

Development of companies' working methods with skills supply planning

(Oct 2019 - June 2020)



July 2020



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On the basis that many SME currently lack a plan for their future skills supply, IUC Z-GROUP has in autumn 2019 started a development program for 5 small businesses needing help in this direction.

The model is based on validation of existing industrial technical skills, 5 joint workshops and 40 hours of individual coaching by company. The goal is for each individual company to develop its own plan, its own process, for future competence provision. The work should be done with a process mindset, i.e. that each part of the plan has its given place, dated and with the designated responsible person. A follow-up of the plan is necessary and an evaluation shall be carried out at specified times.

Validation used is *BASIC Industrial Technology certification* (industry-wide certification Sweden)

Background

The business structure in Jämtland and Härjedalen is mostly SME. And it is not common for SME to hold Human Relations (HR) skills inhouse. For this reason they are not structured with HR processes and HR issues. Recruitment and competence development takes place rather ad-hoc and with a relatively short-term perspective.

Purpose

In order to support these companies, IUC Z-GROUP has during the period Oct 2019 – June 2020 implemented a development program with 5 participating companies with the aim of creating a structure, a process in HR work, and also adding knowledge within the area of Human Relations.

Participating companies

5 manufacturing companies in Jämtland County participated in the project, of which 3 are located in Östersund and the other 2 about 40 km and 270 km from Östersund respectively. The number of participants from each company has been between 2-4 people and we have deliberately tried to include the CEO/Site Manager, Trade Union Representative and some employees, from the respective companies.

Approach/Methodology

The development process has consisted of 5 joint network meetings and up to 40 hours of coaching per company individually. The coaches' skills are mainly in two areas - creating process structure and HR.

A strength-based approach or method has been our starting point in the development work. This means that we are looking for the strengths of companies in order to be able to use them more easily in order to achieve their objectives. Otherwise, it is relatively common to look for what is bad or what works badly, but we have wanted to start from the forces because it creates an energy and it is also easier to absorb new things with the help of your current strengths. Imagine yourself a coach who in an individual conversation asks the participant about its strengths, what you are really good at, what you think you are good at. These forces can then be used to improve the areas that need to be developed.

It creates a completely different energy and interest to develop with this mindset.

Objective

The goal is for each company to develop its own plan for the work with competence supply. The work should be done with a process mindset, i.e. that each part of the plan has its given place, dated and with the designated responsible person. A follow-up is to take place and evaluation shall be carried out at specified times.

