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HR Vocabulary: Are We Speaking the Same Language?

COLUMBIA, MD (December 28, 2005) - The HR industry is committed to improving the workforce, but without a clear understanding of the vocabulary to support its efforts, can it improve? The Human Capital Management 2005 study, released this week by Avilar Technologies, Inc., revealed that although most HR professionals considered themselves very to extremely familiar with several industry terms, few correctly placed HR activities into the right categories.

“There are so many terms that are utilized with respect to employee performance practices, it is easy to see how people might get confused,” said Lauren Havighurst, a Competency Management Solutions Practice Manager at Avilar who works directly with clients to deliver training and competency management solutions.

Terms like Talent Management, Competency Management, Employee Performance Management (EPM), Human Capital Management and Performance Management were developed by HR professionals and consultants to entice executives into paying more attention to improving employee performance. Instead, the study revealed that management buy-in was one of the greatest obstacles in rolling out EPM improvement programs. Without management buy-in there is no budget to fund these programs. When asked for the top challenges faced in competency management, one HR professional wrote, “6 words: Buy in. Buy in. Buy in!”

In October 2004, the Hay Group surveyed more than 400 senior HR practitioners in the public and private sector to find out what Talent Management meant in their organizations. Their research showed no clear definition. Yet in the study conducted by Avilar, 58 percent of respondents listed that “the need to evaluate talent” was the most critical need for their organization’s Competency Management system. All respondents listed critical Competency Management needs. Somewhere between an organization’s need to evaluate talent and a Competency Management program that would fulfill this need, management buy-in is lost and so is employee improvement.

Havighurst observed, “The problem is that management does not make career development a priority or they believe they do not need help in that area even though their employees probably would not agree.”

According to the Avilar study, although every professional surveyed listed critical employee improvement needs, only 26 percent are currently utilizing Competency Management software. This leaves most companies relying on paper-based systems which require calculating reports by hand. Even more surprising, 76 percent are not planning on purchasing EPM software, which encompasses all of the critical needs areas identified by respondents.

The strategic team at Avilar knew management buy-in and an undervalued product were obstacles before the release of empirical data, so two years ago they developed the “Blueprint Workshop.” At this two-day workshop, Avilar’s Competency Management Consultants help participants outline strategies aligned with organizational goals. “In two days we change a long-term, overwhelming process into achievable solutions the whole organization can get behind,” says CEO John Skowlund.

“In today’s economy, mergers, decentralization and technological advances are all very common and make it difficult for organizations to make a name for themselves in the marketplace. Therefore, the main differentiator is the quality of employees,” Havighurst said. “If organizations utilize a Competency Management system to evaluate talent, they will be able to identify the level and type of talent they currently possess and will help them to identify competency areas in which they are lacking. Organizations need to ensure that they have intelligent, dedicated, and hard-working employees in order to achieve the strategic goals they have set for themselves.”

About Avilar Technologies

Avilar Technologies, The Competency Company™, provides web-based competency management and learning solutions for the corporate, government and academic sectors. With its Know, Grow, Go solution, Avilar offers a competency-based approach to workforce development. Formed in 1997, Avilar was a pioneer in the e-Learning marketplace. The flagship WebMentor® product line, originally introduced in 1998, includes a complete suite of affordable, easy-to-use, and full-featured competency development and management tools. Avilar is the recipient of the Excellence in E-Learning for Customer Satisfaction award from Brandon Hall and E-Learning Magazine, and was cited by Training Magazine as a top “Price-to-Value” provider.