



**cybertronics**

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# Portfolio

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## **Who we are**

### **Our background**

Cybertronics is a specialist management consultancy operating since 1977 in the field of job competency analysis and its many applications.

### **Our approach**

Although there are currently many different approaches used in the competency field, We have always tried to remain true to the scientific approach as detailed by Professor David McClelland (the founder of competency) in his seminal article “Testing for competence rather than intelligence”, American Psychologist, 1973. Moreover, we have continued to develop and make upgrades to this approach to ensure its continued currency now and in the future.

### **Our people**

Every member of the Cybertronics team has a deep and long-term association with the competency movement over many years. Our collective experience covers a wide range of industries, job levels and competency applications on an international basis.

Lyle Spencer himself holds the position of Senior Research Fellow with Cybertronics, as well as actively contributing as a team member on every assignment.

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## What we do

### Our focus

We have focused our efforts on helping client organisations to effectively implement their chosen strategy. This is done by ensuring that the capability and competence of the organisation's people is appropriate to the task demands of the strategy.

### How we conduct assignments

Wherever possible, we recommend the use of an ROI based approach. However, this requires that performance in the job be measured for all job holders and that a business case be established before the programme commences. The rationale being that this will allow client management to evaluate the expected ROI of the competency based programme before approving the necessary expenditure much as they would with any other form of investment proposal.

However, we know from experience this approach is not always possible. As a result we have adopted a more flexible approach which allows clients to enter the competency continuum at various points, depending upon their situation or need.

This means that clients may retain us, for example, at the lower end of the scale/continuum to simply evaluate their own work in relation to developing a competency model or programme so that they receive the benefit of some experienced, objective advice.

### Case example (1)

As an example of this, one client wished to bring together in a common language a number of competency models which had been developed independently by their operating units.

The task was to harmonise the competency language used in the different models so that they could be used at corporate level in a career framework which spanned all the operating units, across different countries. We identified common task elements of the various job families and then converted/matched the different competency descriptions to a common competency framework. This provided a comprehensive competency platform which then allowed jobs in the different operating units to be compared/evaluated on a common task/competency basis for the purposes of career choice/development.

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At the other end of the scale we have the resources to design, develop and implement long-term competency based programmes covering all aspects of strategy implementation on a world-wide basis.

### **Case example (2)**

As an example of this one client wished to:

(a) reduce the variation in financial performance of several hundred of its General Managers world-wide who were responsible for running their operating units, and

(b) to implement the new direction required for the company as expressed in the CEO's statement of strategic intent for the future.

This programme started with the development of a competency model based upon interviews and a model building workshop with a group of superior performing General Managers from different countries. This established the benchmark against which all other General Managers were to be assessed and then developed so as to move their performance further up the curve.

The first phase of the programme was to run over a 3 year period. During this period a series of development programmes covering strategy implementation including Balanced Scorecard initiatives, competency development, customer service, organisational climate, motivational style etc. were conducted in several languages so as to cover the entire General Manager population.

Where relevant competency based selection programmes were also conducted.

Client personnel, both HR and Line Managers, were involved in various aspects of the programme and the client project leader trained to a high standard so as to be able to conduct the bulk of the interviews and to run workshops.

The outcomes of the programme were evaluated statistically using control groups where appropriate to determine the realised/measurable benefits. It was determined that the programme training had significantly improved bottom line performance with an ROI figure of several hundred percent.

In addition it was found that the key competencies in the model could predict a substantial percentage of the variation in profit growth 2 years ahead, thus proving the validity of the model. A

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useful point when trying to predict/identify the competencies required in the future. Currently research is under way to see how far ahead the predictive validity of the competency model extends so as to determine what changes/updates may become necessary over time.

Specific performance data gathered from the first 3 year phase has formed the basis on an extension of the programme so as to increase innovative/entrepreneurial activity in the future. This continuation of the original programme, much of which will be delivered in an e-learning format, is seen as necessary by the client so that people development becomes a permanent part of business operations and not just a one-time initiative in response to a problem.

