

APPENDIX GA36d

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Introduction

There are about 300 people working at Aether Innovations, which is a fast-growing IT startup. The organization is currently dealing with a number of people-related problems, such as slow business growth, high employee turnover, and unhappy customers, even though it did well at first. These problems show that the company's current human resource management (HRM) processes, especially performance appraisal and job design, are no longer in line with its strategic goals. In knowledge-driven sectors like technology, employees are a vital source of competitive advantage, and inefficient HR processes can directly impact innovation and organisational success (Torrington et al, 2020)

This report is about changing how Aether Innovations does performance management and job design. It starts by looking at how technology businesses usually do performance reviews and design jobs. Then, it suggests a modern performance appraisal approach that focuses on progress and uses Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and 360-degree feedback. Next, it uses the Job Characteristics Model and skills-based job design to provide job analysis, job descriptions, and job specifications for six important leadership positions. I will also talk about how combining performance appraisal and job design systems can assist and create a culture of innovation and high performance in the workplace. Lastly, there will be a brief mention regarding AI and how to stay relevant

Current Performance Appraisal Practices in Technology Companies

Automation, data analytics, and artificial intelligence are having a bigger and bigger effect on how technology companies evaluate their employees. People have long said that traditional performance assessments are too subjective, too time-consuming, and too infrequent, and they often don't show how current knowledge work is dynamic and collaborative (Rivera et al., 2021). As a result, a lot of businesses are using automated performance management systems to make things more efficient, consistent, and data-driven (Mohan and Vasumathi, 2024). These technologies let you keep track of outputs all the time, get feedback in real time, and do performance analytics on a wide scale, which should help managers make choices faster and help organisations grow.

But as more and more people rely on digitalised appraisal systems, there are big threats to behaviour and ethics. Automation may promise objectivity, but studies show that algorithmic systems can reproduce latent biases that are built into data and evaluation criteria (Huang & Shih, 2021). More significantly, how employees feel about appraisal systems is less about how accurate they are and more about how fair they are and how much they are appreciated by others. Research indicates that instant feedback mechanisms can improve participation when perceived as encouraging and developmental (Kim & Hong, 2017). On the other hand, performance technologies that are seen as intrusive, dehumanising, or surveillance-oriented lower trust, motivation, and psychological safety (Hong & Kim, 2019).

This conflict is especially important in flat technology companies, where working together, informal leadership, and sharing information are all important to getting things done. Appraisal systems that focus on competition or rankings might unintentionally lead to internal conflict, hoarding of knowledge, and defensive behaviour. In these kinds of places, accountability systems that are meant to boost efficiency may rather hurt the collaborative norms that are needed for creativity. For companies like Aether Innovations that are seeing stagnant growth and high turnover, poorly calibrated performance systems could make people less engaged instead of more engaged. As a result, automated assessment tools need to be carefully placed as tools for development that add to human judgement instead of replacing relationship evaluation.

Traditional Performance and Job Design Systems

There are also similar problems in the area of work design. Even though they work in fields that are driven by innovation, many tech companies still have very specialist and role-bound organisations. Employees are often given very specific tasks and little power to make decisions, which is based on efficiency models used in industrial

management. Even though these kinds of designs may help productivity in the short term, they frequently don't allow for the flexibility that digital companies that are growing quickly need. Rigid job boundaries restrict skill utilisation, slow cross-functional collaboration, and reduce employee ownership of outcomes.

The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) is a helpful way to think about these consequences. Roles devoid of autonomy, feedback, skill diversity, task identity, and task relevance correlate with diminished intrinsic motivation and inferior performance (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). In IT environments, this makes it harder to try new things and come up with creative solutions to problems. Employees who are stuck doing the same thing over and over again or who have to do a lot of different things are less likely to suggest ways to make things better or put in extra effort. This leads to disengagement and attrition over time, which is in line with Aether's present unstable workforce.

