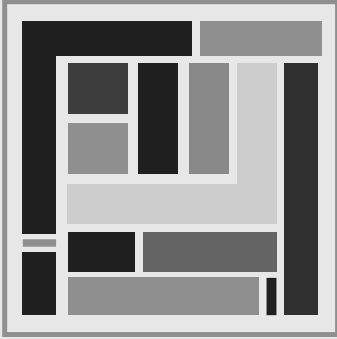


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# REQUIREMENT SPECIFICATION FOR STAFFING IN A NETWORK ORGANIZATION

SPÉCIFICATION DES EXIGENCES POUR LE RECRUTEMENT  
DANS UNE ORGANISATION EN RÉSEAU

ESPECIFICACIÓN DE LAS EXIGENCIAS PARA RECLUTAR EN  
UNA ORGANIZACIÓN EN RED

E P S Agrell

*Ekelöv Infosecurity AB, Stockholm, Sweden  
epsagrell@gmail.com,*

Véronique Pilnière

*Estia-Recherche, CREG-UPPA  
v.pilniere@estia.fr*

## ABSTRACT

The idea of a *learning organization* has become accepted as a generic concept and has grown into being a well-defined management domain (Senge 1994). The term *learning organization* has almost become a cliché. In this article, we try to provide concrete and specific an example of an application developed within a network based staffing firm.

The idea of promoting generic competences and have those better described in CVs (Curriculum Vitae) and in requirement specifications were

designed and tested in an earlier project for the Swedish Defence. (Agrell 2006) Feedback from the contracting firm prompted us to engage in a much more thorough theoretical investigation.

We have identified the following steps as necessary ones in the organization of staffing operations:

- negotiate with international partners about the Swedish styles of leadership and organization,
- match individual competences with described leadership styles,
- model pre-requisite specifications for troop and per-

sonnel and express the requirements in adapted formats throughout the staffing process,

- reach an adequate balance between immediately operational abilities and those to learn and/or adapt,
- identify and recruit those who have potential to acquire abilities and attitudes in due time.

The experience we have gained in the for specifying the types of factors to consider for staffing in a networked organization.

**Key-words:** learning organisation, operational competences, potential competences, recruitment, profiles and pre-requisites, CV (Curriculum Vitae).

## RÉSUMÉ

L'idée d'une organisation apprenante est aujourd'hui admise comme un concept générique qui s'est développé dans un domaine spécifique du management (Senge, 1994). L'expression *d'organisation apprenante* est même utilisée aujourd'hui de façon indiscriminée. C'est pourquoi dans cet article, nous essayons d'être concrets et spécifiques en nous intéressant à une application pour le recrutement en lien avec une organisation publique en réseau.

L'idée générale d'afficher des compétences génériques et d'avoir celles-ci mieux décrites dans les CV et dans les spéci-

fications des profils des offres d'emploi a déjà été acceptée et travaillée dans un récent projet pour la défense suédoise (Agrell, 2006). Le feed-back du maître d'ouvrage nous amena à entrer dans des approfondissements théoriques.

Nous identifîâmes alors comme nécessaires les étapes suivantes pour organiser le recrutement :

- Négocier avec les partenaires internes à propos du style suédois d'organisation et de commandement
- Comparer les compétences individuelles avec les styles de commandement accordés
- Modéliser les spécifications de pré-requis pour la troupe et le personnel

et exprimer les pré-requis dans des formats adaptés tout le long du processus de recrutement

- Gérer l'équilibre entre les compétences immédiatement opérationnelles et les compétences à l'apprentissage et à l'adaptation
- Trouver et recruter ceux qui supposément sont en mesure d'acquérir en temps voulu les compétences et attitudes attendues.

Ce texte est principalement tiré du rapport d'un projet appliqué. Il est néanmoins intéressant au regard des types de facteurs à prendre en compte pour recruter dans une organisation en réseau.

**Mots-clés** : organisation apprenante, compétences opérationnelles, compétences potentielles, recrutement, profils et pré-requis, CV (Curriculum Vitae).