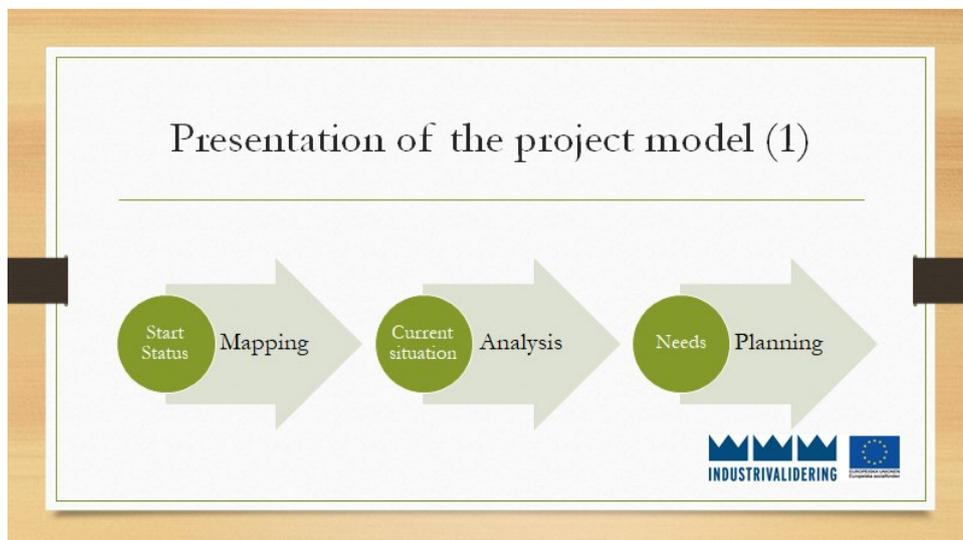
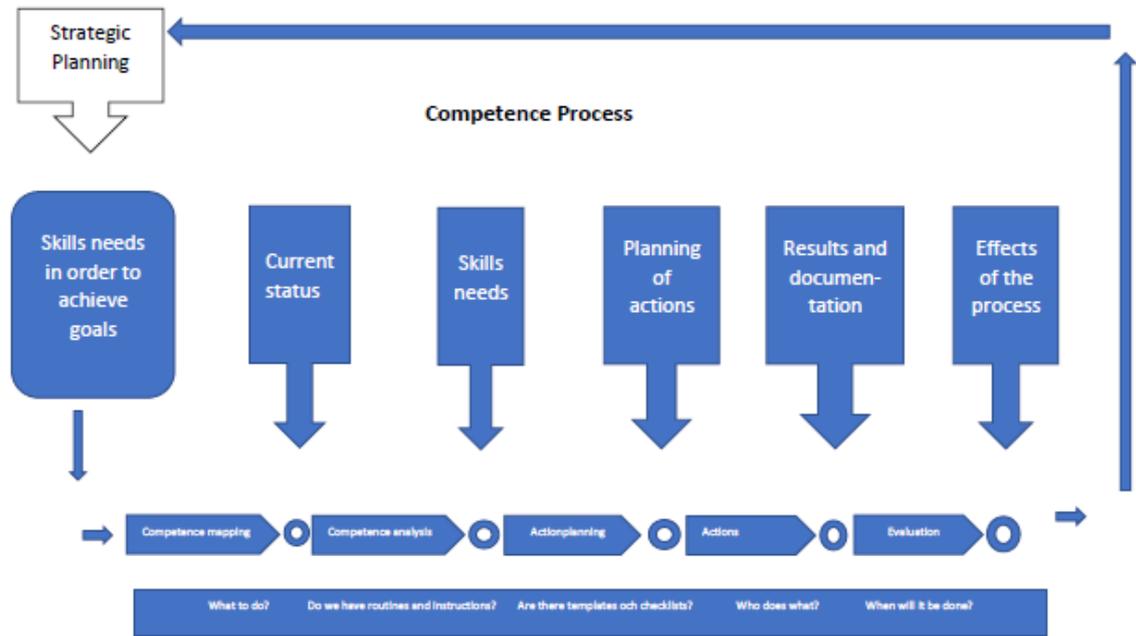
The coaches

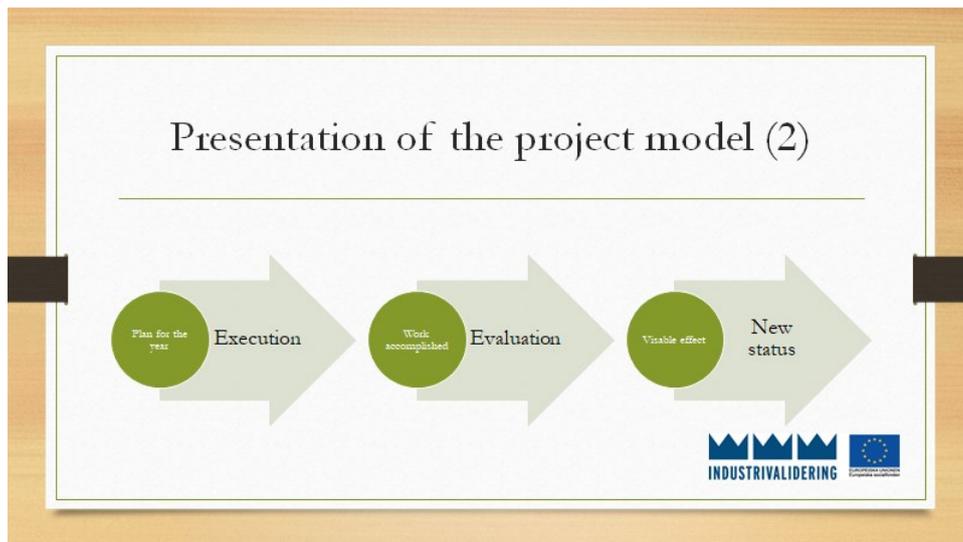
We have had 2 coaches in the project representing HR competence and System competence such as Management systems and Quality systems.