It is important to remember that performance rating methods and job design are not two different things. Specialised, low-autonomy roles with a lot of metrics make things more stressful but don't offer much in the way of growth. This setup makes people more likely to follow the rules than to come up with new ideas. Enriched positions, on the other hand, together with evaluation that focuses on feedback, help with learning, shared responsibility, and flexible performance. Evidence from modern technology companies indicates that sustained growth is less reliant on stringent oversight and more contingent upon the alignment of structural design with internal motivational factors (Raina et al., 2025)

When you look at how performance management and job design are done in the IT industry right now, you can see a structural problem, technologies that are meant to make things more efficient and scalable often get in the way of the collaborative and creative behaviours they are meant to encourage. For Aether Innovations, slow growth, high employee turnover, and unhappy customers are not just problems, they are signs that the company's people systems are not working well together. To solve these problems, we need to rethink everything such that appraisal systems encourage

growth and teamwork, and job structures provide people as much freedom, skill use, and purpose as possible.

Proposed Performance Appraisal Framework for Aether Innovations

Aether Innovations should have a performance review method that focuses on growth and includes both aligning goals and improving performance. A 360-degree feedback system works best in flat organisations where power is spread out across teams instead of being concentrated in a hierarchy (Bracken, Rose and Church, 2016). Supervisors may see how their actions affect cooperation, communication, and psychological safety by getting input from more than one source. When used mostly for growth and backed by systematic coaching, 360-degree feedback helps people become more aware of themselves and strengthens a culture of always learning (Bracken, Rose and Church, 2016)

But 360 feedback systems are not always fair. Interpersonal dynamics, relational bias, and unwillingness to provide constructive criticism can skew outcomes (Dalvi et al., 2023). If there aren't any safeguards, the method can favour popularity over performance. To lower these risks, Aether has to include rater training, anonymous collection, and expert guidance to make sure that input is taken in a positive way instead of a negative way. To keep trust and encourage honest involvement, it's important to make it clear that the system is for development and not for making compensation decisions.

Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) are a clear way to make sure that everyone's work is in line with the organization's goals. They work well with behavioural feedback. Breaking down company-level goals into team and personal objectives makes it clear how daily effort helps achieve strategic goals. For instance, a company's goal to make customers happier might lead to measurable goals for innovation, products, and services across all areas. Goal-setting theory posits that specified and difficult objectives enhance motivation when employees regard them as significant and achievable (Locke and Latham, 2002)

OKRs put learning and advancement ahead of compliance and reward maximisation, which is what typical Key Performance Indicators (KPI) systems do. People expect and see partial success as an experiment, not a failure. This lowers fear-driven conduct and encourages new ideas. This way of thinking is especially crucial in software companies where being flexible and making quick changes gives them an edge over their competitors. However, OKRs need to be used in a disciplined way. Too many metrics or a harsh interpretation can bring back the pressure dynamics they are meant to avoid.

Job Design and Leadership Role Architecture

The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) and skills-based design are used to restructure executive roles at Aether in order to bring back creativity and engagement. The approach puts more value on autonomy, cross-functional responsibility, and ownership of innovation than on tight management control. Each role is designed to add additional expertise, prioritise tasks, and give managers constant feedback, making sure they operate as integrators of strategy, people, and experimentation. The design focuses on leadership skills that can be used in different situations instead of strict task lists. This helps people adjust to a technology environment that is growing quickly.

The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) helps you rethink executive jobs so that they have more freedom, a wider range of skills, and more meaningful responsibilities. Each job is designed to make tasks more specialised to each role and provide ongoing feedback, so leaders act as integrators of strategy, people, and experiments instead than just controlling functions. This design supports adaptability in fast-scaling environments and reinforces learning as a leadership expectation (Edmondson, 2018)..

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is in charge of the company's long-term performance, strategic direction, and innovation. The position has a high task value because executive decisions directly influence growth and culture. In unstable markets, higher autonomy makes it easier to quickly change strategies. At the same time,

regular feedback on how well the organization is doing makes sure that leaders learn from their mistakes. Strategic thinking at the systems level, innovative governance, and adaptable leadership in complicated situations are all important skills.

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is in charge of the company's financial structure and encourages innovation instead of stopping it. The job combines budgetary discipline with quick investment decisions, in addition to financial reporting and risk management. To balance analytical modelling, strategic evaluation, and cross-functional collaboration, you need a wide range of skills. To keep trust while encouraging experimentation, it's important to make decisions based on evidence and ethical judgement.

The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) leads technological development and infrastructure. The role should allow high autonomy in decision-making, encourage experimentation and support continuous learning. Key skills include technical expertise, innovation management, team leadership and problem-solving.

