

6-2020

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Recommended Citation

Oliver, Patrick, "Why Conduct a Job Task Analysis?" (2020). *History and Government Faculty Publications*. 322.

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WHY CONDUCT A JOB TASK ANALYSIS?

By Patrick Oliver, Ph.D. Director of the Criminal Justice Program Cedarville University, Ohio (Retired Police Chief)

Personnel Decisions – Management’s Most Important Decisions

The hiring of a law enforcement officer is the single most important function of any law enforcement agency. It is the officers hired that provide the service to community members. The promotion of law enforcement officers is the second most important personnel decision after hiring, followed by making of special personnel assignments. According to a book I authored on hiring law enforcement officers, I indicated that “The quality of all law enforcement service is reduced to the officers our community members are dealing with. No amount of organization or equipment will replace the human relation skills of the individual officer. Selecting the best candidates in the marketplace is paramount. It is primarily the officers hired at entry level that become the future managers for an agency. The quality of the individuals you hire will determine the quality of the organization. If the officers in your organization are not competitive in the law enforcement profession, how can your organization be competitive in the law enforcement profession?” (Oliver, 2014). The most important tasks of a law enforcement chief executive officer [CEO] are hiring, promoting, and assigning people. Therefore, the CEO should be directly involved in the hiring, promoting, and assigning process and treat it as a priority. Whoever controls the quality of the personnel selection process controls the effectiveness of the law enforcement agency. It is the people that obtain the results and accomplish the mission of any agency. Quality people (not just people) are the most important resource in any organization. Knowledge of this fact should lead to a selection process based on the most important and foundational element, which is a Job Task Analysis. A Job Task Analysis must be conducted to understand the essential functions of the job, and identify the job tasks to be included in a written job description.

Quality People are a must

In the book “Good to Great”, an interview with one of the “good to great” chief executive officers revealed some keen insight on the key factors that lead to the transition from mediocrity to organizational excellence. When this CEO was asked to name the top five factors that led to achieving organizational excellence, his response was, “One would be people. Two would be people. Three would be people. Four would be people. Five would be people. A huge part of our transition can be attributed to our discipline in picking the right people.” Another CEO related a story on being asked about compromising when you really struggle to find the right person to fill this position or that position. Without hesitation, he stated, “You don’t compromise. We find another way to get through until we find the right people” (Collins, 2001).

The key point here is, that there is no substitute for having quality people. Quality people are the key ingredient of organizational excellence. A key factor in selecting quality people is character-based traits and abilities. In my prior research for writing the book, “Recruitment, Selection, and Retention of Law Enforcement Officers”, I offered this conclusion based on the study evidence. Law enforcement, more than any other profession, demands that officers bring the intelligent management of their emotions to bear, especially when responding to calls for service involving conflict among people. Some key character traits for effective law enforcement officers such as integrity, service, and good human relation skills require a job task analysis for validation (Oliver, 2014). Before you can hire quality people, you must know what you are looking for. To understand

what you are looking for, you need to conduct a Job Task Analysis that reflects the current composition of the job.

A Basic Human Resource Management Tool

A Job Task Analysis is a subset of a Job Analysis. The Job Analysis is broader in scope and considers the job environment, qualifications, and performance goals of the job. A job consists of a group of tasks that must be performed for an organization to achieve its goals. A job may require the services of one person, such as that of Chief of Police, or the services of 75 police officers, as might be the case with a local law enforcement agency. A law enforcement work group consisting of a supervisor, seven law enforcement officers, an administrative assistant, contains three jobs and nine positions. A position is the collection of tasks and responsibilities performed by one person within a job classification. There is a position for every individual in an organization. For instance, a small law enforcement agency might have 12 jobs for its 75 employees, whereas in a large law enforcement agency, 50 jobs may exist for 2,000 employees. Job descriptions are lists of general tasks, functions, and responsibilities of a position. The job description will also include to whom the position reports, specifications such as the qualifications needed by the person on the job, salary range for the position, etc. Job descriptions are usually developed by conducting a Job Task Analysis.