## RESUMEN

La idea de una organización que aprende esta hoy admitida como un concepto genérico que se ha desarrollado en un campo particular del management (Senge, 1994). La expresión *organización que aprende* se utiliza como tal de manera demasiado insistente hoy en día. En este papel intentamos entonces de ser concretos y específicos, interesándonos a una aplicación para el reclutamiento en relación con una organización pública en red.

La idea general de poner de relieve las competencias genéricas y de tener estas mejor descritas en los CVs y en las especificaciones de los perfiles de las ofertas

de empleo se trabajó y se aceptó en un proyecto reciente para la defensa sueca (Agrell, 2006). El feed-back del cliente nos llevó a entrar en profundizaciones teóricas.

Se identificaron entonces como necesarias las etapas siguientes para organizar el reclutamiento:

- Negociar con los colaboradores a propósito del estilo sueco de organización y de mando
- Comparar las competencias individuales con los estilos de mando acordados
- Modelizar las especificaciones de prerrequisitos para la tropa y el personal y expresar los prerrequisitos en formatos adaptados a lo largo del proceso de reclutamiento

■ Gestionar el equilibrio entre competencias inmediatamente operacionales y las capacidades al aprendizaje y a la adaptación

- Encontrar y reclutar los que son supuestamente capaces de adquirir rápidamente las competencias y actitudes esperadas

Este texto tiene su origen principal en un proyecto aplicado. Non obstante, tiene un interés en relación a los factores que debe, tomarse en cuenta para reclutar en una organización en red.

**Palabras-claves:** organización que aprende, competencias operacionales, competencias potenciales, reclutamiento, perfiles et prerrequisitos, CV (Curriculum Viate).

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## INTRODUCTION

The Swedish Defence offers variation in tasks and styles of missions, consequently administrative phases in the staffing procedures. The Brussels and Swedish Governments who have overriding control express requirements for troop performance for each Mission. i In each case of a mission that is the starting point for competence modelling which results in descriptions of requirements for individual competences. . These expressions of individual competences are then translated to formal survey questions for the personnel data base. This procedure has to be performed differently for each Mission, supported by more than one piece of computer software. Sweden is making this procedure a rule for modern net-work defence operations and it creates not only new troop lists for each Mission but also a completely new more flexible defence organization.

The starting point of the actual project was a request from the Swedish Military Headquarters to Ekelöw InfoSecurity Ltd for a language and taxonomy for the identification of relevant competences in the recruitment of personnel for international Missions. This was part of an important organizational change connected to the new defence policy (Jean Michel, philosophy as an alternative). The main focus shifted from monitoring and defending of the borders to (was no more to survey and defend the frontier of the country. It became) peace-keeping and peace-making under the United Nations in different parts of the world.

The spectrum of possible operations and the required personnel qualifications also had to change. Aspects of diplomacy and qualified international cooperation had to be incorporated at all organizational levels including all soldiers and sailors as a way of strengthening military fight. This change led us to focus on the individuals' generic characteristics like learning, co-operation, decision making and other generic cognitive properties. It also helped us to move away from the former paradigm in which the language of competence was about direct abilities. The interest in cognitive abilities would probably have developed in this direction in any case, but the political and Philosophical changes accelerated the changes in the recruitment's policy and methodology.

The initial request from the military HQ was expressed in engineering or natural science form in the belief that the concept of competence could be a generally valid ontological analysis. We had to modify a recognized but an obsolete conceptual framework for personnel management based on the HR-XML(2007).<sup>1</sup>

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1. The project was presented at the Projectics conference organised by the ESTIA/Graphos. ERIMA 07 (Agrell 2007).

This change was presented and explained to the client (Agrell 2006) that such an analysis could not be done without using a subjective framework, or world view. To that end we used Miller's (1978) theory of "Living systems" the framing reference as a subjective framework without it being the one and only true view of the problem. It had to be made sense of in other ways.

To use explicit references in planning and assessment may present specific advantages, a way of controlling the entirety of overviews. It helps co-operation and participation across complex bureaucracies. It was, and still is, a way of organizing a set priorities so that elimination of options become visible. These are ways of making sense and by *making sense* we do not mean that the only possibilities are a description being true, probable or false. We think, in terms of literary science, different ways of *making sense* define different *genres*. (Agrell & Nilsson 2003) This inspiration from Humanities' came in a timely way. Many of us had enough experience to realise that these models make very simplistic sense of models in management.

