

Reinventing Workforce Capability:

A Diagnostic Model for Sustainable Human Performance



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Table of Content

Abstract

Introduction

The Workforce Capability Problem

Scholarly Foundations of the Model

Defining Workforce Capability

The Workforce Capability Model

Capacity: Human Reserves for Sustainable Contribution

Competence: Applied Ability for Role-Relevant Performance

Capability as a Functional Relationship

The Capability Interaction Grid

The Nine Capability Expressions

Methodological Basis of the Model

Evidence Alignment and Contribution to Knowledge

Practitioner Applications

Institutional Implications

Limitations and Continuing Research Agenda

Conclusion

References

Abstract

This paper presents The Workforce Capability Model as an expert-led diagnostic framework for understanding, classifying and strengthening sustainable human performance in contemporary organisations. The model defines capability as the fullness of employee potential expressed at work to deliver value to stakeholders. It advances the proposition that capability is a functional relationship between capacity and competence, expressed as $Capability = f(Capacity, Competence)$. Capacity describes the human reserves available for sustained contribution. Competence describes the validated ability required for role-relevant performance. The paper situates the model within established scholarship on the resource-based view of the firm, dynamic capabilities, human capital resource emergence, strategic human resource management, competency modelling, work design, job demands-resources theory and burnout research. It then introduces the Capability Interaction Grid, developed by Dr. Olumuyiwa A. Oludayo, as a diagnostic architecture for classifying nine expressions of human capability: High-Potential Rookie, Accelerating Talent, Peak Performer, Emerging Talent, Reliable Performer, Seasoned Professional, Struggling Performer, Inconsistent Contributor and Burnt-Out Expert. The model has been developed through conceptual synthesis, professional exposition, client-based application, documentary refinement, survey-item improvement and profile-reporting design. Its value lies in helping leaders, HR professionals and organisations distinguish between skill gaps, reserve depletion, development potential, sustainable excellence and performance risk. The paper contributes an integrated capability language for workforce diagnosis, development, deployment and sustainability.

Keywords: **workforce capability**; sustainable human performance; capacity; competence; human capital; capability diagnosis; HR strategy; burnout; competency modelling; performance sustainability.

Introduction

Organisations increasingly operate in environments defined by technological acceleration, rising execution pressure, customer vigilance, regulatory scrutiny, skills movement and repeated institutional demand for better performance. These conditions have increased the importance of human capability as a serious organisational question. The central issue is the quality of human contribution available to the organisation under real work conditions.

Many organisations have well-educated employees, detailed structures, documented job descriptions, extensive HR policies and recurring training programmes. These assets remain useful. Their usefulness depends on the actual capability of people to carry work, apply judgement, learn quickly, collaborate intelligently, execute consistently and sustain performance under pressure. The strength of a workforce therefore rests on expressed capability.

This paper proposes The Workforce Capability Model as a diagnostic framework for understanding sustainable human performance. The model rests on a core proposition: workforce capability emerges through the interaction of capacity and competence. Capacity concerns the reserves that enable sustained contribution. Competence concerns the applied ability that converts effort into role-relevant value. The model brings these constructs together in a way that helps practitioners interpret performance more accurately and intervene more intelligently.

The paper also introduces the Capability Interaction Grid, developed by Dr. Olumuyiwa A. Oludayo. The grid classifies human capability into nine diagnostic expressions based on the interaction between capacity and competence. It offers a practical language for leaders, HR professionals, line managers, coaches and employees seeking to understand why performance differs across people, roles and work conditions.

This paper is written for two audiences. The first is the professional audience of HR leaders, organisational development practitioners, learning professionals,

Introduction

consultants and executives who need a clear framework for workforce diagnosis. The second is the scholarly and expert audience interested in how the model connects with established research on human capital, competence, work design, job demands, burnout and organisational capability.

The Workforce Capability Problem

Organisations often measure workforce strength through visible indicators: headcount, qualifications, job titles, vacancies, training hours, tenure, engagement scores, performance ratings and payroll cost. These indicators provide useful information, yet they rarely explain the full condition of workforce capability. An employee may possess strong qualifications and still struggle under pressure. Another may demonstrate high energy and learning appetite while lacking role mastery. A third may be deeply competent and visibly productive while approaching depletion. A fourth may deliver reliably within familiar conditions and falter when complexity increases.