A Job Analysis is the systematic process of determining the skills, duties, and knowledge required for performing jobs in an organization. It is an essential and pervasive human resource technique. The purpose of job analysis is to obtain information about seven important areas of a job:

1. The physical and mental tasks the worker must accomplish;
2. When the job is to be completed;
3. Where is the job to be accomplished – the environmental and organizational factors;
4. How does the worker do the job – the methods, techniques, process, and work devices used;
5. Why the job is done;
6. What qualifications are needed to perform the job – education, training, and certifications needed; and
7. What are the worker characteristics – the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors and traits needed to accomplish the job tasks.

A Job Analysis provides a summary of a job's duties, tasks, and responsibilities, its relationship to other jobs, the knowledge and skills required, and working conditions under which it is performed. Job facts are gathered, analyzed, and recorded as the job exists, not as the job should exist. The latter function is most often assigned to industrial engineers, methods analysts, or others. Job analysis is conducted after the job has been designed, the worker has been trained, and the job is being performed.

A Job Analysis is performed on three occasions. First, it is done when an organization is founded, and jobs are created. Second, it is performed when new jobs are created. Third, it is used when jobs are changed significantly as a result of new technologies, methods, procedures, or systems. A Job analysis is mostly performed because of changes in the nature of jobs. Job analysis information should be used to prepare both job descriptions and job postings for law enforcement jobs.

The job description is a document that provides information regarding the tasks, duties, and responsibilities of the job, as mentioned before. The minimum acceptable qualifications a person should possess in order to perform a particular job are contained in the job posting. A job analysis can be defined as a detailed statement of work behaviors and other information relevant to the job.

A Task Analysis is a Mandatory Law Enforcement Standard

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA, 2019) has promulgated a law enforcement mandatory standard on conducting what they refer to as a Task Analysis. This standard applies to all law enforcement agencies, regardless of agency size or agency type. This standard requires that every full-time employee in the law enforcement agency (both officers and civilians) have a written Task Analysis that has been conducted and maintained on file. CALEA requires that the Task Analysis contains three components. First, the job duties, responsibilities, functions, and job tasks need to be indicated. Second, the frequency in which these work behaviors occur must be measured. Third, the task analysis must indicate how critical the job-related skills, knowledge, and abilities are to effectiveness in the job.

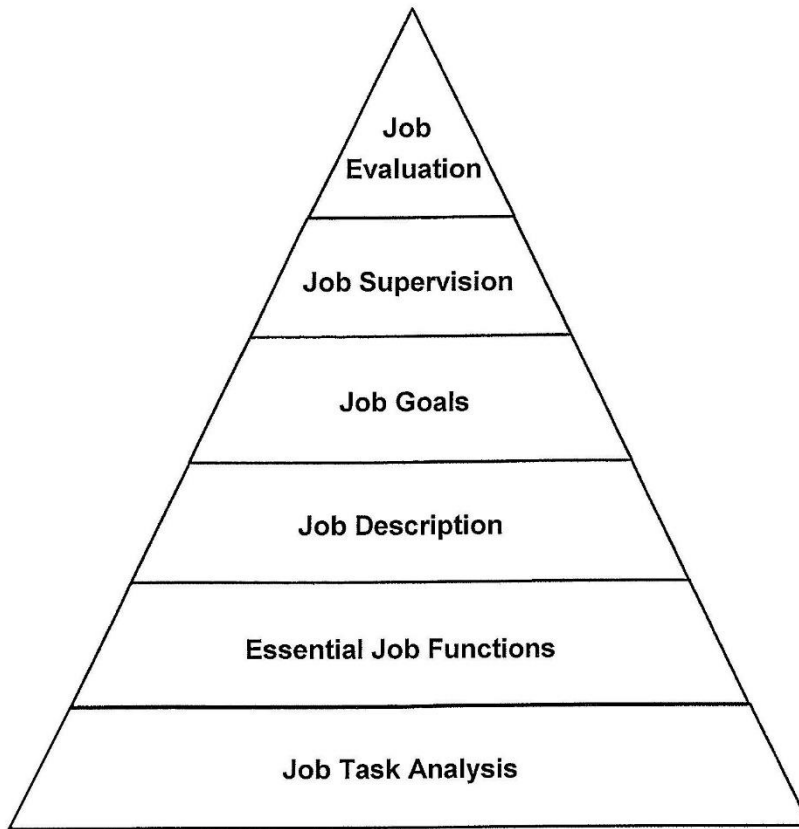
The following diagram (figure 1) helps to indicate the importance of a Job Task Analysis. In the human resource profession, it is considered to be the most basic human resource management tool. A job task analysis allows an organization to identify the essential functions of a job. Essential job functions are critical to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990). ADA prohibits discrimination against a qualified individual with a disability. The qualified individual with a disability must be able to perform the essential functions of a job with or without reasonable accommodation. Therefore, every job description must identify those job tasks that are essential job functions. After identifying the essential functions of a job, other job tasks may be identified based on frequency and importance. After a job description is established, an agency can create job goals. These job goals are in alignment with the identified essential functions of the job and job tasks. A job description, along with job goals, creates the environment for effective job supervision. The individual supervising the job can then properly evaluate positive or negative job performance behaviors. Finally, if the supervisor is able to evaluate positive and negative job behaviors, he or she can do an effective job evaluation. From this description, it is apparent that the essential functions of the job, job description, job goals, job supervision, and job evaluation are all dependent on conducting an evidence-based job task analysis.

