



Level of Work and Role Complexity

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The Benefits of Understanding this Concept:

- You can make universal, apples-to-apples comparisons between complexity level of jobs across departments, across organisations, or across the world.
- You can easily articulate what makes one job more complex than another.
- You can distinguish to what extent one job is more complex than another.
- You can determine how many layers your organisation should have for maximum effectiveness.
- You have a measurable, defensible, and consistent basis for assigning appropriate compensation to a role.
- You can screen candidates for their ability to handle certain levels of complexity to see if they should be considered for certain roles.

Types of work

We all know intuitively that some jobs are more complex than others. However, most of us lack a universal way of measuring and, thus, articulating what makes one job more complex than another.

As it turns out, work in hierarchical organisations occurs in distinct layers of increasing complexity that can be easily distinguished from one another. The work required in each layer, which we call strata, is qualitatively different from the work in any other layer. Once we understand this, we can begin to talk about jobs (any job, from zookeeper to bank teller) in terms of these levels, called strata, and make apples-to-apples comparisons between them. Just as H₂O is always H₂O, but can be present in the form of ice, water, or steam based on temperature, work is work but can be present in various states based on its complexity level.

Organisational Design

Not all organisations are equally complex. Therefore, not all companies require the same maximum number of layers. The world's largest corporations, such as GE or GM, have a total of eight layers of complexity. Smaller organisations would have fewer. A Mom-and-Pop retail store or restaurant might have as few as three levels of work complexity necessary to carry out their business. Some organisations have more layers than necessary and some have too few. Either situation creates problems and costs you money! PeopleFit[®] can help you determine the appropriate number of layers for your organisation.

The chart on the following page describes the various types of work found at each stratum:

Complexity Level	Stratum	Complexity Level	Complexity Level
Most Complex	8	Construct and pursue world wide strategic plans in the largest of the world's corporations.	Super Corporation CEO
	7	Construct and pursue world wide strategic plans. Place businesses in the world.	Corporate CEO
	6	Lead the accumulated impact of multiple business units.	Corporate EVP
	5	Optimise the function of a single business unit or corporate support staff.	Vice President Business Unit President
	4	Manage multiple, interdependent serial projects. Balance resources among a number of departments.	Director General Manager
	3	Plan and carry out sequential projects while considering contingencies and alternatives.	Regional Unit Manager Manager of Managers
	2	Accumulate bits of information to diagnose and anticipate problems. Proactivity appears. Trends are noticed.	District Manager First Line Manager Supervisor
Least complex	1	Follow predefined procedures. When an obstacle is encountered, seek help. No anticipation of problems is expected.	Shop Floor Operator Clerk Cashier Teller

Measuring Job Complexity and Matching It to Human Capability

Now that we understand that some jobs are more complex than others and what it is that makes them so, we can now begin to look at people's ability to handle certain levels of capability. Once again, we all know intuitively that some people can handle more complexity than others, but articulating what makes one person more capable than another can be difficult.

Using a stratum scale, we can make an apples-to-apples comparison between stratum level of work and a person's ability to handle that level (what we call Potential Capability). If one does not currently have the ability to handle complexity at the level required of a certain position, no amount of training, coaching, or personal will can change it.

Determining The Current Capability Level of Employees

Some people can reliably carry out procedures but do not yet have the ability to anticipate problems. Using the chart above, we could describe this person as having potential capability at a stratum 1 level.

Someone who could write a sequential plan for creating and implementing a new software package company-wide would have potential capability at least at the stratum 3 level.

The Over Committed Employee

If an employee with current potential matching stratum 2 is asked to do stratum 3 work, no amount of knowledge, training, coaching or personal will can equip him or her to handle the work. This results in frustration and inefficiency on the employee and manager's part. This common problem is predictable and completely avoidable!

The Underutilised Employee – A Wasted Resource and a Turnover Risk

If an employee with stratum 3 capability is asked to do stratum 2 work, issues surrounding boredom will arise. These employees are prime candidates for turnover. Research suggests that one fifth of corporate employees are underutilised in this manner! This common problem is predictable and completely avoidable!

Matching People To Jobs

Matching current potential to job stratum is key. PeopleFit can train you to easily and accurately determine the current capability level of your employees.

Talent Management

One's ability to handle complexity is not static. It matures with age in a predictable manner. A way to accelerate the maturation has not yet been found. Meaning, if one does not currently have the ability to handle complexity at the level required of a certain position, no amount of training, coaching, or personal will can change it. The person will simply be unable to do the work required by the job until he matures to that level over time. For reasons not yet understood, some people mature to a higher level of capability by the end of their careers. This is why some people desire to move up the corporate ladder (high potential mode), and others are content to stay within one job throughout their career (expert mode).

Internal Talent Assessment, Succession Planning and Employee Development

Creating your succession plans or training and development plans with this knowledge is essential! Let PeopleFit help you make the most of your succession planning and Employee Development process by training you in its three-point, capability assessment process.