SECTION TWO – THE DATA NEEDED

This section covers:

- The definition of job families as Workforce Planning units

- The essential HR information needed for each job family

A workforce plan needs information from HR and financial systems. To commence a project in WFP requires a definition of the different kinds of information that needs to be readily available. Most modern HR Information Systems can provide what we need if the coding structure has been set up accordingly.   It also depends on correct information being input in the first place and consistent use across the organisation.

2.1 The Job Family

Headcount (or "Establishment") planning is driven by the budgets of departments and largely dictated by the finance function. It is based on the organisation's current structure. However WFP is driven by the future business requirements and takes an integrated and horizontal view of the human resource needed. To maximise flexibility we should plan by job family.

A job family should be defined in such a way as to be independent of the current organisation structure, even though some families may closely parallel some departments. This is so that we can take an overview of availability and surpluses across organisational boundaries. Our definition would be: "employees who share a common base of qualifications and skills, and who share a common labour market". Within a job family we may have some vertical grades which provide promotion options. Examples of job families would be:

- Clerical and administrative staff
- Technical support staff
- Field engineers
- Professional accountants
- Sales people
- Specialist engineers

Figure 2.1 Job family sub-divisions

Main Job Family	Sub-Job Family	Grades within a Job Family
Engineer	Mechanical engineer	Postgraduate engineer
	Civil engineer	Graduate engineer
	Electrical engineer	Craftsperson
	Chemical engineer	Apprentice
		Technician

Links between related job families should be made where this reflects career progression. For instance, a particular branch of engineering might span apprentices, craftspeople, graduates and postgraduates.

Supervisors would generally be part of the job family of the people they supervise. Middle managers would be a job family in themselves provided there was movement between them; if not then we would create separate families. Top management would be planned for individually under succession planning.

Sometimes a job family may have geographical subsets, depending on whether the typical job market is international, national or local.

So there needs to be a coding system assigning each job to a job family, and each individual. If not already in the system, this may need to be created at the beginning of a WFP initiative, and each post and existing person coded accordingly. Some organisations unfortunately have just one set of codes for a post which reflects payroll needs and does not give any information about skill sets. Sometimes coding is dictated by the Finance department – they may be unwilling to change them when budgets are drawn up for the next financial year.

At a time of mergers and acquisitions, it is unlikely that HR systems will be similar and providing a common coding base should be a priority. Often it takes a lot of time to get synchronisation however.

If job families are too small they create difficulties in applying statistical forecasts. such as labour turnover. We need to aim for the minimum number of separate families, consistent with the reality of the labour pools.

2.2 Within Each Job Family

For each job family we need then to build some data, both for the group as a whole and regarding the individuals currently within the family.

Some of the data below will be impersonal ie for the family as a whole; some will be derived only by looking at individual records and combining them:

- age profile. This is important for predicting retirements. In many countries the fixed retirement age has disappeared and so it may be more important to know individual by individual (above say 55) a predicted date of retirement. This will be obtained by asking employees annually what their plans are. An average retirement age can be used where the job family is large enough.

Note: Many organisations have been caught out by retirement bombshells. This is when a cohort of staff who are very difficult to replace retire over a short period.

- the profile of length of service. The profile here has implications for predicted attrition rates, and in some countries and organisations may affect benefits such as long service leave, holiday entitlement and so on

- historical *voluntary* attrition rate – taken as six or twelve month moving averages

- historical absenteeism rates, taken as a percentage of working days in the year

- The pattern of movements to and from the job family – where do transfers into it typically come from, and where do people move on to? What are the historical numbers making such transfers?

- The current funded establishment, staff in post and vacancies. We may be planning on a zero base method (what do we need ideally?) or on an "extrapolation method" (i.e. should we increase or decrease from now?). The latter is the most common although we strongly argue for doing zero-basing at least every couple of years. Either way it is vital for HR and Finance to work from the same database, and particularly being agreed about the numbers currently employed, active and non active vacancies and any long term sick or suspended employees.

- The balance of permanent/temporary/consultant resources being used to meet the business needs of the job family

- mobility - a profile of geographical mobility will be of value in some organisations

- potential – it is important to know who has the potential for bigger broader roles in the future and able to be promoted to "higher" job families (this is discussed in more detail in section x.x). We do not want the overall profile to be over light nor over heavy on promotable people

Too much focus on top talent can blind organisations, particularly those with a wide skill set, to the importance of mission critical activities elsewhere within the organisation. These are often the unsung heroes at no more than at the middle level of the organisational structure. They tend to be forgotten, as they typically have low turnover, due to being close to retirement, often loving the technical aspects of their work, and having few alternative employment opportunities close at hand.

NEXT STEPS

- What job families make sense for your organisation?
- To what extent are jobs and people coded according to job family?
- Do you have access to all the data you will need for WFP?