

## **Work Analysis: An Effectiveness Tool**

### **SEEKING QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY**

Many organizations overlook an important technique in achieving the goal of continuing improvement.

Work Analysis is the examination of the way work is done. Work Analysis focuses on shortening work periods, removing redundant or low value steps, and simplifying interfaces between groups or individuals involved in the work process.

This process of changing what we do, how we do it, and the organization's structure to support it, is sometimes called "re-engineering".

### **HOW DOES WORK ANALYSIS HELP MEET PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY GOALS?**

Work Analysis examines major work processes to identify results required, the documents, activities and persons involved, and the sequence of activity.

While one must not over use this technique (i.e. to get into so much detail that the trees are lost in the forest), it has proven time and again to us to be a critical analytical tool in the continual pursuit of improved organization quality and productivity.

### **AN EXAMPLE DEMONSTRATES CRITICAL FEATURES IN ANALYZING WORK**

A simple analysis performed on a licensing process used within a government department gave significant results:

- Flagged that there was an inappropriate involvement of one engineer who was seeing an application 'for information purposes' where the same result would have been reached by a single review at a later date;
- Identified priority and potential legal issues; and,
- Identified possible unnecessary Field reviews.

The results of the analysis were:

- Several weeks were dropped off the time of processing applications; and,
- A significant portion of the engineer's time was also saved.

All with the investment of only a few hours of analytical time to do the work analysis!

### **HOW DO WE PERFORM WORK ANALYSIS?**

Work Analysis follows a systems approach:

- Identify the work process of concern.
- Select and train a team to conduct the analysis.
- Identify the main results required.
- Identify the participants in the work process, and list them by name and position in the vertical columns of the Work Analysis chart.
- Track the work process, often using document trails or information flows, from the first person to each and every other person, recording the activity conducted.
- Subsequent to having the overall work process identified, add to the work analysis for each activity the documents or information added or created, and results produced.
- The work analysis form is then used to assess such beneficial actions as:
  - whether activities and functions could be effectively combined
  - how interfaces might be simplified
  - how documents might be combined
  - where critical delays or possible quality problems might arise
  - where skills may be needed.

### **ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**

In addition, the process of work analysis is particularly useful in assessing your organization and job accountabilities. As you make decisions to effect work improvements, you will be able to reassign accountabilities to better accommodate effective work flows and to gain better utilization of your human and other resources.

This technique also aids in the analysis and documentation of procedures. Even if the work process does not change, a new understanding of it will be gained by the participants, bringing the procedures in use into focus, and providing an opportunity for continuing improvement.

And, because your staff have done the analysis, they are trained for future analysis, and are committed to the opportunities for change that have been identified.