



SKILLS

Linking Employees' Contributions to Company Needs

Faced with a less favourable economic environment, the management team became aware of the company's internal rigidity. Encouraging employees to participate in building the new dynamic, BPI developed a skills assessment system and set the changes in motion.

► Context

GROWTH AND RIGIDITY

Following 20 years of prosperity, the company's profits were diminishing in the early nineties. The growth of the past had led to the problems of the future: salaries reached very high levels, functions were frozen in branches which prevented internal mobility, and social relations were based on an archaic model that neglected dialogue. Management knew that internal operations needed to be made more flexible to allow the company to adapt itself. When two very big contracts postponed the company's economic difficulties, they decided to initiate a profound change with the participation of the company's 500 employees.

BPI proposed an approach based on skills assessment. The unions were open to an approach that aimed for greater transparency and that considered the workers first.

► Task

STRUCTURE THROUGH PREPARATION

As the first step in the process, consultants visited all of the departments to set up job descriptions with the employees and line managers. Grouped around a few benchmark positions, they provided a precise description of the situation as well as a clearer presentation of the organisation.

Then, with the aid of a preliminary reflection on "professional values", the pilot committee listed a series of skills that were common to all occupations. In this way, in an organisation that up to that point had been compartmentalised, the will to create transverse references was established. The elements gathered made it possible to develop an evaluation grid: seven transversal skills and a job-based approach became the spokes of a «wheel» that the entire staff quickly adopted.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTIVELY

Step-by-step, the consultants developed the stages of a process that channelled the reflections made at all levels of the company, resulting in a totally adapted tool - definition of the technical assessment criteria by occupation, detailed description of the levels of assessment, etc. At each stage, the consistency of the whole was studied together with the steering committee. The full system was set up for the workers before being rebuilt for the executives.

The **group building** of the tool was an education in itself - when the system was implemented, everyone in the company was able, using the guide that had been written to prepare and conduct the interview they were to undergo as an employee or conduct as a manager.

► Perspectives

AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM

As planned, the relationship **between the assessment tool and the classification and compensation system was progressively established**. The tool was already integrated when the consultants returned to the company to begin discussions on the 35-hour work week application.

Consultant's Comments

"From experience, we have seen that when employees perform self-evaluation in preparation for an interview, they generally underestimate their skills and past performances. The tool puts managers in a position to see the true value of the members of their team."

Employee Involvement

- Information : the staff is regularly informed of work in progress.
- Consultation : groups are formed to describe professional situations (150 out of 500 people).
- Participation : to specify skills and tools.

Possible uses of the skills tool :

- Annual assessment interviews.
- Individual compensation.
- Training plans;
- Job classifications, etc.