How to write a “role description”?
We use a template for the description of a role. Although tasks might be the same as in the previous job description, an employee can have roles in different domains. This has already helped significantly to overcome duplications. Furthermore, reflecting on the accountability, output and decision-making power of each role was very helpful in clarifying previously unclear responsibilities.

The story I want to share

A classical hierarchical structure no longer did the job.

The reasons:
• Management overload; many issues were being handled by our direction instead of the responsible employees.
• Silo-thinking; there was a clear need to improve the collaboration between often disconnected islands of know-how.
• Processes such as decision-making were too slow for the rapidly changing environment.
• Willingness to incorporate employees ideas and offer them opportunities to develop themselves.

For these reasons we are becoming agile.
We started this process with the help of a consultant. In 6 different domains, we have defined specific roles with clear accountability, output and decision-making authority. Decisions are consulted in a circle. Translating the model to our daily work is not always easy as we still fall back into old habits. We do not yet have solutions for everything – we are moving slowly.

Role-based leadership, a strategic initiative.

Lessons learnt
• The most important lesson learnt is how to manage expectations. We communicated the overall concept too soon, highlighting the opportunities of the model without sufficiently considering realistic time frames and concrete implementation.
• Employees therefore became frustrated; they didn’t understand the implications of this change for their daily work.
• We now have a circle of role coaches in place – employees in each domain – who will help to develop the concept further. It is crucial to have both management and a driving-force of employees on board.

Anne Bickel
Director “People and Learning”

“Top management alignment, mutual support and trust, honest communication, patience and openness, and clear time frames are crucial to managing change.”

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