



Phase 3

Competency Indicator

Ideas for Self-development

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Increasing Organisational Awareness

- ✓ Keep up a regular reading list. Start to include a follow of a general business and/or sector publication – whether an digital feed, a news site or a good quality business paper. Do this at least monthly and aim for weekly.
- ✓ Make sure you understand your organisation's KPI's. Find out what they are and understand what makes up those numbers. Follow how those figures are trending and what your directors are saying about it.
- ✓ Seek opportunity to present your HR systems work. Push yourself out of a comfort zone to stand up and talk about HR technology and its contribution to the business at a more senior level. Ask to share a space like this with your boss.
- ✓ Focus your mind on the 'So what?' question of technology. Start any new phase of development with a clear expression of the business or team benefit.
- ✓ Read a few case studies to understand how those are compiled. Try writing your own future case study. Where will you take your technology and where will this take the organisation? How would that be written up? Or do this for real with your provider(s)!
- ✓ Volunteer to work on a project that is not core to your role. This could be a cross-functional working group about systems projects or something that does not relate to technology directly at all. It could be a one-off event or a steering group.

Enhancing Systems Capabilities

- ✓ Use the opportunity of visiting consultants to shadow technical work. Sit with consultants and understand how development and configuration is carried out. They will be glad of your interest!
- ✓ Give yourself research time. There is tons of material available to improve technical knowledge with a Google! Try YouTube videos, blogs or freely released user guides.
- ✓ Improving your system-specific skillset is one area which you can improve on with the classic training course. Make sure that the agenda you sign up for is one created tailored to your need.
- ✓ Try to visualise the system you are working on without it's 'UX' (user experience). Imagine if the front-end were changed or were stripped away. What would you see?
- ✓ Compare two or more different systems. Note the pro's and con's of each. Form a view about which is more suitable in which context. Quiz a professional who has worked with another you've not yet tried.
- ✓ Just as the person wishing to enhance organisational awareness should think about 'So what?', you need to think about 'How?'

- ✓ Build. A test or sandbox environment is really key to you. Replicate build done already by someone else. Play with a development environment and DIY. Please take care with live!

Working on People Skills

- ✓ Train some users. Look for opportunity to deliver personally HR systems training material in different formats – write your in-house user guides, record videos or podcasts and sit down with end-user colleagues to show how to use the system.
- ✓ Attend a user group. This is a great environment in which technically-minded people can network within a relative comfort zone and get yourself out there.
- ✓ A trend currently emerging is that of story-telling to increase adoption of technology. Read about this and see if you can learn the art. Could that work for you?
- ✓ Develop what is known as ‘active listening’ techniques. Pay attention to questions asked of you and aim to understand if you are effectively conveying your messages and information.
- ✓ Even if it turns you cold, try one of the online psychology and professional personality tests and look at who you are as a person yourself. Myers-Briggs is a tried and trusted source of a typology.
- ✓ Make an effort to use different formats to communicate. If you tend to rely on email or IM, then go speak to people instead. Use visual formats, such as Slidedecks and infographics but also narrative, written guide or report-format text.
- ✓ Be brave enough to seek feedback. Your line manager is an obvious place to start. If you took up the idea of doing some training then don’t fight shy of the feedback survey, which can be tempting!

Following Better Method

Project management method is important to have a basic grasp of. Learn at least one methodology in a formal way. Then:

Critique the method(s) you know about. Read about the difference between formal and agile approaches and some of the PM jargon. Assess the pro’s and con’s and decide what you prefer.

Branch out with your method. Use your experience to create your own self-styled method to manage a project.

As an HR professional, adopt a project mind-set. Define a project as any work you have to do that aims to achieve a change between a given start and end point. What other work in the HR team that relates less directly to systems is a project?

Practise ‘black hat thinking’ (read about De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats). This is about being the one to see the detail and therefore to spot the flaws in the plan or the holes in the process.

Look at the personal ways in which you manage your working day with consistency and with discipline. Take a tough look at your track record in keeping up progress with a goal. Try using tracking tools over time with your personal routines and objectives. Identify consistent behaviour as a goal for you in itself.

