

TABLE 3-2

Which jobs make the most difference?

An “A” position is defined primarily by its impact on strategy and by the range in the performance level of the people in the position. From these two characteristics flow a number of other attributes that distinguish “A” positions from “B” and “C” jobs.

Defining characteristics	“A” position Strategic	“B” position Support	“C” position Surplus
Scope of authority	Has direct strategic impact and exhibits high-performance variability among those in the position, representing upside potential. Autonomous decision making.	Has an indirect strategic impact by supporting strategic positions and minimizes downside risk by providing a foundation for strategic efforts, or has a potential strategic impact, but exhibits little performance variability among those in the position. Specific processes or procedures typically must be followed.	May be required for the firm to function but has little strategic impact. Little discretion in work
Primary determinant of compensation	Performance	Job level	Market price
Effect on value creation	Creates value by substantially enhancing revenue or reducing costs.	Supports value-creating positions.	Has positive economic impact.
Consequences of mistakes	May be very costly, but missed revenue opportunities are a greater loss to the firm.	May be very costly and can destroy value.	Not necessarily costly.
Consequences of hiring wrong person	Significant expense in terms of lost training investment and revenue opportunities.	Fairly easily remedied through hiring of replacement.	Easily remedied through hiring of replacement.

Source: Adapted from Mark A. Huselid, Brian E. Becker, and Richard W. Beatty, “‘A Players’ or ‘A Positions’? The Strategic Logic of Workforce Management,” *Harvard Business Review*, December 2005.