## Immediate feed-back

The Mission in the first project was to include descriptions of talents for co-operation and flexibility in *learning organizations*. This was easily done within the framework of a recently developed new flexible routine for staffing. It used the search engine of the computer support software that could search free text. These improvements were introduced but the development of methods had to continue by incorporating a comprehensive design rule for the design process in several phases with fine levels of granularity for concrete and specific personnel requirement specifications.

The final report of the the project was useful for the personnel managers present. New requirement specifications were written, but at the same time it also became clear that those specifications had to be expressed differently for different stakeholders in the complex recruitment and staffing process.

The study was included as a part of the HQ current developments of a new defence oriented network and it was mentioned in most internal presentations of the new personnel policy. It was accepted as far as it elaborated competence descriptions in psychological and sociological dimensions. It also gave an appreciation test that the computerized staffing routines could accommodate an enlarged spectrum of competence requirements.

The conceptual developments were incorporated as a form of language within which to fit the new *enterprise architecture* (Johnson & Ekstedt 2007) of the Swedish Defence although it also became clear that international negotiations were to follow to help unify formats for the descriptions of personnel. The latter was not easy, as assumptions will have to be made since the basic ideas of cooperation and individual's initiatives do differ in different countries.

Discussions were initiated as to how to use the verified staffing procedure in new contexts for physical resource logistics and in different civilian contexts. The continued project discussions took two pathways. The original staffing interest was not restricted to the organization and expression of items

in the personnel data base, but also to interest in the diversified use of the software grew into a project of its own with big potential. This Moisdon *et al.* (1997) discuss other examples of how the foci and sense may change during a process of learning and development.

However, we will continue with the personnel management theme used for sketching a design rule for staffing. It was presented at the Projectics conference in ESTIA, Bidart, France (2007), in order to obtain feedback before presenting the proposal to the clients.

## Relevant theories

Senge's (1994) concept of the learning organization is very relevant for the project. Although he acknowledges earlier thinkers and authors, we believe that he should be considered as the inventor and promoter of the concept of *learning organization*. Personal mastery, mental models and systems thinking are the keys to synergetic cooperation (see page. 48).

Per Albinsson (1998) has followed Senge and has refined the kinds of leadership as it is not sufficient simply to recognize the authoritarian, the democratic and the laissez-faire styles,. He considers not only the styles but also the ways of classifying leadership Hansson (2004), is much more precise and specific about the need for different kinds of organization requiring different kinds of individual competencies. Fromm (1945) states that mismatch leads to real unhealthy stress, escapism and strange politics.

Larrasquet (2004) and de la Garanderie (2006) expand on the willingness to *make sense* of learning as a dominating prerequisite for competence. Several other authors such as Albert (2005) and Saumonneau (2006) were acknowledged in Agrell (2006) for their contribution to specifications of competence and learning modes for modern learning organizations. Saumonneau for instance proposes three fundamental aspects of competences: technical (i.e. related to the technical aspects of the job and its environment), behavioural (i.e., abilities related mainly to relationship skills and abilities related to cooperative and group work, etc.) and meta-cognitive (i.e. competences related to the ability to conceptualize, model and understand situations and problems using complex approaches and complex epistemologies: systemic approaches, life-cycle-based approaches, dialogues (for instance trade off discussions), paradoxical approaches, etc.). The importance of situations makes her propose "best ways" for learning and developing competences, with reference to their nature and to the kind of situations faced.

Lichtenberger (2003), like Le Boterf (2005) and Zarifian (2002) offer the concept of management **by** competence, which is not, as most others define as, competence **for** management,. It is the idea that the management of persons must focus on skills and competences they possess or they are able to develop, learn and improve. This offers strength and variety, and at the same time a rich perspective on the concept of competence, even in its epistemological dimensions.



In conclusion of such a survey, it is clear that competence not only transparent but is also created by the situation. In a sense it is only in the situation and in the application that the real competence is revealed. Competence is the ability to self-create and in doing so creates itself. With this thesis as a general guidance, the following suggestions are offered to the clients in the defence establishments.