The Chief Innovation Officer's (CIO) job is to make sure that new concepts are used throughout the company. Managing research projects, promoting creative thinking, and incorporating new ideas into business strategy are some of the duties. To do the job well, you need to be able to think critically, be creative, work with people from different departments, and lead change.

The HR Director makes plans and carries them out that help the business reach its goals. The new job focuses on strategic HR leadership, developing employees, and creating a culture of performance. Continuous feedback mechanisms reinforce learning and engagement, consistent with developmental performance research (Bracken et al., 2016) Required skills include HR analytics, change management, communication and strategic thinking.

The Head of Research and Development (R&D) leads product development and innovation initiatives. The role should support autonomy, experimentation and collaboration. Some important skills are technical knowledge, project management, creative problem-solving, and leading a team.

Integrating Performance Appraisal and Job Design

Aligned performance appraisal and job design work best. Well-designed employment at Aether Innovations offer autonomy, meaningful work, and different skill sets. The performance appraisal system fosters these behaviours with clear goals and regular feedback.

OKRs encourage employees to focus on outcomes rather than tasks, while enhanced job roles allow them to choose how to achieve them. Job requirements include cooperation and leadership development, which 360-degree feedback supports.

Learning and Development reflection

This Human Capital Management learning journey requires reflection. The information I have gathered has given me a solid base from which to build successful learning and development for myself. The Gibbs Reflective Cycle will help me describe, analyse, feel, and create an action plan. I want to discuss how the module has influenced my understanding of innovation, employability, and growth mindset and how I will continue to learn in a dynamic, technology-driven environment.

Once we started this module my understanding of the human capital management was very limited. I had a rough idea on how HR works, I assumed it was mainly an administrative position rather than a strategic post for the success of a company. Lectures and during my self directed learning I was introduced to contemporary perspectives on aligning human capital with business objectives, sustainable employability and innovation-oriented HR practices. It highlighted the importance of investing in staff not only for short term performance but for long term success.

Firstly, I felt overwhelmed and intimidated by the extensive content of the module plus the level of academic work that needed to be done. Many concepts such as strategic alignment and appraisal systems were unknown to me considering my background in textile engineering. I began feeling more confident after I focused on growth mindset and how this is a lifelong learning that could even be applied to my personal career development and not only for organisational contexts. One of the challenges I faced was translating theory into practice, while models such as strategic HR alignment and sustainable employability were insightful, applying them initially felt abstract. Over time, reflective exercises helped bridge this gap by encouraging me to contextualise theory within my own career aspirations. Analytically, the module emphasised a growth attitude, viewing problems as learning opportunities rather than threats. Adopting this approach encouraged me to experiment, seek feedback, and welcome changes.

This module has improved my understanding of how human capital drives innovation and sustained success. It changed my focus from short-term skill acquisition to long-term employability and growth. I now understand that learning is an essential aspect of my professional identity, not a separate activity.

Moving forward, I will be using the SMART framework. By the end of my MSc programme, I will achieve an overall merit by dedicating a minimum of 6 structured study hours per week, strengthening my critical analysis and academic writing skills, and producing quality research that demonstrates expert understanding of international business strategies.

Artificial Intelligence and Future Relevance

Moreover, Artificial Intelligence's (AI) rapid growth offers career opportunities and problems. AI is becoming capable of handling regular, analytical, and data-driven activities previously done by humans. Therefore, being relevant demands knowing how to collaborate with AI rather than compete against it. My strategy to staying relevant is complementarity, not replacement. Although AI can process enormous

amounts of data and automate repetitive jobs, it lacks human judgement, ethical reasoning, emotional intelligence, and contextual knowledge.

I plan to use AI as a supportive tool to enhance productivity, decision-making and learning efficiency. AI may help with data analysis, research summarisation, and administrative work, freeing up time for more valuable jobs like problem-solving, creativity, and strategic thinking. I understand the importance of developing non-automatable skills. These include critical thinking, communication, flexibility, and invention. I can make AI boost my role by improving my technical and soft skills. Growth mindset and lifelong learning encourage proactive adaptation to technological change, making the module applicable here.

My ultimate goal is to become a professional who can integrate AI into work processes while retaining human contributions. This balanced approach facilitates sustainable professional growth in an AI-driven world and reflect current ideas on future employability.

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