This performance variation creates a diagnostic challenge. Leaders often interpret performance through narrow categories such as “strong performer,” “poor performer,” “high potential” or “burnt out.” Such labels can miss the interaction between ability and sustainability. The same output may come from very different capability states. A high-performing employee may be a sustainable peak performer or a depleted expert. A low-performing employee may be miscast, undertrained, unsupported, overwhelmed, new to role or experiencing diminished reserves. An energetic employee may be promising and still unready for complex responsibility.

The Workforce Capability Model addresses this problem by separating two questions that are often merged. The first concerns the employee’s available reserves for sustained contribution. The second concerns the employee’s role-relevant ability. This distinction improves the precision of diagnosis. It also improves the quality of managerial action.

The model contributes to workforce thinking by integrating two streams that often travel separately in professional practice. Competence literature speaks strongly to skills, knowledge, qualifications, behaviours and performance standards. Wellbeing and work-demand literature explains exhaustion, strain, burnout, resources and sustainability. The Workforce Capability Model connects these streams into one diagnostic logic. It treats sustainable human performance as a capability issue.

Scholarly Foundations of the Model

The Workforce Capability Model stands on several established bodies of scholarship. It draws from strategic management, human capital theory, competency modelling, work design, job demands-resources theory, burnout research and HR systems research.

The resource-based view of the firm provides a strategic foundation for treating workforce capability as a source of organisational advantage. Barney (1991) argues that firm resources can support sustained competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and difficult to substitute. Workforce capability fits this logic when employee contribution is difficult to replicate because it is embedded in experience, judgement, culture, relationships and organisational routines.

Dynamic capabilities theory adds the adaptation dimension. Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) describe dynamic capabilities as the firm's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences in changing environments. This is relevant because contemporary organisations need more than static skill possession. They need people who can learn, adapt, recombine knowledge and respond intelligently to shifting demands.

Strategic human capital scholarship provides a bridge between individual attributes and organisational performance. Ployhart and Moliterno (2011) define human capital resource emergence as the process through which individual knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics become a unit-level resource. Their work supports the view that workforce capability becomes strategically meaningful when individual attributes are organised, expressed and converted into collective value.

Strategic HRM research also supports the model's practical relevance. Jiang, Lepak, Hu and Baer (2012) show through meta-analysis that HR systems influence organisational outcomes through mechanisms such as human capital and motivation. This finding validates the importance of HR practices that build, deploy and sustain capability. The Workforce Capability Model gives HR practitioners a diagnostic structure for understanding where capability is strong, fragile, undeveloped or depleted.

Scholarly Foundations of the Model

Competency modelling research strengthens the competence side of the model. Campion et al. (2011) show that competency models help organisations connect knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes to selection, development and performance management. Their work provides a foundation for treating competence as more than qualification. Competence includes applied ability, role-relevant behaviour, experience, knowledge and performance standards.

Work design scholarship strengthens the capacity side of the model. Hackman and Oldham (1976) show that job design affects motivation and performance. Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) provide a validated framework for assessing work characteristics and the nature of work. These contributions support the idea that work conditions shape the extent to which employee ability is expressed effectively.

Job Demands-Resources theory provides a direct foundation for understanding capacity. Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) show that job demands and job resources relate to burnout processes. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) develop the JD-R model as a flexible framework for understanding demands, resources, wellbeing and performance across occupations. This gives empirical support to the idea that performance sustainability depends on the relationship between work pressure and available resources.

Burnout research further confirms the importance of capacity. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) define burnout as a prolonged response to chronic work stressors, characterised by exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. Their work gives strong scholarly grounding to the claim that employee competence loses effectiveness when human reserves become depleted.

The Workforce Capability Model therefore emerges from a credible intellectual base. Its originality lies in the integration of these foundations into a diagnostic framework that practitioners can use.

Defining Workforce Capability

Capability is defined in this paper as:

The fullness of employee potential expressed at work to deliver value to stakeholders.

This definition contains four important elements.

First, capability concerns potential. It recognises that employees bring more than current output into work. They bring energy, knowledge, judgement, experience, networks, motivation, resilience, learning capacity and professional identity.

Second, capability requires expression. Potential becomes organisationally meaningful when it shows up in work behaviour, quality, judgement, service, problem-solving, reliability, innovation and execution.

Third, capability is contextual. Work conditions influence expression. Role clarity, workload, leadership, systems, psychological safety, technology, reward, culture and organisational design affect the extent to which capability becomes visible.

