

1. Have you reviewed the formal job documentation?

- Take a closer look at your job description. Mark the key objectives and priorities within it.
- Review the periodic performance evaluation forms. These set out precisely the behaviors that will be rewarded and, by implication, show those that will be punished.
- Find out what training is normally required for the role. Ensure that you attend appropriate training so that you know as much as possible about what your job entails.
- Look at incentive schemes to understand the behaviors that these reward.

2. Do you grasp the organization's strategy and culture?

Your job is ultimately connected to the strategy of the organizational unit you work for. This strategy is often expressed either in a mission statement or corporate vision. Your tasks should help the organization reach its mission (if it does not, you have to ask yourself how established the job is!). Make sure you understand and perform well the tasks that contribute to the strategy.

Likewise, every organization has its own culture – comprised of its attested values, rights and wrongs, and things that it considers to be a part of its identity. If you are new to an organization, talk through with established, respected members of staff to discover these values.

It is important that you understand this culture. Make sure that your actions reinforce the company's culture, or at least do not contradict it. Try to see yourself through the lens of culture, and ask yourself whether the company would value your actions.

Check that your priorities are in line with this mission statement and the company culture.

3. Have you found out who the top achievers are, and understood why they are successful?

Inside or outside the organization, there may be people in a similar role to you who are seen as highly successful. Find out how they work, and what they do in order to generate this success. Observe what they do, and learn from them. Understand what skills make them successful, and acquire those skills.

4. Do you already know if you have the right people and resources to do the job?

The next step is to check that you have the staff support, resources and training needed to do an excellent job. If you do not, you need to start acquiring them.

5. Have you confirmed the priorities with your boss?

By this stage, you should have a thorough understanding of what your job entails, and what your key objectives are. You should also have a good idea of the resources that you need, and any additional training you may need to do the best you can.

There is no better time than now to talk the job through with your boss, and confirm that you share an understanding of what constitutes good performance in the role.

It is also worthwhile to talk through potential or actual inconsistencies, and agreeing how these should be managed.

6. Time to take action.

You should now know what you have to do to excel in your job. This means that you should have a good understanding of the most important things that you have to do, and also the least important.

Remember to be conscious of the way you manage teamwork: Good teamwork often entails helping other people out with jobs that do not necessarily benefit you. However, do not let people take advantage of you: Be keen and assertive in explaining that you have your own work to do.

Where you can drop the less-important tasks, do so. Where you can de-prioritize them, do so.

Where you need more resource or training to do your job, negotiate for this.

If you cannot drop tasks, delegate them or negotiate longer time scales.

Take Home Points

Job analysis is a practical tool for:

- Understanding and agreeing how to achieve top performance in your job.
- Ensuring that you and your boss are in a complete agreement on the areas you should concentrate on when time gets tight; and the areas that can be de-emphasized during this time.
- Checking that you have the resources, training and staff required to do a good job.

By using the job analysis tool, you should develop a good understanding of how you can excel at your job and what your priorities consist of.

The tool is designed for managing stress and job overload by especially helping you decide which jobs you should drop.

Job analysis is one of the many practical action-oriented methods for reducing the stress of job overload. These tools help you resolve structural problems within jobs, work more effectively with the management, improve the way your teams function and become more assertive so that other people respect your right not to take on an excessive workload. These are all crucial techniques for bringing job stress under control, for improving the quality of your working life, and for achieving career success.