EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research work is focused on the mapping competencies of SAP Functional consultants in India. A thorough study of previous research works done at national and international levels was carried out by the researcher on the areas of competency, competency mapping and its relationship with employee performance, suggestion for carrying out competency mapping in niche areas and studies in ERP technology domain.

Based on the theoretical review and experience as a SAP functional consultant the researcher developed a theoretical model on factors influencing competencies of a SAP functional consultant. The core of the model is to identify competency of a SAP functional consultant in delivering SAP engagements to clients. Leveraging inputs from review and preliminary study with subject matter experts in SAP functional consulting space research objectives, research questions and hypothesis were framed.

Researcher identified competency factors that were impacting competency of a SAP functional consultant. They are Business process knowledge, SAP Product knowledge and others. While there could be more than one factor identified in others category during the course of research the model proposed by researched contained factors mentioned above.

SAP consulting being a niche area researcher used starting from the scratch model to arrive at a competency model for SAP functional consultants. As a first step to identify competency factors and related experience indicators for SAP functional consultants researcher carried out focus group interviews and discussion with subject matter experts in SAP functional consulting space. Analysis of video graphed interviews and discussions resulted in identification of factors which impact competency of a SAP functional consultant.
The factors identified were functional knowledge, SAP product knowledge, communication, Concern for quality/precision, Flexibility, Interpersonal Understanding and Client/Customer service orientation. Threshold and differentiating competencies were also identified along with the factors. Analysis of outcome revealed that SAP Product knowledge is a combination of business processes, master data, transactions, integration and configuration. Based on interview output analysis and detailed observation of day in a life of a SAP functional consultant researcher proceeded towards identification of building blocks for SAP functional modules which influences competency of a SAP functional consultant along with attributes that need to be part of the building blocks. Researcher faced phenomenal challenge in identifying subject matter experts and industry leaders for focused group interview. Lot of respondents were hesitant to provide information as the information they provide could be confidential, specific towards the organization they are with (or) the information could be viewed in a different perspective by the market giving rise to legal challenges.

After identifying factors influencing competency of a SAP functional consultant and arriving at building blocks with attributes in the building blocks the researcher conceptualized, designed and delivered a training program for SAP functional consultants to validate the competency model arrived at. Researcher took appropriate care of getting right trainers, developing training content, designing training methodology, finalizing evaluation process and following up with trained functional consultants after training. After completion of training the researcher worked with senior management resources in the organization to deploy them into live SAP engagements. Feedback on performance of the trained SAP functional consultant was received from their supervisors to confirm the impact of training in developing required competency factors.
After completion of training feedback a questionnaire was developed to involve larger group of SAP functional consultants, identify their competencies and map them to the competency model developed, this exercise was delivered to validate the competency model developed and accordingly arrive at a model to for competency of SAP functional consultant. With use of sampling techniques a representative sample of 589 respondents were chosen in six cities where information technology organizations have established their bases in India: Bangalore, Mumbai Kolkata, Chennai, Pune and Hyderabad. Selected respondents were approached with a structured questionnaire consisting of constructs measuring the responses in Likert scale. Respondents were bit hesitant to share information on factors influencing their competencies as they were worried about the information being shared with their respective organizations, after giving a confirmation that this research work is being carried out on an independent basis, not specific to any organization respondents co-operated with most of them requesting the researcher not to reveal their identity and organizational identity.

The data collected were tabulated and aggregated. The demographic details of the respondents were initially analyzed. Level of competency of a SAP functional consultant and the impact it had based on experience levels, qualification were analyzed. Furthermore, SAP functional consultant’s competency on various factors like managing schedule of an engagement, Configuration capability, Functional design development capability, managing scope, knowledge of production support in comparison with their experience was analyzed to identify right roles for SAP consultant at different experience levels. A regression model was developed for evaluating competency of a SAP functional consultant. The model was validated through SEM-AMOS.
Key findings of the study are:

- Seven major factors that influence competency of SAP functional consultant along with threshold and differentiating competencies for each.
- Building Blocks that influence competency of a SAP functional consultant’s SAP Module knowledge.
- Detailed attributes that form part of the building blocks indicated that influence SAP Module knowledge.
- Other engagement related parameters that influence competency of a SAP functional consultant.
- Ranking of key factors that influence competency of a SAP functional consultant.
- Difference in gender did not bring about any change in competency parameters of a SAP functional consultant.
- With appropriate care to training design and delivery fresh engineering graduates can be trained and deployed into support and rollout engagements as SAP functional consultants.
- Based on analysis researcher devised the following models:
  - Jag and Sen’s building block model for Competency of SAP functional consultants.
  - Jag and Sen’s regression model to identify competency of SAP functional consultant.
- Finally researcher has made recommendations in the area (given below) of SAP functional consulting which will support organizations that deliver SAP services in the global market to keep them competitive and stay ahead in SAP services that they offer.
  - Building competencies of SAP functional consultant.
o Evaluation of SAP functional consultants for project roles

o Using Jag and Sen’s model to identify competency of SAP functional consultants in their organization

o Building skills of SAP functional consultants on other parameters that influence competencies of SAP functional consultant