Fourth, capability serves value. Employee capability matters because it contributes to stakeholders: customers, colleagues, shareholders, regulators, communities and the wider institution.

This definition allows leaders and HR practitioners to move beyond talent language that focuses on promise alone. It also avoids the narrowness of performance language that focuses only on output. Capability sits between potential and performance. It explains how human possibility becomes practical contribution.

The Workforce Capability Model

The Workforce Capability Model expresses capability through the following equation:

$$\text{Capability} = f(\text{Capacity, Competence})$$

This equation presents capability as a functional relationship. Capacity and competence interact to shape the quality, consistency and sustainability of human performance.

Capacity refers to the human reserves available for work. It answers the question of how much more an employee can sustainably take as work demands rise, pressure increases or complexity changes.

Competence refers to the applied ability required for work. It answers the question of how well an employee can perform role-relevant tasks, make decisions, solve problems and deliver expected outcomes.

Capability is the expression that emerges when capacity and competence interact in a real work context. It asks a fuller question: how well can the employee perform the work as demand, complexity and workload change?

This formulation improves workforce diagnosis because it distinguishes between available reserves and applied ability. Some performance issues arise from weak competence. Some arise from depleted capacity. Some arise from both. Some employees have strong capacity and require competence development. Some have strong competence and require capacity restoration. Some employees combine strong capacity with strong competence and become central to organisational performance. The model gives leaders a language for these differences.

Capacity: Human Reserves for Sustainable Contribution

Capacity refers to the reserves an employee draws upon to sustain work contribution. It is a critical dimension of capability because competence depends on usable human energy. A person may know what to do and still lack the reserves to do it consistently under pressure.

The model identifies five components of capacity: physical, intellectual, emotional, financial and social.

6.1 Physical Capacity

Physical capacity concerns energy, stamina, health and fitness for the demands of the role. It affects attendance, alertness, endurance and the quality of work execution. In operational roles, physical capacity may influence pace and safety. In professional and leadership roles, it affects presence, consistency and decision stamina.

The inclusion of physical capacity is supported by work-demand and burnout scholarship. JD-R research shows that job demands contribute to exhaustion when resources are insufficient (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Physical depletion therefore has direct implications for sustainable performance.

6.2 Intellectual Capacity

Intellectual capacity concerns reasoning, learning speed, cognitive agility, attention, problem analysis and decision quality. Work increasingly requires people to interpret data, manage complexity, learn new systems and make decisions under ambiguity.

Work design research supports this dimension. Hackman and Oldham (1976) show that job characteristics influence motivation and performance. Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) further demonstrate that work design can be

Capacity: Human Reserves for Sustainable Contribution

systematically assessed across task, knowledge, social and contextual characteristics. Intellectual capacity is therefore essential where work demands reasoning, learning and adaptation.

6.3 Emotional Capacity

Emotional capacity concerns resilience, stress tolerance, composure, emotional regulation and recovery. Employees with stronger emotional capacity maintain professional judgement and communication during pressure. Employees with weakened emotional capacity may experience stress spillover into relationships, decisions and work quality.

Burnout research provides strong empirical grounding for this component. Maslach et al. (2001) show that prolonged work stress can produce exhaustion, cynicism and reduced efficacy. Emotional capacity therefore helps explain why competent employees may experience declining contribution when strain becomes prolonged.

6.4 Financial Capacity

Financial capacity concerns personal economic stability and the ability to invest in professional growth. It affects focus, stress, developmental access, career choices and work availability. Financial strain can consume cognitive and emotional bandwidth that would otherwise support performance.

Research on financial stress and work outcomes supports its inclusion. Kim and Garman (2004) examine relationships between financial stress and workplace outcomes such as work time use and absenteeism. Financial capacity gives the model a realistic view of the employee as a whole person whose work contribution is affected by economic pressure.

Capacity: Human Reserves for Sustainable Contribution

6.5 Social Capacity

Social capacity concerns relationships, collaboration ability, social capital, support access and stakeholder influence. Work is rarely delivered through individual effort alone. Employees rely on colleagues, supervisors, networks and cross-functional relationships to access information, solve problems and execute work.

Human capital resource theory supports this dimension because individual attributes become organisationally valuable through interaction, emergence and unit-level expression (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). Social capacity also connects with team performance because collaboration affects how competence is mobilised across the organisation.

