



## The Measurement of Workforce Development Needs as a Source for Training Customization

*A Dancker Sellew & Douglas  
and Raritan Valley Community  
College Partnership with  
Assessment Technologies Group*

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Dancker Sellew & Douglas is an expanding interior solutions organization serving New Jersey and surrounding markets. The organization is known for its commitments to extraordinary customer service and proactive employee development. As DS&D grew through acquisition early in 2009, leadership recognized that the success of this expansion depended on the ability of its employees to rapidly improve both their hard and their soft skills. To enable this accelerated skills training, the organization applied for and received a New Jersey Department of Labor grant to enhance incumbent skill sets through the resources of Raritan Valley Community College.

Grant monies were assigned to both hard and soft skills training. The primary hard skill needs were for expanded technology competence. The primary soft skill need was to develop true front line leadership competencies in incumbents who currently were lead persons in various functional teams. Determining the hard skill training needs and resulting curricula was fairly straight forward, but determining the needs for front line leadership competencies and then designing course work to meet those needs proved to be much more of a challenge.

Assessment Technologies Group proposed a process to objectively measure training needs by identifying

the competencies that would be needed in the future DS&D front line leadership role, assessing current lead persons against the role, and then identifying the gaps that would need to be addressed by the Raritan Valley Community College customized training. This objective measurement began with a soft skills assessment of each lead person invited to participate in the front line leader training. Each participant completed an online standardized assessment of work dimension preferences and competencies, the OPQ32. Frequency distributions of participant scores on 32 behavioral dimensions and 16 competencies were created to determine possible training needs. Next, participants were given the once-in-a-career opportunity to help shape their future role as front line leaders by joining representatives of organization leadership in a facilitated focus group to model this future role.

The focus group facilitation used Work Profiling, a job modeling process anchored in extensive research linking job tasks to the skills, behavioral dimensions and competencies needed to perform those tasks successfully. These skills, behavioral dimensions and competencies then are further linked to validated assessments, enabling the measurement of the extent to which an individual possesses the elements needed for successful task performance.

The DS&D front line leader Work Profiling process was introduced to the potential profilers by an invitational



email two weeks in advance of the scheduled Work Profiling facilitation:

**DS&D PRESENTS A  
ONCE-IN-A-CAREER OPPORTUNITY**

***Participate in Shaping the Future of Your  
Job and the Future of Our Dealership!***

***Even if you can't participate in the work profiling  
itself, please share your views on the purpose  
and objectives of these emerging front line  
leader positions***

DS&D's anticipated growth over the next several years will increase the number of people on many of our functional teams, requiring that many team leaders and team manager roles evolve into true Front Line Leader positions. You're invited to join DS&D's senior leadership in visioning the Front Line Leader position that many of you are likely to hold in the very near future.

Front Line Leaders will be doing less and less of the work itself and spending more and more of their time managing people and projects. No matter what their functional specialty, Front Line Leaders will share essentially the same leadership responsibilities. The attached Work Profiling pre-work invitation asks that you share your views on the purpose of these Front Line Leader roles and also identify six to eight objectives that the Front Line Leader roles are designed to accomplish. Remember that the purpose and objectives are NOT about your own functional specialty; the purpose and objectives are what these Front Line Leader roles have in common. Thanks in advance for helping to shape the future of your own job and the future success of the dealership.

The front line leader Work Profiling session itself was a half day facilitated focus group that took profilers through a series of steps designed to identify the critical tasks and context factors that constitute the DS&D front line leader role. Profilers included representatives of DS&D senior leadership as well as

several individuals who would be in training for the front line leader role. Representatives from Raritan Valley Community College and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development observed the Work Profiling process.

Work Profiling can produce over a dozen different reporting formats providing a wide range of perspectives on the profiled job. To document the training needs of the front line leader training participants, Assessment Technologies Group produced a Work Profiling Job Description, an Attribute Person Specification, and a Management Competency Specification. The reporting was selected to highlight the behavioral dimensions and competencies needed for success in the visioned DS&D front line leader role. Incumbent assessment data on each of these success factors then could be reviewed to identify the development needs to be addressed in the customized training.

The results of the comparison of Work Profiling identified front line leader success factors and incumbent assessment scores on these same success factors were dramatic. Eight behavioral dimensions were identified by Work Profiling as essential to success as a DS&D front line leader:

***Persuasive: enjoys selling and negotiating***

***Controlling: likes to be in charge***

***Socially Confident: feels comfortable when first meeting people***

***Democratic: involves others in decision making***

***Data Rational: likes working with numbers***

***Evaluative: critically evaluates information***

***Behavioral: enjoys analyzing others' behaviors***

***Forward Thinking: enjoys forming long term plans***



Incumbent assessment scores on each behavioral dimension range from 1 to 10, with the lowest scores (1,2) and highest scores (9,10) representing really extreme positions at either end of the dimension. Frequency distributions of incumbents' scores on each of the essential eight dimensions were examined for possible development needs:

**Persuasive:** no incumbent scored above 6. Development need!

**Controlling:** no incumbent scored above 6. Development need!

**Socially Confident:** no incumbent above 7. Development need!

**Democratic:** more than half of incumbents scored 5 or below. Development need!

**Data Rational:** all incumbents scored 5 or above. No need.

**Evaluative:** only four incumbents above 6. Some need.

**Behavioral:** only three incumbents above 6. Some need.

**Forward Thinking:** only three incumbents above 5. Development need!

Three competencies were identified by Work Profiling as most essential to success as a DS&D front line leader:

**Leadership:** motivates and empowers others in order to reach organization goals

**Planning and Organizing:** organizes and schedules events, activities, resources. Sets up and monitors timescales and plans

**Strategic:** demonstrates a broad-based view of issues, events, activities and a perception of their longer term impact or wider implications

Incumbent assessment scores on each competency range from 1 to 5, and the frequency distributions of incumbents on each of the three most essential competencies were examined for possible development needs:

**Leadership:** no incumbent scored above 3. Development need!

**Planning and Organizing:** incumbent scores distributed across competency. No need.

**Strategic:** only two incumbents scored above 3. Development need!

In sum, then, there were seven development gaps that front line leader training most needed to address. These development gaps were shared with the Raritan Valley Community College trainer who expressed great appreciation for the objective data and immediately began to customize the course in alignment with these identified needs.

At the conclusion of the front line leader training course participants will have the opportunity for reassessment of their behavioral dimensions and competencies. A second online administration of OPQ32 and on-the-job behavioral observation by the organization's senior leadership will measure the impact of the training that was customized in alignment with the participants' objectively identified development needs.