## SUGGESTIONS

The above mentioned theories give us a conceptual language while the personnel departments need something more practical and specific, related to solution of the problems they face. We propose the following suggestions for the benefit of our actual client, Swedish Defence HQ and similar complex dynamic network organizations.

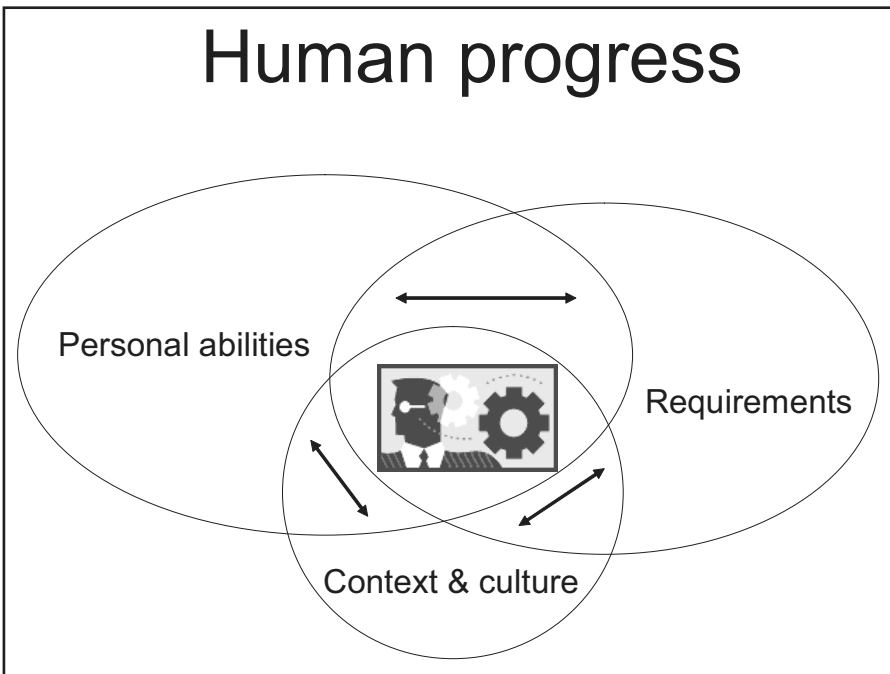
- The traditional ways of describing competences is by abilities to perform tasks individually and directly. The modern complementary concepts have generic properties as well. We may describe competence and competence requirements at different levels. And these levels of abstraction are also a salient reality and they represent differences in ways to act, e.g. to recruit and staff. Theory shows that a *learning organization* needs competence from levels other than Weberian or Taylorish types. As Hanson (2004) informs us, unless you can make competence the parameter in control (Lichtenberger 2003) mismatches can have a detrimental effect. In such a case, the organization would probably be changed or changing and the mismatch would disappear. Experience from a series of past missions and exercises have shown that such mismatches create stress, accidents and inefficiency. For example, Swedish staff being used to independence in mission oriented tactics do not adapt automatically or easily to the American form regulated culture. Therefore, individual recruitment cannot be performed well unless the cultures of the hosting nations are also taken into account from the beginning.
- To minimize risks, staffing for international missions should also be undertaken with a direct concern for the kind of organization the troops shall be able to develop by their own group dynamics, considering the organization not as a static concept but as a dynamic process with emergence and self-organization dynamics i.e. in the recruitment and staffing procedures managers have got to be locally experienced about competence development, so they can judge, arbitrate and implement in the context of recent day to day experiences. Recruitment- and staffing

officers must also learn about possible future and intended organizations' focussed learning-orientation!