Capacity therefore represents the sustainability side of capability. It determines whether employees can keep contributing as work demands intensify.

Competence: Applied Ability for Role-Relevant Performance

Competence refers to the validated ability that converts capacity into useful contribution. It is the ability side of the model. It concerns what an employee knows, does, demonstrates and applies in relation to role expectations.

The model identifies five components of competence: credentials, attributes, skills, knowledge and experience.

7.1 Credentials

Credentials refer to formal qualifications, certifications, training and professional preparation. They matter when they are valid, current and relevant to the work. Credentials provide evidence of exposure to structured learning, professional standards and recognised bodies of knowledge.

Their value depends on role relevance. A credential that aligns with the demands of the role strengthens competence. A credential disconnected from current work contributes less to performance.

7.2 Attributes

Attributes refer to behavioural qualities that shape work performance. These include reliability, discipline, integrity, humility, empathy, curiosity, ownership, adaptability and professionalism. Attributes affect how competence is expressed. A skilled employee with poor discipline creates risk. A knowledgeable employee with weak humility may resist learning and feedback.

Competency modelling research supports the inclusion of attributes because competency models often include behaviours and personal characteristics that influence performance (Campion et al., 2011).

Competence: Applied Ability for Role-Relevant Performance

7.3 Skills

Skills refer to practical proficiency. They include technical, interpersonal, conceptual, digital, analytical and managerial abilities required for the role. Skills become visible through task execution, problem-solving, communication, customer service, supervision and decision-making.

Skills are central to competence because organisations need applied performance, not abstract knowledge alone. Skill depth affects independence, quality, speed and consistency.

7.4 Knowledge

Knowledge refers to what an employee understands about role requirements, processes, systems, standards, products, customers, risks, policies, technology and industry practice. Knowledge must remain current and useful. Outdated knowledge weakens competence in environments where systems, regulations, customer behaviour and tools change.

Knowledge also supports judgement. Employees with strong knowledge can interpret situations faster, identify risks earlier and choose more appropriate actions.

7.5 Experience

Experience refers to exposure that has produced judgement, pattern recognition and transferable insight. Experience matters when it helps the employee solve current problems, anticipate consequences and perform with maturity.

Experience is stronger when it has depth, relevance and reflection. Length of service alone does not guarantee competence. Experience becomes competence when it improves judgement and performance.

Competence therefore represents the ability side of capability. It gives direction and quality to human reserves.

Capability as a Functional Relationship

The expression $\text{Capability} = f(\text{Capacity}, \text{Competence})$ gives the model its diagnostic strength. It means that capability is shaped by the interaction between reserves and ability.

High competence requires sufficient capacity for sustainable expression. Low capacity can weaken the impact of strong competence. High capacity requires sufficient competence for valuable expression. Low competence can waste strong reserves. Moderate levels of capacity and competence often produce stable performance, though with limits under increased complexity or pressure.

This interaction explains many common organisational experiences.

An employee with strong energy and weak skill often appears promising and unready at the same time. An experienced professional with high competence and depleted reserves often remains valuable while carrying rising sustainability risk. A steady contributor may keep routine operations stable and require deliberate growth to take on more complex work. A struggling employee may need skill development, capacity support and role clarification together.

The model also helps leaders avoid common intervention errors. Training solves competence gaps. Workload redesign, recovery, support, prioritisation and psychosocial safety address capacity strain. Stretch assignments serve employees with sufficient reserves and developing competence. Succession pipelines require employees who combine competence with capacity. Retention strategy becomes urgent where rare competence is paired with declining capacity.

This is the practical value of the model. It directs attention to the true nature of the capability condition before intervention decisions are made.

The Capability Interaction Grid

The Capability Interaction Grid, developed by Dr. Olumuyiwa A. Oludayo, translates The Workforce Capability Model into a diagnostic architecture. It classifies capability expression by plotting capacity and competence across three bands: low, moderate and high.

The grid serves five purposes.

First, it gives leaders and HR professionals a structured language for discussing workforce capability.

Second, it separates ability from sustainability.

Third, it supports differentiated development and performance intervention.

Fourth, it helps organisations identify capability risk hidden behind current output.

Fifth, it creates a basis for individual reports, team diagnosis, workforce segmentation and leadership action.

The grid describes current capability expression. It is not a permanent identity. Employees move across the grid as role demands, work context, support systems, competence and capacity change. The grid therefore functions as a diagnostic map, not a fixed label.