As coaches, we work with follow-up calls, company visits, act as sounding boards and hold briefings. We offer tools as well as coaching conversations with the participants. At each network meeting we present new knowledge that is useful on the way to a company-specific skills supply process and in between we contribute with advice and tips for implementation.

Basic planning of the coaching work is to think about the main process steps in the companies' competence supply process including competence mapping, competence analysis, competence planning, implementation and evaluation.

Project model





Oct 24 -Dec 5. Competence mapping, validation.

Dec 6 – Jan 30. Competence analysis, goal management

Jan 31- Mar 12. Competence planning, implementation

Mar 13- May 22. Implementation, evaluation.

May 23-Jun 15. Evaluation, termination.

The coaches offer current tools and support throughout the process. The aim is to create a structured competence supply routine, taking into account horizontal principles at all stages. In a company that works process-oriented with continuous improvements, issues of gender equality (including discrimination and accessibility) and environmental impact cannot be excluded. These issues affect everything we do, and as entrepreneurs you have a great responsibility to ensure that things go in the right direction.

As coaches, we will also be clear that it is a pure competitive advantage to have a high level of awareness of these issues. Successful companies have a mix of people who work with them in terms of gender, age, functional variations, origin and outlook on life. Discrimination is a health and safety problem that must be tackled early and vigorously. It is badwill for a company to be known for not tackling problems such as bullying and otherwise poor psychosocial work environment. When it comes to sustainability issues, they will not diminish in importance, but rather will be absolutely crucial for the future of a company.

The project will be completed in mid-June 2020.

Network leaders and coaches:

- + Sverker Hallén, IUC Z-GROUP
- + Pernilla Hellan, DRIV Innovation

During the first network meeting, we found out that none of the companies really had a formal Management System, but several of them used home made systems.

Implementation of network meetings

Network meeting No. 1, conference room at the coaches

October 24, 2019 is a start-up meeting where we focus on getting to know the participants and their companies and laying the foundation for a work with goal management and current situation analysis.

Network Meeting No. 2, company-based meeting

December 5, 2019, the current situation is clear and we are moving more clearly into goal management and needs analysis and setting out the foundations for sustainable planning.

Network Meeting No. 3, company-based meeting

January 30, we deepen ourselves in the planning phase and clarify the structure and formulate the main milestones.

Network Meeting No. 4, Digital Meeting

Scheduled for March 12, 2020 but was cancelled due to Corona epidemic. Instead we held a digital meeting May 11. We verified what has already been implemented and what challenges can be considered.

Network Meeting No. 5, Digital Meeting

On 15 June, we evaluated what has been done so far, learned from each other and opened up for forward ongoing work even after the end of the project period.

In addition to the network meetings, each company has the opportunity up to 40 hours of individual coaching.

Adding knowledge in Human Relations

One of the goals of the development process is for participating companies to gain more knowledge about HR, and therefore we have implemented extra sessions with HR Knowledge based on the European standard for work with competence supply. In the project we have been careful to start from the needs of the companies but also from the level of what is possible to reach and level of ambition. It has been important for us to get the participants to succeed in their goals. And therefore we chose to start from the participants' current situation.

Creating structure in HR work

Part of the project has been to help companies create a structure in the HR work that is based on the system that is already used, for example, Management systems or Quality systems. The home-made systems used by the companies were all missing the documentation part.

Network meetings

During the project we have had a total of 5 network meetings starting in October 2019 and the last one was completed in mid-June 2020. The first meeting in October 2019 focused on getting to know each other, communicating about the project, practical issues, finding the company's current state and starting a discussion about the company's goals for the project. As project leaders, we put a lot of effort into clarifying roles, partly our own skills as coaches but above all to make the participants' responsibility for their own development. Working with a coaching approach to participants means to us that you work both supportively, but also by being challenging. That is our task for moving the participants forward in the process. Support in the form of inspiration, adding knowledge and interlocutors. Challenging by asking how the development work is going, what results have been achieved and what opportunities there are going forward. Help the participant to drive the process forward.

As of March 2020, we have had to hold the meetings digitally instead of physically because of the corona epidemic. In practice, we have had 3 physical meetings and 2 digital meetings. There is a big difference between meeting physically and online, but at the same time it has been good to increase the digital maturity of the participants by using modern technology. Both for the companies and ourselves.

