

Job Evaluation – outdated bureaucracy or modern HR support mechanism?

Job evaluation has long been in operation in the UK as a tool to determine the relative worth of jobs. It is, in effect, a job sizing tool. For example using a points-based scheme a job worth 400 points is a bigger job than one with 200 points and should therefore, in practice, command a higher salary. Also when evaluated jobs are slotted into a single pay structure, work of equal value linked to equal pay can be delivered.

Predominantly used for many years used by the public sector, it has helped implemented the NHS Agenda for Change, Single Status in the public sector, a framework agreement in higher education and workforce remodelling in schools.

However, in recent years the apparent underlining of job evaluation as an important tool for defending equal pay claims (one of the top tribunal claims according to recent statistics) is very evident. There is even now a move to use this tool in the private sector.

Job evaluation is very versatile and can be used for:

- Determining pay and grading structures
- A fair and equal pay system
- Comparing rates against the external market
- Changes in the job content
- Clarifying career paths and succession planning
- Harmonisation of pay and conditions with one pay spine
- Technological and organisational change

The traditional uses for creating pay structures and providing an equal pay system are further enhanced by its ability to support the harmonisation of terms and conditions and technological and organisational change. In the modern day with TUPE transfers taking place by the thousand every year, job evaluation is emerging as a highly useful management tool.

Changes in job content can cause a great deal of consternation amongst employees particularly if they feel they are not benefitting from the change, including financially. Therefore a way forward is to use job evaluation to size the role and allocate an appropriate salary accordingly.

Decent external pay data linked to the internal pay structure will ensure that companies remain competitive in the jobs market place. Companies can decide whether to remain on the same level as their competitors or pay above market rates to win the war for talent.

Also in the talent management war, clarifying career paths and supporting important succession planning is really quite key so its use in this area is only to be applauded.

There is a trend now to link job evaluation to recruitment and performance management processes so firmly embedding its use within established HR practices.

There are various types of job evaluation schemes. Non-analytical schemes include job pairing and job ranking. Although these can be quick and easy processes, a great deal of subjectivity and human judgement comes into play, which can possibly be challenged by employees and ultimately the tribunal courts.

An analytical scheme such as a points-based scheme takes much longer to use, but provides an objective assessment for a role and is defensible in the tribunal court. Such named schemes include FEJE, GLEA, GLPC, Hay, HERA, JEGS, NJC. Factors such as HR and financial responsibility, knowledge, mental skills, physical skills, initiative and independence can all be included. There may be around 5-8 levels contained within a scheme with weightings allocated accordingly. This type of scheme gives the impression of being very scientific, which it can not in practice, be. However, the process can provide an objective basis to work from.

Companies, often working with a consultant, can even design their own job evaluation, which suit their specific needs.

Companies must consider a host of issues when choosing or designing a scheme including deciding which factors to use; the values of any weightings to apply; which jobs to assess; and how evidence about these roles will be gathered. They also have to establish how the project will be managed and to what extent they will involve staff, managers and consultants in the process.

Job evaluation can indeed be very bureaucratic and heavily paper-based. However, in recent years computer-based schemes have been developed to make the process easier and "greener".

In conclusion, it seems that job evaluation is continuing to firmly establish itself as a HR support mechanism relevant in the modern world although can be bureaucratic depending on the system used. With the private sector now realising its value, the role of job evaluation can only strengthen its relevance in the future.

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