The Capability Interaction Grid

Figure 1: Capability Interaction Grid

Developed by Dr. Olumuyiwa A. Oludayo

Capacity / Competence	Low Competence	Moderate Competence	High Competence
High Capacity			
Strong reserves; low role mastery; fast learner.	High-Potential Rookie		
Strong reserves; growing competence; visible improvement.		Accelerating Talent	
Strong reserves; strong competence; sustainable excellence.			Peak Performer
Moderate Capacity			
Adequate reserves; developing skills; needs structure.	Emerging Talent		
Stable reserves; consistent delivery; predictable work quality.		Reliable Performer	
Good reserves; high skill maturity; trusted contributor.			Seasoned Professional
Low Capacity			
Low reserves; low skill; overwhelmed and underperforming.	Struggling Performer		

The Capability Interaction Grid

Figure 1: Capability Interaction Grid

Developed by Dr. Olumuyiwa A. Oludayo

Low reserves; moderate skill; fluctuating performance.		Inconsistent Contributor	
Low reserves; high skill; capable but depleted.			Burnt-Out Expert

The grid introduces diagnostic precision. A leader looking at performance alone may place employees into broad categories. The grid improves interpretation by identifying whether the primary issue is capacity, competence or their interaction.

The Nine Capability Expressions

High-Potential Rookie: High Capacity + Low Competence

The High-Potential Rookie has strong reserves and limited role mastery. This profile is common among early-career employees, newly promoted employees, recently transferred employees or professionals entering a more complex work setting. The employee may show energy, curiosity, adaptability and willingness to learn, yet still require technical, functional or professional development.

The diagnostic message is structured growth. This employee benefits from role clarity, foundational learning, guided practice, mentoring, feedback and gradually increasing task complexity. Premature exposure to high-risk work may create errors and frustration. Delayed development may waste available capacity.

The HR implication is targeted onboarding and competence acceleration. The managerial implication is guided opportunity.

Accelerating Talent: High Capacity + Moderate Competence

The Accelerating Talent has strong capacity and developing competence. This profile reflects a growth corridor. The employee is learning quickly, handling more complex work and beginning to show stronger performance confidence. Their capacity creates room for stretch. Their competence requires deepening. The diagnostic message is guided stretch. This employee benefits from challenging assignments, mentoring, performance feedback, cross-functional exposure and visible development goals. The risk is advancement without settled judgement. The employee may perform well in familiar areas and struggle with complex exceptions.

The HR implication is talent acceleration. The managerial implication is structured stretch with close feedback.

The Nine Capability Expressions

Peak Performer: High Capacity + High Competence

The Peak Performer combines strong reserves with strong competence. This profile represents sustainable excellence. The employee can deliver high-quality work, sustain pressure, solve complex problems, influence others and contribute beyond immediate task boundaries.

The diagnostic message is value multiplication. Peak performers should receive strategic assignments, leadership development, succession attention, recognition and opportunities to transfer capability. The organisation should manage dependency risk because repeated reliance on peak performers can create future depletion.

The HR implication is retention, succession and capability transfer. The managerial implication is autonomy with strategic engagement.

Emerging Talent: Moderate Capacity + Low Competence

The Emerging Talent has adequate reserves and developing competence. This employee can grow when the work is structured and expectations are clear. The profile may appear among people who are new to a technical area, adapting to new standards or trying to find their footing in a role.

The diagnostic message is structured development. The employee needs clarity, demonstration, task-based learning, feedback and realistic workload expectations. Excessive ambiguity may weaken confidence. High pressure may expose competence gaps quickly.

The HR implication is foundational development. The managerial implication is steady coaching and work clarity.

The Nine Capability Expressions

Reliable Performer: Moderate Capacity + Moderate Competence

The Reliable Performer provides stable contribution. This employee is often the operational backbone of a team. Work quality is predictable under familiar conditions. The person may not always demonstrate the highest level of expertise or energy, yet the organisation benefits from consistency.

The diagnostic message is contribution strengthening. The employee needs recognition, moderate stretch, development planning and opportunities to increase impact. The risk is plateau. Reliability can become stagnation if growth is neglected.

The HR implication is job enrichment and capability upgrading. The managerial implication is recognition combined with deliberate development.