Coaching

In every network meeting, we stressed the importance of taking advantage of the coaches who can participate in the development work at home in each individual company. Up to 40 hours of coaching per company has been possible and it has been a bit different how it has been used. After a slight sluggish start, several companies used the coaching time to the full. It has mainly been about individual conversations with employees to identify skills, working with target images and to open up a dialogue about competence and strengthen the teamwork.

BASIC Industrial Technology Validation (BITV)

BITV is a national standard for the validation of basic industrial competence of manufacturing personnel. The stakeholders of BITV are a number of professional associations, employers' organisations and trade unions that have together created a common national standard for validating labour skills in manufacturing companies. With BITV, employers, employees, employment agencies and training providers get clear information about the basic skills required to be able to work in a manufacturing company, a clarity is created about where the bar is for the industry's lowest level of competence.

BITV is part of the basic concept, there is also BITV for Automation and BITV for Maintenance. The basic concept ensures the skills required for work content that can be found in all sorts of manufacturing and where the requirement for skills to do the job is the same regardless of branch. The competence certificate is valid within all branches of manufacturing.

Validation is time-effective and cost effective. The selection of the 10 areas of competence to be measured is resource-efficient. For the individual, the actual validation

process takes 4 hours. Management needs to set aside time before each validation to decide how to take care of the results and after validation for analysis of results. The 10 areas of competence are qualifying and quality driven for work in any manufacturing company. The description of what is required in each area is taken directly from reality, through companies from all branches. The content of validation is reviewed and anchored in all professional organizations. The way to validate is based on a proven and well-used concept.

Areas of expertise in BITV

1. Health, Environment and Safety
2. IT and Automation
3. Quality
4. Mathematics
5. Meating technique
6. Production Technology- Economy
7. Blueprint reading
8. Language- English
9. Language - Swedish
10. Maintenance

The right to a BITV certificate of competence

With BITV as a platform, you build competence in the company in a stable and safe way. Since validation is limited to the areas identified by the industry as a significant quality and competition driving force, the efforts will also be focused. It is guaranteed to be easier.

BITV provides a fast and efficient basis and thus facilitates the work of planning and implementing the necessary competence development considerably. No extensive, difficult or resource-intensive work needed. If not approved in all areas, a supplementary validation can be carried out after competence development. When reaching the

requirements in each area of expertise, you get a BITV certificate. This is of value for both the individual and the employer. When to apply for a new job or when to hire.

During the project, one of the companies has completed the BITV for its 10 employees. 3 companies had already implemented the BITV process before the start of the project. The fifth company was informed of the possibility of carrying out BITV and was also given the opportunity to try out test sets.

BITV is part of the competence mapping. In addition to validation, we have conducted individual interviews with staff in the companies to find out what skills are further available. The participant was asked what machines he or she can handle and to what extent. In addition to that, we mapped other personal skills not used in the existing workplace, so-called hidden skills.

The validation consists of 10 pieces of tests that the participant will pass in all 10 sections to pass the entire validation. When you have succeeded in doing so, you will receive a certificate of competence showing that you have basic industrial technical skills. This enables the employer to ensure that staff have a certain minimum level of competence. It also makes it easier for the individual who has taken the test to be able to apply for a new job because they can more easily prove their skills.

Company needs

Initially, we examined the companies' need for HR skills and the participants in the individual companies then had discussions about activities and goals for their company. This became our starting point for coaching with each participating company. Several companies saw the need for an inventory of employees' skills, not least on the hardware side, that is, operator knowledge. Who can operate what machines and what level does the operator judge himself to be at? The level is then checked by management to ensure the match of the existing competence.

Corporate engagement

The companies have participated with several people from their company and thus the commitment is also a little different in each person. Overall, it can be said that the commitment has been great and it has also been an advantage that there have been several from the same company to more easily discuss the need for action, level of ambition and activities for their particular company. When several people from the same workplace have accessed the same information from the network meetings, it facilitates the work to be done later on. The group dynamic created during the network meetings is also of great value for the outcome.