An example of a mid-range entry to competency analysis is given below.

### **Case example (3)**

The client, as part of its strategy to improve customer satisfaction with its service, had both redefined key job roles and created new roles/jobs in certain cases.

The task was to develop competency models for:

- a) an existing job where some of the roles and therefore some of the job tasks had been changed and,
- b) a new job role which only had a very limited number of current job holders with very limited experience in the role due to its being so new.

Interviews were conducted with a small sample of job holders who had been nominated by the client as being superior performers for job a) and job b).

The interview data relating to the job holders' successful incidents was analysed and competency models produced for both jobs.

The output information contained in the competency models was then applied by the client as follows: in job a) where role changes had been introduced, the model allowed the client to see the extent to which job holders were displaying competency behaviour consistent with the new direction embodied in the role changes and where there were gaps requiring further development.

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Interestingly, one of the superior performers had already seen the need to change approach before the job role changes had been introduced and was already beginning to act in ways the client now sought to make a regular part of the job.

This is consistent with what we have found in other studies, i.e. that some top performers "see the future" and start to adapt their behaviour to the changing conditions or situation and try to push the organisational envelope within the limits of their power or others they can influence.

In this case the client, as an organisation trying to introduce change, found such information useful as it allowed them to leverage off/build upon this behaviour so as to speed up the process when implementing their intended job role changes.

With job type b) which was still new, only having been in operation for a little less than a year, the model provided fresh insights into the tasks and competencies of the job.

These insights into how the job was actually being performed allowed the client to refine their original concept of how the job should function and also to help focus development activities much more accurately and economically.

## Summary

In each of these examples there is an underlying, common element in that they were all based on a validated set of competencies.

This is important because it allows for a unified progression from one point on the competency continuum to another as clients wish to apply competency initiatives in greater/increasing depth.

Not all competencies in use today have been validated in the sense that a statistically proven relationship exists between an individual's or people's possession of a set of competencies and their measurable job performance.

Our approach is to develop a statistically validated set of competencies derived from in-depth competency interviewing and coding analysis for each client assignment.

When developing competency models for clients we provide customised behavioural descriptions to demonstrate and reflect

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how the competency is actually being displayed in the context of the specific client situation/task.

We have found that this gives us the rigour of analysis that is necessary to make possible accurate predictions regarding outcomes from competency applications. The approach also provides a very clear, practical and understandable language and set of behavioural examples from which development and selection programmes may be prepared and implemented.

Finally, we have accumulated sufficient experience within the Cybertronics team to allow us to offer clients virtually anything in the competency field from a 1 day briefing on the subject to a major, long-term, strategically driven, system based competency programme - whatever the client needs.

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## Relevant Experience

Over the past twenty-nine years we have conducted several hundred competency based assignments during which we have carried out competency interviews with several thousand managers and other job level holders. Additionally, through our relationship with Lyle Spencer we have access to his knowledge of and wide experience with a broad range of industry sectors.

If you wish, it would be possible to arrange a presentation to your organisation on the application of competency profiling and development.

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**Note:** It has been a policy of Cybertronics not to publicise widely the work done on behalf of clients. Most client relationships span several years working closely to develop strategic capability/ competence in key job areas. Such information is normally proprietary.

Nevertheless it is perhaps noteworthy that our work for a number of clients operating in different industry/ business sectors has been used as case study and reference material respectively in three recent books:

***The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace***

Cary Cherniss (Editor), Daniel Goleman (Editor)  
Jossey-Bass; 2001

***Primal Leadership – Realizing the power of emotional intelligence***

Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, Richard E. Boyatzis  
Harvard Business School Press, 2002

***The Talent Management Handbook***

Lance A Berger, Dorothy R Berger Eds  
McGraw Hill, 2004