Seasoned Professional: Moderate Capacity + High Competence

The Seasoned Professional has high competence and moderate reserves. This employee often carries valuable institutional memory, technical judgement, professional maturity and trusted expertise. The capacity level requires active management because high competence may attract heavy reliance.

The diagnostic message is expertise preservation. The organisation should use this employee for judgement, mentoring, knowledge transfer, complex decisions and advisory contribution. Workload prioritisation matters. Renewal also matters because experience must remain current.

The HR implication is knowledge management and retention. The managerial implication is respect-based deployment and capacity-aware workload design.

The Nine Capability Expressions

Struggling Performer: Low Capacity + Low Competence

The Struggling Performer has limited reserves and limited competence in relation to role demands. This profile requires careful diagnosis because the gap between current capability and current work expectations is significant. The employee may need role clarification, foundational training, workload support, emotional support and close supervision.

The diagnostic message is stabilisation and foundation repair. The organisation should identify whether the issue is poor role fit, inadequate training, unclear expectations, personal strain, workload mismatch or a combination of these. Support should be structured, time-bound and evidence-based.

The HR implication is performance support with fair accountability. The managerial implication is clear diagnosis, focused coaching and realistic review.

Inconsistent Contributor: Low Capacity + Moderate Competence

The Inconsistent Contributor has useful competence and weak reserves. Performance fluctuates because the person can deliver under manageable conditions and declines under pressure, ambiguity or overload. Colleagues may experience the employee as effective at some times and unreliable at other times.

The diagnostic message is capacity stabilisation. The employee needs workload review, priority clarity, planning tools, support relationships, recovery routines and regular check-ins. Additional training may help only where specific competence gaps exist. The main issue is the stability of contribution.

The HR implication is capacity support and performance consistency. The managerial implication is structured priorities and close monitoring of pressure triggers.

The Nine Capability Expressions

Burnt-Out Expert: Low Capacity + High Competence

The Burnt-Out Expert has strong competence and depleted reserves. This profile carries high organisational risk because valuable knowledge, judgement, experience and credibility may be present alongside exhaustion, disengagement or withdrawal.

The diagnostic message is capacity restoration and expertise repositioning. This employee may need workload rebalance, recovery conversation, recognition, flexible contribution options, knowledge-transfer structure and renewed purpose. The organisation gains more by preserving expertise than by repeatedly extracting output from depletion.

The HR implication is retention, wellbeing and knowledge continuity. The managerial implication is workload redesign and renewed engagement.

Methodological Basis of the Model

This paper adopts an expert-led practice-based model development approach. The Workforce Capability Model was developed through conceptual synthesis, professional exposition, client-based application, documentary review, construct clarification, instrument refinement and applied diagnostic design.

The development record includes the presentation of the model to over 800 HR professionals of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria on December 16, 2025, according to the author's professional practice record. The model has also been presented and adapted in client settings including PAG, Bitachon, VMO Group, Sundry Market, Counterhouse and other organisations. These presentations and adaptations provided practice-based exposure across leadership development, strategic HR, recruitment, team performance, psychosocial wellbeing and workforce development contexts.

The documentary development record shows model refinement across multiple professional materials. Earlier versions used a two-by-two capability structure. Later versions developed the current three-by-three Capability Interaction Grid with nine diagnostic profiles. The model also moved from presentation logic into survey architecture and individual reporting design.

The survey instrument has been strengthened through several design choices aligned with scale-development principles. It uses recent-behaviour wording, a frequency-based response scale, pressure-based scenarios, trade-off language, reverse-scored items, quality-control questions and scoring bands for capacity and competence. The current survey structure measures capacity through physical, intellectual, emotional, financial and social components. It measures competence through credentials, attributes, skills, knowledge and experience. Each construct contains ten items, with balanced scoring and profile classification.

Methodological Basis of the Model

The individual report guide also strengthens application validity. It translates each profile into a summary, meaning, likely strengths, possible risks, career growth priorities, development actions, a 90-day growth plan, managerial support and a development message. This reporting structure makes the grid practical for professional development, coaching, leadership conversations and HR intervention.

The model was subjected to four validation standards in this paper.

First, theoretical validation was conducted by aligning the model with resource-based theory, dynamic capabilities, strategic human capital theory, HR systems research, competency modelling, work design, JD-R theory and burnout research.

Second, construct validation by logic mapping was conducted by clarifying the domains of capacity, competence and capability. Each component was examined for conceptual fit and practical relevance.

