A quick insight into ‘capabilities’ as a theoretical and applied concept

CAPABILITIES

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Noun, ‘a thing’:  
- **Capability** – In strict language a capability establishes a high level definition of the attributes (skills, knowledge and behaviours) that an organisation needs to have deeply embedded across all levels and functions in the workforce to achieve its desired future state.

Collective Noun ‘things’:  
- **Capability Framework** – A Capability Framework may include individual capabilities and, in common usage today, the other competencies or skills - attributes defining the skills, knowledge and behaviours - required to deliver the organisation's current and future purpose.

Before we start - language please......
A Capability is not the same as a Competence.

» A capability has to underpin how the business builds competitive advantage now and in the future.

» Capabilities embed the organizational culture and values across a global workforce at all levels of work, wherever they are located.

» A competence/competency description is typically a sub-set under a capability or a sub-component of a capability framework.

» Most ASX Top 20 companies have Capability Models to drive future workforce performance and transformation across all levels of work, occupations/professions and locations. These Models typically cover:

> Leadership
> Management
> Values
> Customer Experience
The distinction is critical because the **Capabilities** defined by an organisation ‘ALIGN’ how skills, knowledge and behaviours (competencies) may be defined and used. They are ‘bigger’ than the person, the job or the operational context.

**Why so precious about language?**
More Australian organisations than people suspect have built Capability Frameworks to drive current and future success. Including*:

- Woolworths Limited
- Qantas Airways Limited
- SingTel Optus
- Santos Ltd.
- St George Bank/Westpac
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- BHP Billiton
- Mater Health Services

* Working Futures™ experience only, others exist.
» The **Aligned Framework** presented herein is used as an example of many commercial-in-confidence models created from a core research framework first issued in 2005. It has been deployed with large and small variations across some of Australia’s largest corporations and by NZ Health.

» The Framework has been based on over a 15 years of research and practice in multiple complex organisations. It is designed to work with the many different approaches to skills definitions and human resources systems that may already be in use. It is not intended to be to sole solution an organisation will use to manage people capabilities. Nor is it presented as an exhaustive examination of all the professional, technical and other competencies an individual may require to secure and perform in a job or professional role.

» The model deployed in New Zealand’s Canterbury District Health Board in 2006/7 was one of the first and has inspired what is now a world-wide movement in Western healthcare (Australia, Canada, Malaysia) and customer-centric organisations adopting transformational-based approaches to leadership (in particular public sector agencies, creative and design companies, banks and telecos).

A quick insight into a Capability Framework
Aligned Framework

1. Act with personal insight
2. Lead transformation
3. Inspire a vision and sense of purpose
4. Grow relationships and commitment
5. Nurture strategic thinking and action
6. Embed a positive culture
7. Develop agility
Act with personal insight

Personal ability to appreciate own strengths and weaknesses and effectively relate to peers, employees and others in a manner that promotes collaboration and goal attainment. This includes being confident in their personal capacity, a drive to improve professional performance, and commitment to uphold the organisation’s values and ethics.

Lead transformation

The personal ability to envision, lead and champion improvement and change projects. This includes modelling positive attitudes to change and inspiring employees, professionals and stakeholders to accomplish change.
Inspire a vision and sense of purpose

The ability to engage employees and stakeholders and to inspire a sustained commitment to the organisation's vision of the future and strategic purpose.

Grow relationships and commitment

The ability to establish, influence and sustain professional contacts for the purpose of building networks and relationships that can be mobilised to support the attainment of operational goals and change initiatives.

Definition
Nurture strategic thinking and action

The ability to draw professional and strategic implications and conclusions within a highly complex environment of competing health, policy, community and economic trends and requirements. This will include the translation of thinking into action in support of the ethical and strategic objectives set by the organisation and for health care generally.

Embed a positive culture

The ability to build and reinforce a culture where everyone has a sense of the underpinning vision, purpose and values the organisation aspires to achieve. This includes recognising cultural differences while building a climate of engagement and collaboration.
Develop agility

The ability to stimulate actions that will optimise responsiveness and deliver superior business and customer outcomes. This will necessitate the ability to make connections between situations and promote new processes, practices, technologies, knowledge or thinking that elevate the readiness to respond.
A sense of levels

Level 1
Takes responsibility for own actions and decisions affecting immediate work and team duties.
Has the knowledge, capacity and experience to complete tasks in the context immediately related to their work.
Shows awareness of immediate goals and appreciates their role relative to the customer and other team members.
Undertakes explicit, concrete tasks with established routines or procedures.

Level 2
Takes ownership of own plans and work outcomes and takes limited responsibility for decisions and work of others within short term plans.
Recognises a number of patterns and distinguishes those aspects that are important and relevant.
Undertakes a range of routine and non-routine tasks often requiring complex task organisation and technical proficiency.
Competently deals with decisions or some tasks may be abstract or ambiguous.

Level 3
Works independently within broad parameters, with a strong sense of responsibility and ownership of medium term goals, decisions and outcomes.
Is developing a ‘big picture’ understanding of the broader context, combined with recognition of patterns and nuances.
Performs a range of often complex work in a wide range of contexts using an advancing level of technical knowledge and experience.
Undertakes a range of routine and non-routine tasks requiring complex task organisation involving a number of steps and broad analysis.

Level 4
Holds responsibility for all aspects of longer term outcomes, including the work and actions of other leaders within a defined context.
Makes decisions and possesses a high level view on trends affecting the broader strategic context and advocates for future opportunities.
Leads the formulation and application of professional and technical knowledge in what may be an uncertain global environment.
Undertakes routine and non-routine tasks requiring highly sophisticated conceptualisation, organisation and analysis.
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