Figure 1 shows the inter-relationship between the Job Task Analysis and related components of managing the job.

The Legal Requirements of a Job Analysis

An article titled, "Job Analysis: Why Do It, and How Should It Be Done", indicates that there is an established legal need for a job analysis. The Uniform Guidelines published in the Federal Register has a great deal to say about the legal need for a job analysis. As indicated in the Guidelines, the job analysis is a critical element to the three types of validation of a job: content, criterion-related, and construct validity. If an employer wants to be able to demonstrate to the courts that the selection process used for an employment decision was valid, the employer will need to start from the basis of a current job analysis. There are not only legal reasons for job analysis, but there are also important management considerations as well (Clifford, 2001).

Figure 1



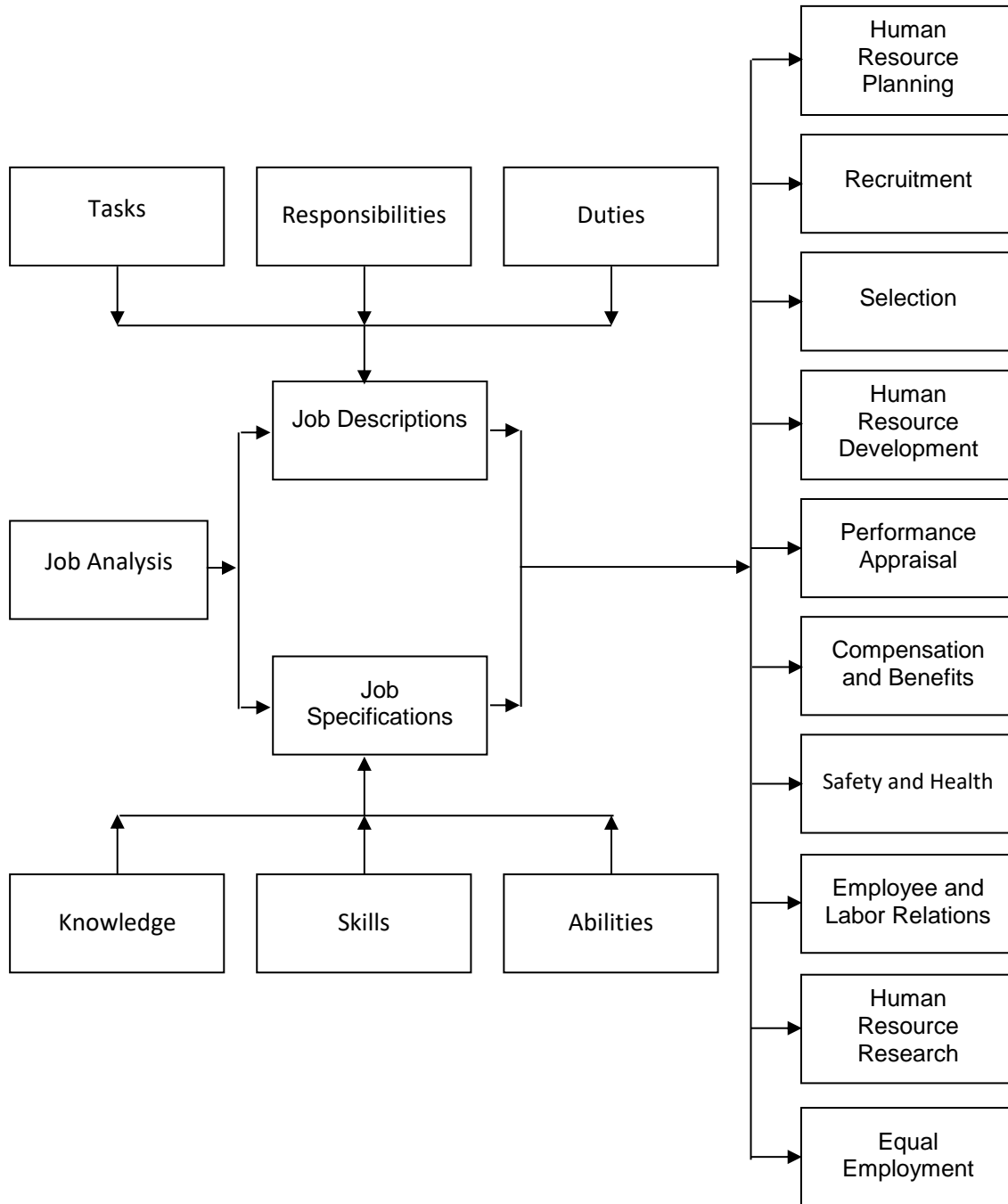
The Foundational Importance of a Job Task Analysis

This diagram above indicates the foundational purpose of a written Job Task Analysis. Without an evidence-based Job Task Analysis, the requirement of establishing essential job functions, a valid job description, and job goals cannot be properly completed. These documents are necessary to then do effective job supervision, and to evaluate job performance in a credible manner. Without a written Job Task Analysis, there is no evidence to support decisions on who is suitable and unsuitable for the target job. Hiring, promotion, training, and job performance evaluation criteria should be established based on conducting a current and credible Job Task Analysis.