Capture and use all of the information that passes through the systems you are working with. Are there any data fields which are getting lost? Is your organisation able to access that information as part of a continuous learning process? For example, user interactions is one area you could look at

Improved Self-management

- ✓ First understand that few of us would not benefit from better self-management. If you have identified this as a need then your courage in so doing is already a credit to you! What you need to do is very individual, but here are some clues:
- ✓ Diaries and journaling can be informative and stress-relieving. A current trend is to keep a bullet-journal which you might enjoy if you have a sense of good order and systematic approach.
- ✓ Look at your relationship with the self-help shelf! If it's too close, try letting a few popular releases pass you by; if the reverse is true try taking one seriously and looking at the readership figures. Why?
- ✓ Understand your value-set. There are tools available to help you identify your values and to prioritise those, which can help you keep a focus. For example, try the VIA Institute Character Strengths survey.
- ✓ If time management is an issue then go back to basics: classic time management tips still apply today so take old-school education here and read some tips. All you need to do is to translate that into your preferred apps of the day.
- ✓ Do not underestimate the effect of stress in your life and take practical measures to avoid and manage your personal stress triggers. Notice good stress too and how your daily patterns can best enable you to enjoy it.
- ✓ Decide what you think about the difference between work-life balance and work-life integration. Are you more comfortable with a clear divide between work and home? Or do you most enjoy a sense of being one person? To what extent do you put that belief into practice?
- ✓ Devise your own career USP. Be able to say in one or two lines and clearly what it is that you do as a professional in your own special way and the value that you bring to the HR technology industry.

Knowing More

Knowledge, happily, is freely available with open-source materials online. Turn this availability into action by scheduling on a regular basis your learning and reading time.

Network. Attend user groups or set up a group yourself. Join online forums too, for example the customer communities available. Be active on LinkedIn which

remains the most relevant network when it comes to your professional life in HR technology.

Identify a short list of industry influencers you will follow on a regular basis and read their stuff. A handful whose content you tend to like is more manageable to stick to than a Twitter feed of hundreds. In this specialism there is no ultimate guru! Pick a few whose views and style you find appealing.

Ask for opportunities to shadow people at work who know more than you. This could be a visiting consultant, a more experienced team member or someone working in another department such as IT or finance. If you work independently do not be afraid to ask a mentor.

- ✓ Operate a share-and-share-alike approach to knowledge share amongst the more advanced professional networks. Avoid the mindset that 'knowledge is power' and remember that your knowledge is not diluted by sharing it. You go first.
- ✓ Improving knowledge again is catered for by the classic training course. Make sure that the agenda you sign up for is one created tailored to your need.

Doing More

- ✓ Ask for involvement. First work out what is happening at work that you could benefit from involvement in and who is responsible for allowing that. Be ready to make your business case for so doing.
- ✓ Try systems work out in a sandbox, test or development space. Replicate project build work done.
- ✓ If you are a leader or manager, sit in the driving seat of technology and have a go. Make sure that your own balance of skill includes an active awareness of the user experiences and processes. See how it feels.
- ✓ You may need or wish to investigate other roles if there are not adequate opportunities ready for you and you have tried asking for those that there are. You do not need to feel disloyal in so doing. Start by enquiring about the internal role progression that are possible.
- ✓ Another way to achieve involvement is to share involvement: with your boss or by shadowing or by working on a mission that is not core to your usual work. Volunteering to support or pitch in is an offer rarely rejected!
- ✓ Here is a tough one. Are you lazy? If your knowledge exceeds your application then it's a plausible explanation. Perhaps you know the answer and a simple 'fessing up will move you forwards. If you don't then ask your family rather than your colleagues for a straight answer. Carry out the ideas aimed to identify squarely your values, USP and motivations.

Feeling Better

- ✓ Assess the evidence. Apply the phrase 'data-driven' to your own self-critique. How well do you really do? What are your results? What proportion of your inbox comment really does suggest your work is not good enough?
- ✓ Work with a mentor. Mentoring is a great way to build your confidence, as well as other areas of your skill-set such as your organisational awareness, your

people skills and your industry-specific knowledge. Some organisations have mentor schemes in-house and there are professional mentor networks. But do not be afraid to ask someone you admire directly if they would act as your mentor. Your line manager is not in the right role for this.

- ✓ Plan celebratory events for your project-work. When systems go-live or milestones are achieved, promote it! Communicate the message internally, post it on social media, or have a launch day. Enjoy it and enjoy some positive feedback.
- ✓ Often feeling better about the work that you do relates to practice and repetition. See the ideas about greater involvement in new things and practising, repeating and testing and having a go at systems development work, or about sitting in the driving seat of technology.
- ✓ Repeat this self-assessment against the HR technology skill-set on a regular basis. We suggest once every 3-6 months is a sensible time-frame over which to be able to plot development activity and see some measurable result.
- ✓ Identify your role comfort zone. Map out a boundary that is just slightly wider and push yourself out there. For example, if you are a consultant is there a type of work you shy away from and could you take that on?
- ✓ Notice the difference between feedback that gives you new information and reassurance-seeking. Do seek feedback if you need to ask new questions or track progress or ask a newly important audience. Do not if you're covering all ground.
- ✓ Create your own mental Board of Directors. If you were to appoint a personal leadership team, who do you know who would be your chief chairperson, managing director, operational and strategic advisors? Your finance lead? Your marketer? What can you learn from their styles?