



## Coast Guard Flag Voice 51

### THE SKILL ARCHITECTURE AND MANAGEMENT STUDY (SAMS)

#### -- GETTING A BETTER HANDLE ON WORKFORCE SKILLS --

To meet the future needs of a less populous, ever-increasingly technically sophisticated Coast Guard, we especially must develop the capability to match workforce skills with individual, unit, and organizational needs.

The Coast Guard invests a substantial amount of its limited resources in developing its workforce. This extensive, continuous people development effort requires us to develop, maintain, and track individually tailored, very specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for every workforce member. Current business practices leave us far short of attaining this goal, resulting in significant process and performance deficiencies:

1. Commanding officers are not confident reporting personnel will have the skills required to meet their unit's needs and moreover do not think this situation will improve in the future.
2. Individuals, units, and programs have difficulty managing skill development.
3. No formal or standard process exists for force managers to develop and amend Performance-Based Qualifications.
4. It's unclear how PeopleSoft, the commercial software on which our Human Resources (HR) management system is based (Flag Voice # 45), will assist the Coast Guard in skill management.
5. Current assignment policies and procedures do not incorporate the necessary information to fully consider skills when placing people in jobs.
6. Job requirements across pay grades and certain ratings overlap significantly.

To run our HR system in the future, we must take a new, global look at our people's and units' needs. Staffing our units based solely on pay grade, rate, and assignment preference is not serving us well -- we must develop, track, and use each individual's skills and abilities in new ways by rating, mission, platform, etc., in our HR processes.

Currently, tying qualifications or specific skills to a billet wastes intellectual capital as well as resources. As I briefed to the Fall 1998 Flag/SES Conference, a specific billet is not the most advantageous way to specify a skill requirement (demand). For example, a billet may specify an EM2 requiring special expertise in gas turbine systems. Since those skills are in short supply, we generally have to train the EM on the way to or once in the billet, which is expensive both in cost and time away from the unit. If the EM2 advances to EM1 a year later, he or she normally is reassigned or stays at the same unit but moves to an EM1 billet. Either way the member now occupies another billet and the EM2 billet must be filled,

requiring us to train another member in gas turbine systems. Meanwhile, the EM1 no longer uses the skill and likely won't for the rest of his or her career.

Several completed studies, including the Enlisted Career Development Plan, Junior Enlisted Management Study, Joint Ratings Review, and Enlisted Advancement Study Team, have identified the need to redesign the qualifications process and improve the overall management and utilization of our workforce's skills. In addition, the recent Buoy Tender Structure Study (BTSS) (Flag Voice #36) described the need to look at new, innovative ways to staff our units and presented a sample solution describing a possibly three-tiered workforce (apprentice, technician, master technician).

Current HR strategic planning is focusing on building strategic capabilities for the future. Our strategy is not how to get 40,000 people with the right skills but rather how to create and maintain the Coast Guard's capability to acquire and then maintain any number of people with whatever skills they need at some point in the future.

One of the keys to building these capabilities is first establishing partnerships and strategies with field and program managers to describe current and future needs for skills and experience, and then flexibly and responsively delivering the right people to the right place at the right time to enable unit readiness. In essence, we must:

- a. Develop a better way to determine personnel requirements (demand) and translate them into unit requirements for knowledge, skills, and experience, e.g., aggregate unit skills vs. billets and positions, and then,
- b. Design a flexible HR system enabling the CG to guarantee the flow of appropriate people and skill sets to anticipate and meet unit requirements.

To this end, we are initiating the Skill Architecture and Management Study (SAMS), whose goal is to establish new procedures and processes to optimize the skills developed within Team Coast Guard and provide readily available, accurate information for informed decisions at all levels. Using Human Performance Technology, the study group, consisting of representatives from various Human Resources (G-W) elements plus members from the MCPO-CG, S, M, and O staffs, will determine the optimal (best) methods, processes, and procedures for specifying requirements and developing, tracking, and employing skills throughout the Coast Guard. The Study then will compare this optimal state to our current practices, identify the root causes of gaps between the two, and recommend interventions with an implementation plan to close them.

The Team plans to report out in early spring of 2000.

Regards, FL Ames

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**This page is maintained by [HR Webmaster \(CG-1A\)](#)**