The next diagram (figure 2) provides a pictorial view of the relationship between the use of a Job Analysis and all of the related information, documents, and human resource functions that required an accurate evidence-based Job Analysis. Figure 2 below also indicates that without a credible job analysis that several other human resource functions cannot be done effectively.

Figure 2

Job Analysis: The Most Basic Human Resource Management Tool



The job descriptions and job tasks that come from a Job Analysis give employees and managers a common reference point. This common reference point help keep bias and favoritism out of annual performance reviews. Both employees and their managers need to have a clear understanding of the job tasks and responsibilities to meet performance objectives.

The jobs in law enforcement agencies today, are not the same as they were five years ago, and certainly not ten years ago. Does your law enforcement agency have up to date Job Task Analysis for every job? There are operational, managerial, and legal implications of conducting this most basic and important human resource function.

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About the author

Patrick Oliver is the Director of the Criminal Justice Program at Cedarville University. He has served as chief of police for the cities of Fairborn, Grandview Heights, and Cleveland, Ohio, and the ranger chief of Cleveland Metropolitan Park District. He serves as a consultant and trainer with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, and the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. He is also a past commissioner for the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, and a past president for the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police. He is the author of the book, "*Recruitment, Selection, and Retention of Law Enforcement Officers*" published by Looseleaf Law Publications Inc.