Third, documentary validation was conducted by tracing the model's evolution across professional presentations, client applications, survey refinement and report design.

Fourth, application validation was conducted by examining the model's usefulness across leadership, recruitment, strategic HR, team performance, psychosocial wellbeing, workforce development and individual career growth contexts.

These validation activities support the model as an expert-led diagnostic framework. Statistical validation through large-scale field datasets remains a complementary empirical exercise for organisations or researchers seeking normative benchmarks, reliability coefficients, factor structure or predictive validity estimates.

Evidence Alignment and Contribution to Knowledge

The Workforce Capability Model builds on established empirical foundations and fills an applied diagnostic gap.

Core Assertion	Empirical or Scholarly Foundation	Contribution of the Model
Workforce capability can be a source of organisational advantage.	Resource-based theory argues that valuable and difficult-to-imitate resources can support advantage (Barney, 1991).	The model explains workforce capability as a strategic human resource condition that can be diagnosed and developed.
Organisations need adaptable human capability in changing environments.	Dynamic capabilities theory focuses on integration, building and reconfiguration of competences under change (Teece et al., 1997).	The model connects human performance with adaptability, sustainability and changing work demands.
Individual attributes become organisational resources through emergence.	Human capital resource theory explains how individual KSAOs become unit-level resources (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).	The model gives managers a practical way to interpret individual capability as a building block of workforce strength.
HR systems influence outcomes through people-related mechanisms.	Meta-analytic HRM research links HR systems with human capital, motivation, turnover, operational outcomes and financial outcomes (Jiang et al., 2012).	The model gives HR functions a diagnostic framework for capability-based recruitment, development, performance and succession.

Evidence Alignment and Contribution to Knowledge

The Workforce Capability Model builds on established empirical foundations and fills an applied diagnostic gap.

Core Assertion	Empirical or Scholarly Foundation	Contribution of the Model
Competence requires structured definition and evidence.	Competency modelling research supports the use of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes for performance systems (Campion et al., 2011).	The model integrates competence into a wider capability diagnosis by linking it with capacity.
Work conditions affect motivation, wellbeing and performance.	Work design research links job characteristics with motivation and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).	The model explains how work demands and context affect the expression of capability.
Depleted human reserves affect sustainable contribution.	JD-R and burnout research link demands, resources, exhaustion, disengagement and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Maslach et al., 2001).	The model makes capacity a central part of workforce diagnosis.
Measurement design requires construct clarity and item discipline.	Scale-development and construct-validation literature emphasises construct definition, item development and validation procedures (Hinkin, 1998; MacKenzie et al., 2011).	The model's survey instrument uses construct mapping, frequency scales, reverse scoring and scoring bands.

Evidence Alignment and Contribution to Knowledge

The authentic contribution of the model lies in integration. It brings together strategic human capital, competence, work demand, burnout and performance sustainability into one practical diagnostic framework. It also gives practitioners language for conditions that are often misdiagnosed. For example, a high-skill employee with low capacity is not simply a high performer; the person may be a Burnt-Out Expert. A high-energy employee with low competence is not automatically ready for complex responsibility; the person may be a High-Potential Rookie. A moderate-skill employee with low capacity is not necessarily incapable; the person may be an Inconsistent Contributor whose output improves when capacity is stabilised.

This interpretive precision is the model's main contribution to knowledge and practice.

Practitioner Applications

The Workforce Capability Model applies across the employee lifecycle.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment decisions improve when organisations assess both capacity and competence. Competence-based selection examines qualifications, skills, knowledge, attributes and relevant experience. Capacity-aware selection examines role stamina, learning agility, resilience, collaboration demands and work-context fit. This is especially important in roles with high pressure, customer exposure, regulatory risk, safety demands or rapid learning requirements.

Recruitment and Selection

The model helps onboarding teams distinguish between new employees with strong capacity and low competence, and employees with moderate capacity who require more structured support. High-Potential Rookies and Emerging Talents both need competence development, yet the intensity and pace of stretch should differ.

Learning and Development

Learning design becomes more precise when employee profiles are understood. High-Potential Rookies need foundational learning. Accelerating Talents need depth and stretch. Reliable Performers need capability upgrading. Seasoned Professionals need renewal and knowledge transfer. Burnt-Out Experts need capacity restoration before additional learning demands are imposed.

