

Lesson n03: Job Analysis

Before we can hire people, before we can assess their performance, before we can decide on their salaries, before we can train them – before we can do virtually anything to affect a job, we must first understand what a job consists of. What tasks does it include? What skills does the job require? Where does the job fit within the organization? Job analysis helps I-O psychologists answer these questions (Sanchez & Levine, 2012). Because of its importance for making further decisions about jobs, many I-O psychologists begin their consulting work with a job analysis.

Generally speaking, a **job analysis** can fall into one of two categories: *work-oriented* or *worker-oriented* (Brannick, Levine, Morgeson, & Brannick, 2007). **Work-oriented job analysis** focuses on the job itself, and involves developing a list of tasks that the job involves. For example, a retail store sales clerk might assist customers in finding merchandise, answer customer questions, use a cash register to take money and make change, bag the merchandise, and thank the customer, among other responsibilities. If we put this all together, it produces a *job description* that we can later use to identify training needs and the valuable behaviors that we should reward.

On the other hand, **worker-oriented job analysis** focuses on identifying the qualities needed by an employee to successfully perform the job in question. Traditionally, I-O psychologists have tried to identify several key characteristics of employees, including their knowledge (things they know), their skills (such as skill at persuading others), and their abilities (more stable traits they possess, like mathematical ability), often referred to as the “**KSAs**” required to perform the job. Returning to the example of our retail sales clerk, we might find that they need to be friendly, detail-oriented, reliable, and have the ability to learn about the merchandise the store has in stock. This information is crucial to developing a selection system that identifies job applicants with the right qualifications to be successful.

The process of completing a work- or worker-oriented job analysis procedure is actually quite similar. In each case, I-O consultants typically interview current employees and supervisors, or ask them to complete surveys, to gather information about the job. The consultants then use this information to write the task or KSA statements that describe the job.