

Sample Interview/Survey Questions to Ask Business Leaders to Diagnose Strategic Priorities

Resource: CEB Corporate Leadership Council, Strategic Workforce Planning Playbook: Translating Business Strategy into Workforce Strategy. May 2013

1. Assess Current State

Goal: Learn the status of the business unit right now and the business leader's perception of the current state of the organization.

Sample Questions

What is the business unit's advantage (or disadvantage) compared to its competitors'?

How does this business unit contribute to the larger organization's competitive strengths?

What are our organization's major weaknesses?

What are the biggest challenges you face today as you lead the business?

What are the most significant recent or projected changes in the organization and/or its staff members?

2. Define Business Strategy

Goal: Understand the long-term plan as the business leader sees it, including how it can be achieved and measures of success.

Sample Questions

What are our key business goals for the next two to five years?

What major obstacles will the business unit face in reaching these objectives?

How will you know if the business unit is successful? What will you measure?

What are the key success factors that will make or break the business unit's success long term?

What are the critical issues that put the success factors at risk?

What will be the immediate and future impact on growth?

3. Identify Capabilities

Goal: Identify all the capabilities needed to support business strategy, then determine the relative importance of those capabilities by rating their impact on individual strategic objectives.

Sample Questions

What critical skills are needed to succeed in this business unit (behavioral capabilities and technical skills)?

What competencies will your staff need to support the organization's strategy?

Where do these skills/capabilities need to be located to have an impact?

How prevalent will these skills/capabilities need to be to support business strategy (i.e., do most employees need these skills, or only a few specialist)?

Tip: Keep the discussion focused on capabilities rather than specific roles or job groups to provide more flexibility when developing a workforce plan.

4. Gather Customer Feedback on Future Performance Requirements (Old vs New)

Goal: Collect customer input— not just leader or vendor input—to accurately identify critical capabilities for the future.

Sample Questions

Thinking five years into the future...

Which of the following attributes do you most want to see from our employees you interact with?

Consider the following themes and rank the top three in terms of how important they are to your business's relationship with UC:

Examples: Anticipating change, helping make better decisions with confidence

Which of the following propositions characterize the experience you desire from working with UC? Inspiring others

Example: Forward thinking