Performance Management

Performance reviews often focus on outputs. The model adds diagnostic depth. It helps managers ask whether performance outcomes reflect competence, capacity, work design, role fit, support, workload or motivation. This leads to fairer and more useful performance conversations.

Practitioner Applications

Succession Planning

Succession requires competence and capacity. A technically strong employee with low capacity may struggle in larger roles. A high-capacity employee with moderate competence may be suitable for accelerated development. Peak Performers and selected Accelerating Talents may feed leadership pipelines when evidence supports readiness.

Workload Design and Wellbeing

The model supports workload decisions by identifying where competence is being overused and where capacity is deteriorating. Burnt-Out Experts and Inconsistent Contributors are especially important in this regard. Their profiles signal the need for workload review, recovery, prioritisation and support.

Team Diagnosis

Teams can be mapped by capability profile distribution. A team filled with High-Potential Rookies may have energy without depth. A team filled with Reliable Performers may provide stability with limited stretch. A team dependent on Burnt-Out Experts carries continuity risk. A team with Peak Performers and Accelerating Talents may be ready for complex priorities if leadership preserves sustainability.

HR Strategy

The model supports capability-based HR. It can guide workforce planning, talent reviews, learning investments, performance interventions, retention plans, succession discussions and leadership development. HR becomes more strategic when it diagnoses the actual capability condition of the workforce.

Institutional Implications

The Workforce Capability Model has implications beyond individual development. It affects organisational design, leadership behaviour, workforce planning and culture.

First, organisations should treat capability as a system outcome. Employee capability is shaped by hiring quality, role clarity, work design, learning systems, leadership, performance management, reward, wellbeing and organisational culture.

Second, leaders should become stewards of capability. Their decisions affect capacity and competence. Poorly designed work, unclear priorities, weak support and unmanaged pressure can suppress capability. Clear direction, fair workload, coaching, recognition and well-designed learning can strengthen it.

Third, HR should use capability intelligence to guide investment. Training budgets should not be spent only because gaps are assumed. Capability diagnosis can reveal whether the issue requires learning, coaching, job redesign, workload balance, manager capability, role clarification or retention action.

Fourth, organisations should protect expertise. Burnt-Out Experts represent one of the most dangerous hidden workforce risks. They often carry institutional memory, client trust, technical insight and problem-solving history. Losing them can create costs that are difficult to quantify.

Fifth, workforce planning should include sustainability. It is possible to meet today's targets by exhausting tomorrow's capability. Sustainable performance requires attention to both current output and future capacity.

Limitations and Continuing Research Agenda

The Workforce Capability Model is presented as an expert-led diagnostic framework developed through practice, conceptual synthesis and applied refinement. The current paper reports conceptual, documentary, application and instrument-design validity.

A continuing empirical research agenda can strengthen the model further through field data. Useful studies include reliability analysis of the survey instrument, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, measurement invariance across job levels and sectors, criterion validity against performance ratings, predictive validity against turnover, absenteeism and promotion readiness, and longitudinal movement across grid profiles.

Sector-specific research can also be valuable. Healthcare, education, public service, financial services, manufacturing, hospitality, technology and energy-sector contexts may produce different capability patterns because work demands and competence requirements differ.

The model is also suitable for organisational benchmarking when sufficient data is collected across departments, job families, levels and locations.

Conclusion

The Workforce Capability Model offers a disciplined way to understand sustainable human performance. It defines capability as the fullness of employee potential expressed at work to deliver value to stakeholders. It explains capability as a function of capacity and competence. It gives leaders and HR professionals a diagnostic grid for interpreting nine expressions of human capability.

The model responds to a practical problem that many organisations face. Workforce performance is often misread because competence and capacity are merged in everyday judgement. The Capability Interaction Grid improves this judgement. It helps organisations see promising talent, developing talent, reliable contribution, seasoned expertise, inconsistency, struggle, depletion and peak performance with greater precision.

The model's value is both scholarly and practical. It stands on established empirical foundations in human capital, competence, work design, work demands, burnout and strategic HRM. It also translates those foundations into an accessible tool for leaders and practitioners.

Workforce capability is not an abstract HR phrase. It is the real strength through which organisations execute priorities, serve stakeholders, adapt to change and sustain performance. Organisations that understand capability more precisely make better decisions about people. They hire more intelligently, develop more deliberately, deploy more responsibly, preserve expertise more carefully and build performance systems that endure.

The power of a workforce is the capability it can express sustainably.

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