Benchmarking: Powerful Tools to Improve Organizational Processes

Situation: When environmental factors drive change, organizations must reevaluate the staffing implications in order to successfully meet the new demands.
Adapting to change requires more than rethinking your implementation and strategic plan. It also requires looking at the organizational competencies necessary in order to successfully meet the new demands. Whether environmental factors have created the need to institute a hiring freeze, to rethink mission, vision, objectives and/or strategy - being prepared to meet the challenges with a clear strategy that addresses the staffing implications is critical.

Problem: Executives are vulnerable without the right deployment of resources to meet their objectives.
Change forces us to adapt and acquire new skills. Building staff capacity becomes even more relevant during times of change, because, in part, things are evolving and there can be a lack of clarity. If left unaddressed, individual, departmental, and organizational performance can suffer. Whether the culprit is poor performance related to unclear change in expectations, individuals who are now miscast in their role because of new demands, or stagnation from the lack of a progressive career path, there are ways to course-correct. Left unaddressed, there can be a loss of self-confidence which further erodes the ability of miscast individuals to meet the demands of the job. Another important factor to consider is that poor performance of a single individual can negatively affects peers, co-workers, and stakeholders – especially where strong interdependencies exist.

Solution: Create an unbiased view of the change in roles by identifying key accountabilities through job benchmarking and targeted development planning.
This allows executives to gain understanding about the true skills necessary for each position. While most jobs have strong interdependent ties within an organization, sometimes there are interdependencies that exist outside the organization with stakeholders and clients. We understand the need for clarity and achieving a "meeting of the minds" about expectations, as well as what is required in order to perform successfully in a role.

Results: Benchmarking creates a clear roadmap for staff development during lean times by identifying specific gaps in skill and abilities. This allows targeted professional development in an environment with scarce resources.
When you benchmark a job, it lays out an objective view based on input from all relevant stakeholders of exactly what it takes to perform the job successfully. During years when adding new staff is not an option, this allows you to identify specific gaps in skills and improve the abilities of existing staff. When those hiring freezes are lifted, benchmarking clearly outlines job requirements for new talent. It also creates a framework for you to look internally for individuals who might have the skill set necessary to perform the role successfully, but might not have been identified otherwise. A tangential but nonetheless important benefit of integrating benchmarking into your organization is that it shows other staff members who may have been negatively affected by the poor performance of a co-worker that you are taking steps to positively correct the issue without ostracizing the individuals who may need assistance.

Benchmarking provides a structured way to identify the true scope of a position by integrating thoughts and input of the key stakeholders so that interdependencies and expectations are clear from the outset. Further benefits are be realized through benchmarking multiple jobs within the organization, as this process produces a framework to ascertain where a career ladder exists and what development is necessary for high-performers to move from one position to another.