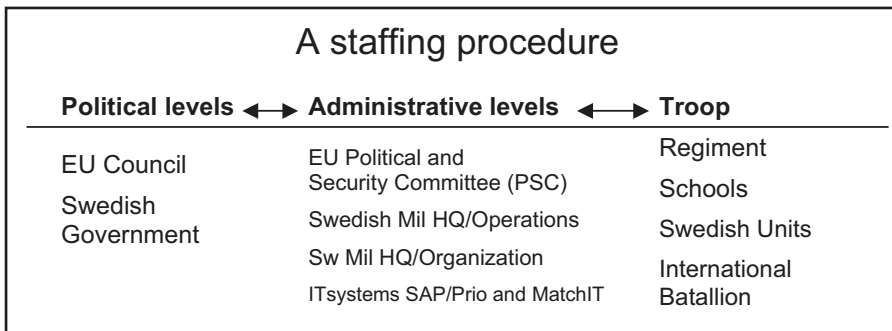
- Following Lichtenberger (2003) we should shape the organizational styles of troops' by staffing and training; definitely not traditional instruction in elements of operations and techniques. Moods of learning and cooperation, and other motors of development, could be shaped in this way. However, short time lags and differing partners in international co-operation force one to face diversity and to make compromises. On the one hand Sweden wants to create *learning organizations* including defence. On the other hand there is severe complication that not much time is offered for learning when Brussels call for action. What makes situation still more complex is that many partner countries would organize under classical top down paradigms i.e. more hierarchical and Cartesian styles. In this context, a balance has got to be achieved, by way of discussions and negotiations, between learning and operational abilities. The result of such processes must influence the staffing! That is why the question of the balance between operational efficiency (short term exploitation) and learning (long term improvement) must be managed as an urgent and key issue with reference to the actual culturally heterogeneous milieu.
- Design needs to be based upon views of the intended future activities. That is axiomatic in occidental thinking is called job analysis. Some recent references are Howick et al (2006) and Meschi (2006). However they do not elaborate possible time tables for this analysis. In each case a trade-off has got to be struck between the needs to perform defined tasks immediately and to adapt to a vaguely predicted future of unanticipated new situations. The outcome of this balance as well as the set of recruited competences will have to depend on time factor which is not the same as in traditional approaches. We shall have time issues depending on delays in the proper organization of own cultural turbulence and upon requirements coming from a future more unknown turbulence. The latter issue may be generally seen as another key-question for management of complex situations.
- Larrasquet (2004) we may deduce a precise requirement: "Those people should be recruited who have, or may be able acquire, relevant attitudes to learning in the actual environment and in the time-space available." Staffing should follow the same rule but should start from the abilities of those initially recruited. In this staffing however

each person must be understood both as a person in a process of her own development and as a person able to produce, e.g. to innovate and to participate, in the creation of a future troop. Both aspects must be understood together as a dialogue as two views of the same progressive transformation. We would then have a kind of dyad in each individual case: the person and her predicted dynamic context. By this context has to be understood the more or less homogenous culture of the troops with collaborating people and equipment like computers, networks. Virtual environments and the relationships between all these elements considering this totality from a kind of extended ethnology perspective. For a continued methods development and research the existing ethno-methodological approaches may be applied. This systemic way of thinking should not come as a surprise to any professional in the Human Resource field. Staffing is complex and it serves a complex process of design and development at several levels.

- The requirement specifications for the design rule for staffing must be written in many versions since the staffing processes pass through different, and differing, milieus. Post-modern linguistics (for example, Foucault 1966) be-



comes real, even obligatory. Politicians, administrative personnel and troops speak differently about competence. Some form of translation in requirement specifications need to be performed between levels and organisations in the staffing process, also between the troops' and individuals' required abilities. Here again we should recognize the contributions of Foucault (1966). The translation will not be direct one to one nor will it be a successive specification. The different actors' perspectives will be very different. This part of a design rule for staffing will not be a precise sequence of translations; rather it will be pragmatic, very much decided bottom up in the respective managing organizations.



These suggestions will be part of a handbook for staffing. They were requested as a part of a design rule for shaping international interventions by an existing network organization.

Nevertheless, we also address a scientific community by an effort to specify the theoretical backings of a real case, thus trying a mutually rewarding dialogue between theory and practice. We strengthen some theories still under debate and we define issues which ought to be deepened by further research. Some interest in this report may also come, as with all empirics, from a report of the possible. This will then help other designers of staffing methods to find their relevant distinctions, correlations and procedures.

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