

## Some questions about guaranteeing competence

1. Have you defined the competence you expect?  Yes  No
2. Do you require proof of competence?  Yes  No
3. Does assessment really matter to your staff?  Yes  No
4. Are people assessed on whether they can do what the job requires?  Yes  No
5. Do you link assessment to other organisational systems, so that competence results in improving job performance?  Yes  No
6. Are the people doing the assessing skilled at doing it?  Yes  No
7. Is the assessment system running efficiently?  Yes  No

If you are reconsidering your approach to assessing competence, and you want guaranteed proof of performance, then PACT can help you.

## Your guarantee of quality

'PACT guarantees to meet agreed performance standards. In addition when providing training services **all participants** signed off as competent by PACT are **guaranteed then to be able to perform to the competence standards** or PACT will retrain at no charge'



Contact us now – we're ready to help

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## One in a series of special reports from



## Are you sure your staff are competent?

### Consider this for a moment

Are you safe and secure in the knowledge that your staff are competent –

- To deal with the crises that sometimes happen in business?
- To take key roles when staff move on?
- To achieve the business goals you have set?

You may be confident that your staff have been trained, but do you know they are competent?

It can be risky to rely on training. One organisation identified what its staff should be competent in, in order to meet business goals. It invested in a big training programme, but it did not demand that the trainees prove that they could perform to the standards needed on the job. So no-one knew whether all the staff were competent. A year later the inevitable happened – the poor business performance was found to be due to deficiencies in staff competence. Had the original training been competence assessed, the deficiency would have been identified and addressed at source.

Assessment is testing each individual against specific standards of performance. It can be a one-off test or some ongoing checks. Assessment can be at a course or, more frequently these days, on the job.

There are some key success factors in making competency assessment work. If you are interested, read on over the page.

# COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT

## Management driven

Leaders who want a change-ready organisation know they need competent people to achieve it.  
 They make competence matter.  
 They identify what people should be competent in.  
 They provide resources and support to those developing competence.  
 They demand proof that people have achieved competence.

## Link to other systems

Assessment of the competence of people must flow through into performance improvement on the job. To make sure of this, competence assessment must link with other systems in the organisation including:

- Selection and promotion
- Performance assessment
- Quality assurance
- Health and safety
- Training
- Production and other manuals

## Definition of competence

Competence is the achievement of defined standards of performance.

Identifying a competency is half way there. An example is 'interpersonal communication'.

Defining competence is describing what you can see, hear or measure when someone is performing on the job at the standard you want. For example, standards for listening skills could include:

- All contributions of speakers are acknowledged (verbally or non-verbally)
- Body posture is open
- Eye contact is maintained ...

## Making assessment matter

To make assessment matter, you link proof of competence to:

- Job descriptions/person specifications
- Selection and promotion
- Attractive job/project placements, development opportunities
- Incentives such as bonuses and pay

Competence assessment also provides the proof required for qualifications such as those on the National Qualifications Framework.

## Relevant assessment

The assessment proves that a person can perform to the standards on the job. (Whether they continue to do so depends on other factors such as the manager's contribution and the links to other systems in the organisation.)

Knowledge tests, portfolios of past work, tests of performance in conditions very different from the workplace – all of these are only part way there.

The assessment has to test whether the person is performing to the standard required on the job – just that – no more and no less.

## Quality systems

You can have solid management support and develop ways of ensuring achievement of competence flows through to performance improvement on the job.

You can have good tight definitions of competence, relevant assessments, and trained assessors.

But you also have to keep the assessment system itself running to standard.

This system ensures:

- The assessors are performing the assessments properly.
- The competence definitions are up to date.
- The assessments are up to date.

## Trained assessors

The people doing the assessing need to be skilled at comparing performance to the standard.

What is also important is how they do it. They encourage people to get it right; they don't put people down.