Mapping of individual competence

3 out of 5 companies wanted the help of the coach when it came to mapping the skills of the staff. It was done in slightly different ways but the starting point was individual coaching sessions for each employee. In some cases, we had a list to start from where the staff had to fill in their operator's skills by self-estimation and to indicate the level. Level scale for handling a machine vary from "Does not handle the machine at all" to "Expert who can teach others".

Through conversations about the staff's previous professional experience, we found lots of non-used "hidden competences". In a company of 30 employees with each individual employee having an average of 3 professional previous other experiences there will be 90 competencies together that would be beneficial in some parts of the company, available for use now or later. This should, of course, be included in the planning of skills provision. Personal abilities is another aspect such as creativity, accuracy and structure. These characteristics should also be included in the work on the provision of skills.

In the project we have started a process in the companies for a dialogue about competence in a broad perspective. What needs to be done forward is to document the competence in a matrix.

Corporate Target Image

How do you know where to go if there is no target image for the company? It is possible to inventory existing skills among the staff, but it will be more difficult to rig skills supply for the future if you do not know where you are going. In many companies, such a pronounced target image is lacking. At best, it is available at the CEO/Owner/Management team. Not always there either. In the project, we have discovered a need to help create visual communicative target images that can help everyone at the company to take a step in the right direction, to make decisions that lead towards the goal.

Most people can relate their own skills to the need in the future and thus understand for themselves what needs to be done in order to achieve the goal. The target image is crucial.

Comments from participants

During the project, we have continuously taken in the views of the participants from the network meetings and overall it can be said that these has been positive and one just wants to continue on the same path. During the last network meeting we received feedback from the participants who wished that the coaches would have been more driving when it comes to, for example, booking coaching hours, being more active. That is, of course, a point of view that we must take into account while we have had an approach that wants to ensure that the individual participants assume their responsibility for their own development process. It's easy to leave responsibility to someone else, especially those who are in charge of the project. In the defense of the participants, it can still be said that they have been responsible and engaged, but have their main task in production and it is then easy that everyday life may take over and that the development work suffers.

Comments from the coaches

Each company had the opportunity for 40 hours of coaching where one could choose to get help with the structural work around HR work and/or HR-work itself. The most in demand was coaching in pure HR work, i.e. employee talks for competence mapping, working with goal settings and strengthening the teamwork. It would have been desirable for companies to have started earlier in the project with the individual coaching.

Results

The project has set in motion a process for companies to develop their work with skills supply. All participating companies have started their work on competence mapping, some have also completed that part. No company has a ready-made process for its competence supply, but the work has been initiated and can at best continue on its own power in the companies. Desirable, however, would be a longer period with continued network meetings and more coaching to ensure that this happens. The Corona epidemic, which appeared halfway through the project, caused concern and disruption.

You could say that we have gained the interest of participating companies in the opportunities that a structured process for working with their own competence supply entails. Right now we are planning for a continuation starting in September and the companies have orally said that they want to participate.

Evaluation

Early in the project, we presented a method for follow-up that also contributes to a natural continuation based on where you stand right now. The method is called DGLFA – and is an abbreviation for the questions Done, Get, Learned, Figured out, Act.

DGLFA is an action learning method that captures one's own experiences by asking what is done, what it has given and what we have learned from what is done.

Furthermore, it focuses on what is the best option for action in the further work by asking what is now wise to do and what activities we are going to do.

Next steps

The project has been going on for about 8 months and it is relatively short time to bring about profound changes that also become lasting, especially when it comes to an area like Human Relations. The companies are simply unaccustomed to working with it. All 5 participating companies have said that they would like to continue for a longer period. This summer we will determine which companies will be involved and we plan for a continuation starting in September 2020. In our network of 62 manufacturing companies, we know that several would be happy to start similar development projects and therefore we have plans to start a new group in parallel with the continuation group.

Literature

Strength-based Team Development – a practical handbook in appreciative Inquiry is a translation and processing made by Daniel Richardsson. 2019 came the 2nd edition. The first edition was released in 2012 and until December 2018 it was sold in 3000 copies. The book is a Swedish version of the book Appreciative Team Building: Positive Questions to Bring Out the Best of Your Team (2004) written by Diana Whitney, Amanda Trosten-Bloom, Jay Cherney & Ron Fry.