

# The Many Potential Uses for a Job Analysis



Linda D. Waters, PhD, RN

Prometric, Baltimore, MD

Olga Mironova

Competency and Credentialing Institute, Denver, CO

James X. Stobinski, PhD, RN, CNOR, CSSM

Competency and Credentialing Institute, Denver, CO

## Abstract

A job analysis is an integral component in the development of a certification examination. A job analysis, also referred to as a role delineation study, is an expensive, resource-intensive endeavor. The job analysis, the task and knowledge statements, and survey findings, are among the most valuable assets held by a certification organization, but this asset is often underutilized. This article presents alternative uses for job analysis results and strategies for increasing the return on investment for this asset.

**Keywords:** alternate uses, job analysis study, role delineation study

## Background

A job analysis is an empirical study conducted to determine the critical skills and knowledge needed by individuals working in a specific occupation or profession. A job analysis defines, for any job role, the competencies a person must have. Most frequently, job analyses are conducted as the first step in developing a new certificate or certification program or, for programs already in existence, repeated on 5- to 7-year intervals to keep the program up to date with current practice. This 5- to 7-year interval is open to revision based on the pace of change in an occupation.

Using survey-based methodology, organizations collect data from a representative sample of the population of interest; that is, members of the profession. Survey respondents rate a series of statements that describe their job role and assign ratings to these statements based on such variables as frequency, criticality, and importance. These ratings are then analyzed and grouped based on major content areas, referred to as domains, which are used to construct a test blueprint or test specifications that guide the development of a testing program. Accreditation organizations place an emphasis on the job analysis processes and this research activity is a resource-intensive process.

Considering both the rigor and expense of this process, it is only logical that the sponsoring organization should fully utilize the findings. The data resulting from a job analysis include a list of knowledge and task statements related to performing a

job. Knowledge statements define what a person must know to be a competent practitioner, whereas task statements describe what skills an individual needs to perform in a role. These knowledge and task statements are then linked together to provide a comprehensive picture of job requirements.

Credentialing organizations undertake a job analysis to determine how these areas of competency should be reflected on a certification examination. However, this study also provides a foundation for activities related to human resources management.<sup>1</sup> The information collected provides valuable insight on job activities and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics needed to perform a job.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge is identified as information related to performance of job-related tasks. Skills are “observable competencies required to perform the particular tasks of the position.”<sup>3</sup> Abilities are “aptitudes for performing particular tasks.”<sup>3</sup> Other characteristics may refer to personality factors, attitudes, and traits needed to perform job tasks.

A job analysis study provides a plethora of information that could be used in a workplace for purposes such as identifying continuing education programs, developing model job descriptions, identifying compensation systems, developing training programs, and designing performance appraisals. A job analysis study can also be used to design an outline of the body of knowledge for a profession. Stakeholders, including educators, human resources professionals, and administrators, could find this information of value. Specific uses for job analysis findings are delineated in the following sections of this article.

## Continuing Education Programs

Many professional organizations require that practitioners engage in continuing education on a defined timeline for recertification or relicensure. Yet, what guides the development

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to [jstobinski@cc-institute.org](mailto:jstobinski@cc-institute.org)

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of the topics for continuing education offerings? How does a sponsoring organization or a practitioner know which continuing education offerings to select that promote currency with developments within the profession? Selecting topics based on empirical data ensures a linkage between what is happening in the profession and what continuing education should be pursued. The rigor of the job analysis process can ensure relevance to the profession of content provided in educational offerings.

The tasks and knowledge statements resulting from a job analysis can generate an extensive list of content areas for continuing education. Sponsoring organizations can easily identify gaps between the topics identified in job analysis data and available educational offerings. This is especially critical when practitioners have been working in the profession for many years and may be unaware of emerging topics.

### **Identifying Compensation Systems**

Job analysis findings provide a clear picture of essential functions of a job and the skills and knowledge necessary to perform those functions. It is also the standard for educational requirements and the level of experience needed to perform a job. Thus, it is essential in developing a compensation system that fairly reflects the job requirements. Sharing job analysis findings with employees “provides a common understanding of the value of each job, its relationship to other jobs, and the requirements necessary to perform it.”<sup>3</sup> According to the Human Resources Research Organization,<sup>4</sup> a job analysis study could be used to develop or compare compensation systems.

### **Career Development and Training**

A job analysis could be used as a benchmark for evaluating employee performance and developing a training program.<sup>5</sup> Job analysis findings provide valuable information about the knowledge, skills, and responsibility requirements necessary to perform a job. This information becomes useful in designing training and career development programs.<sup>3</sup> By identifying gaps in an employee’s skills and knowledge, an organization can implement effective training programs. Christina Tino, director of perioperative services at Mercy Health, reports, “I’m using the gap analysis to plan career development for myself and my team.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Model Job Descriptions**

Organizations may struggle with how to define a specific role and what competencies should be solicited from individuals applying for a position. Questions such as, What are the skills that an individual should have? are possible in that situation. Using data from a job analysis is an excellent way to align the critical knowledge and skills determined by practitioners in the field to the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in a position. Employers can incorporate task and knowledge statements into job descriptions and have a firm basis for their inclusion. Using knowledge statements as the foundation, job descriptions can be customized to match the vision, mission, and values of the employing institution. This would be especially important when a role is being developed and implemented for the

first time or when major changes within an institution are occurring.

Model job descriptions can also be beneficial to an individual charting his or her career goals. Access to a model job description provides an empirically based definition of what skills an employer may be seeking. With that information, an individual can perform self-assessment and gap analysis from which to build a career development plan.

### **Assessing Work Setting Performance**

Annual performance evaluations are commonplace in work settings. Evaluating an individual’s performance against statements from a job analysis provides a benchmark for determining an employee’s contribution to the organization. Assessment tools can be designed by selecting only those tasks and knowledge statements that match the job responsibility for a specific job. By customizing the assessment tool, employers can be certain that the evaluation of the employee’s performance is based on current standards of competency specifically selected to match the job role at that employment location. The Human Resources Research Organization<sup>4</sup> uses the job analysis methodology to identify core leadership competencies and develop multi-source assessment systems for leadership development and performance appraisal.

### **Bodies of Knowledge**

Rory McCorkle is the president of International Credentialing Associates and an adjunct professor of Saint Joseph’s University. He is a leading expert in the credentialing industry and often presents and writes on the subject of certification, licensure, and exam development. According to McCorkle, there is an increasing number of associations and credentialing organizations that use job analysis study to outline bodies of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> A body of knowledge, as defined by CFA Institute,<sup>7</sup> is “the core knowledge, skills, and abilities generally accepted and applied by a professional community.” Bodies of knowledge could be used in certification exams and exam preparation materials development.<sup>6</sup>

### **Market Research**

A carefully constructed job analysis survey could be used as a market research tool. Developing an extra set of questions related to the perception of a credentialing program among professionals will greatly benefit any organization’s marketing efforts. Because a job analysis survey is disseminated among all professionals in a field, it is an excellent opportunity to conduct market research without spending substantial resources to reach out to a sample group and collect data.<sup>8</sup> The addition of questions to the job analysis ensures responses from a representative and well-defined group that mirrors the known characteristics of the group.

### **Implications for Vascular Access**

Job analysis findings exist for the role of vascular access professional. The current job analysis was completed in 2015 (see [Appendix](#)). These job analysis findings are the basis for the vascular access-board certified credential. Vascular access

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