "the republic's military defense"[1], "satisfy the Portuguese State international agreements in military field and participate in humanitarian and peace keeping missions from the international organizations to which Portugal belongs"[1], "collaborate in civilian protection missions, satisfying basic needs and improvement of life quality of population related tasks, and in technical and military cooperation actions in extent of the national cooperation politic"[1], for these reasons the PRT AF needs to adapt to its external environment, in order to maintain its effectiveness, competitiveness and updated.

"Currently, organizations are under constant changes. These are in large scale enlarged by the need to adapt the way they run their business to the market demands"[2]. With these new demands it is possible to verify that "the enterprise human resources selection criteria tend to change, moving from formal qualifications to competencies, which means that the enterprise demands are stronger and, between the qualified human resources, only the competent ones get the job and distinguish from the rest"[3].

The PRT AF is in an environment where all the human resources should be managed by their competencies allowing to get the most from them, creating a competitive advantage to the organization. This type of management enables setting the resources where they will have the best performance. There is a need of adaptation in order to apply this kind of management in the PRT AF.

In PRT AF, nowadays, a person's career is determined by her working time in the organization, rank, specialty and qualifications. The organizational positions are filled according to the available personnel, their qualifications and the requirements for those positions. The qualifications and requirements demanded for every position are specified on organizational manuals and personnel qualifications are managed by the Personnel Directorate.

The problem identified by the authors is that PRT AF does not have a competency architecture and it can be detailed as follows:

- In different organizational manuals the term competency is used to refer to different things;
- Competencies are not used to manage human resources in PRT AF;
- The organization is not structured to apply this kind of human resources management.

This problem raises the following question:

- Why is it relevant for PRT AF, to apply a competency architecture?

A competency architecture is a tool that organizations use to ensure that they have the most competent person to perform each task. With the implementation of a competency architecture in PRT AF, it would be possible to perform a better distribution of human resources by the different organizational positions, which leads to a lower error occurrence rate and an increased organization effectiveness.

2. Concepts and Applications

The present paragraph clarifies important concepts that arise from and are considered as essential for a better understanding of the developed work.

2.1. Competency

"Competencies are "things" that an individual must demonstrate to be effective in a job, role, function, task, or duty. These "things" include job-relevant behavior, motivation, and technical knowledge/skills"[4]. To consider that an individual has a set of competences is necessary to recognize that he has them and that they are relevant to certain task[5].

The term competency was introduced to replace the term qualification, because qualifications are considered technical competencies. Being competent to execute a task means that the worker is qualified to do it, and also has