

## IBM Institute for Business Value

# Focal jobs

*Viewing talent through a different lens*



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### Overview

Increasingly, organizations are being asked to improve employee productivity while at the same time limiting discretionary spending on workforce investments. How can they accomplish both simultaneously? One approach is to channel time, energy and resources towards positions that make a clear and positive difference in an enterprise's ability to succeed in the marketplace. By identifying these "focal jobs" – and the talent management practices that support them – organizations can pinpoint areas that require more attention, and more effectively allocate limited resources.

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Economic uncertainties place constraints on an organization's ability to invest in its workforce. Still, enterprises must be able to develop a talent pool that can help them achieve differentiation and drive growth. One way is to direct attention to a few select positions that truly influence the organization's standing. We refer to these as "focal jobs." By addressing how these responsibilities are designed and structured, and how talent management practices enable effective job performance, companies can optimize the impact of their limited investments and make a direct contribution to organizational performance. Based on our work with three global companies across different industries, we have identified three primary steps associated with more effectively managing talent investments associated with focal jobs:

#### Determine focal jobs based on the corporate strategy

- Review industry trends.
- Develop and confirm a component business model (CBM) that reflects the organization's current and future strategic direction.
- Highlight components that differentiate the organization in the marketplace.
- Identify and prioritize focal jobs within the differentiating components.

#### Identify the talent management practices associated with the focal jobs

- Develop job profile.
- Identify current and future performance measures.
- Identify talent supply and demand issues.
- Collect human capital analytics.
- Document existing talent management practices and gaps.

#### Determine opportunities for improvement based on current and future needs

- Highlight potential opportunities to improve talent management practices.
- Prioritize talent management initiatives.



## **Determine focal jobs based on the corporate strategy**

The first step in determining the focal jobs within an organization is a review of the corporate strategy. Without a detailed understanding of changing industry trends, customer needs and market opportunities, it can be extremely difficult to confirm which jobs will play a central role in making the strategy viable. Once the major trends have been identified, the next task is to articulate a business model that drives the execution of the business strategy.

## **Identify the talent management practices associated with the focal jobs**

This step involves putting together a basic profile of the focal jobs to better understand roles and responsibilities, the number of individuals who perform these roles, and the future trends that are likely to impact the job requirements. The next task requires gathering data that can help in understanding how effective the organization is in designing jobs and managing talent. This entails collecting both qualitative and quantitative data that could provide insight into job-related issues, and conducting interviews with various stakeholders.

## **Determine opportunities for improvement based on current and future needs**

Having identified the talent management challenges associated with focal jobs, the next step is to pinpoint and prioritize opportunities for closing gaps. Three major themes ran through many of our discussions:

- The importance of tying together multiple initiatives under a common goal that aims to “professionalize” the particular discipline.
- Focal jobs do not exist within a vacuum.
- Focal job analysis represents an approach to prioritizing, rather than limiting investments in talent management activities.

## **Paying attention to focal jobs: Key benefits**

Based on our experience in working with our initial set of companies, we believe a focal job analysis can enable organizations to directly link talent management investments to the business strategy and organizational performance; employ a more disciplined, fact-based approach to integrating talent management activities and investments; raise the visibility of previously undervalued positions; drive the need for better workforce analytics and insights, and clarify the distinction between high-value contributors and high-value positions.

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## Using a different “lens” to examine talent management issues

In today’s challenging economy, organizations need a framework for leveraging their investments – financial, technological and people alike. By using a different “lens” to examine talent management issues, enterprises can uncover the value of taking a systematic, data-driven approach to linking the business strategy to focal jobs, and seize opportunities for improving talent management practices that support these positions.

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## How can IBM help?

IBM’s Workforce and Talent Solutions enable organizations to have a complete, integrated view of their employee life-cycle by bringing together: HCM Consulting Services, Lotus® Collaborative Technologies, Cognos® Workforce Analytics and Measurement, and best of breed Talent Management ISV applications (SuccessFactors and Saba).

The scope of Workforce and Talent Solutions can include the following components:

- Workforce Strategy and Planning
- Sourcing Workforce Capability
- Connecting, Deploying & Developing Workforces
- Change and Sustain
- Workforce Measurement
- Leadership, Performance, Reward and Recognition, and Succession.

To request a full version of this paper, e-mail us at [iibv@us.ibm.com](mailto:iibv@us.ibm.com)

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