**Competency Assessments**

* **Skills checklists**. Skills checklists may be used for apprenticeship, mentorship, and on-the-job training programs where employees note their progress in achieving the desired job performance.
* **Competency assessment tests**. Competency assessments tests can be used as the basis for certification in an occupation, for performance management, and for the validation of knowledge and skills.
* **Online competency assessments.** Lists of job skills combined with performance standards are well suited to be delivered as online competency assessments.
* **Competency-based interviews**. These are effective means of screening candidates who qualify for the job by targeting the specific competencies required for the position.
* **Skills gap analysis.**Skills gap analyses can identify gaps in training programs and employees’ skills.
* **180° or 360° assessment.**
* **Competency assessment for recruitment.**Self-assessment test (sometimes validated by a second party) to determine if a candidate has the skills necessary to perform on the job.

**Skills checklists**.

**What are skills checklists?**

Skills checklists are practical lists that detail for employees the skills they are required to perform and the level of performance that is expected for each skill. Skills checklists can take the form of logbooks, fillable PDF forms, and online forms. It is common to see skills checklists used for apprenticeship, internship and on-the-job training programs where new entrants to a job or profession note their progress in achieving the desired job performance. The first step is to define the skills required through a competency mapping process for each job.

**What are the benefits of skills checklists?**

**For the employer:**

* Provide managers and supervisors with concrete tools to clarify performance standards
* Document the employee’s acquisition of the knowledge, skills, safety, and other procedures relating to each task
* Promote a two-way communication between the employee and management, creating a more positive work environment
* Establish job standards for performance appraisals

**For the employees:**

* Present a clear set of expectations, enabling employees to make better decisions and work more effectively
* Provide a reference resource for day-to-day requirements
* Ensure that individual professional development and training milestones are recorded and acknowledged by the organization

**Competency assessment tests**.

## What is a competency assessment test?

Competency mapping is often used as the basis to develop competency assessment tests. Competency assessment tests are valid and reliable tests that measure knowledge and skills required for a job. Competency assessment tests are developed for many occupations for the purpose of determining certification in the occupation. For example, competencies that describe the knowledge and skills required for nursing practice are used to develop competency tests for the registered nurse exam.

Organizations may use competency assessment tests to certify knowledge and skills of their employees for critical functions. For example, a manufacturing organization may develop a certification test to ensure that employees operating a specific type of equipment possess the required knowledge and skills. Software developers often use competency assessment tests to certify individuals in the use of their software.

### How is a competency assessment test developed?

Regardless of the purpose of the certification, the test development process begins with a competency analysis of a function or job. Using the competency analysis as the basis, test development follows a cycle that includes producing a test blueprint, preparing test items, establishing cut-off scores, and creating the test forms.

**Online competency assessments.**

**What is an online competency assessment?**

This is a practical list, presented as an online form, that details for employees the skills they are required to perform and the expected level of performance.

Online competency assessments can be used for a variety of purposes, such as:

* Administering certification tests
* Conducting training needs analysis
* Conducting performance reviews
* Self-assessment tools for employees

Regardless of the purpose of the online competency assessments, the process begins with a competency analysis of a function or job. Using the competency analysis as the basis, the online competency assessment is developed.

**Competency-based interviews**.

**Competency-based interviews will give you a good insight into how your candidate applies their skills to different situations. They are a systematic way of interviewing and are used to discover how specific examples from a candidate’s previous role might be advantageous to you if you hired them.**

Use the following list of types of competency questions as a guide to assist you in preparation for your interviews. Each demonstrate key competency areas and the skills in which they will demonstrate.

## Individual competencies

These questions refer to a candidate’s: knowledge, flexibility, tenacity, decisiveness, personal integrity, risk taking and independence.

**An example question is**: Tell me about a time when your work or ideas were challenged.

## Motivational competencies

These questions should display a candidate’s: motivation, drive, result orientation, energy, resilience, initiative and focus.

**An example question is**: Describe a time you felt as though you worked the hardest and had felt the greatest sense of achievement?

## Analytical

Questions referring to a candidate’s: practical learning, decision making abilities, analytical skills, innovation, problem solving and attention to detail.

**An example question is**: Explain a time when you identified a new approach to a problem.

## Managerial

These will refer to a candidate’s: leadership, corporate sensitivity, strategic thinking, managerial control and project management.

**An example question is**: Have you ever led a group to achieve an objective, and if so, how?

## Interpersonal

These will demonstrate a candidate’s: leadership, social competencies and teamwork skills.

**An example question is**: Describe a situation where you successfully worked as part of a team.

## Being relevant

You should design your competency-based questions to be relevant to the role and to your organization. This will allow you to assess whether candidates possess the skills that they would need in the job on offer. Consider whether you’re looking for leadership and delegation skills over teamwork and communication skills, for example. When you know which skills are the biggest priorities you can come up with questions that address them directly.

## What to look for

You should have a clear idea of the type of person you’re looking for, before conducting a competency-based interview because scoring candidates by their answers can prove an ultimate deciding factor.

For example, when you ask a fairly direct question such as ‘describe a time you had to use X’, you’ll be able to gauge from their answer how skilled or unskilled they were in carrying out that task. Asking more general questions makes the process harder as the answers will also be less specific. You’ll have to use your own judgement, did the example they gave prove a success in their past role?

You should also be able to deduce a candidate’s strengths and weaknesses through their answers. Assess whether they demonstrate a willingness to learn or if they show a negative approach towards a task.

**Skills gap analysis.**

There are three critical steps to a skills gap analysis: determine the skills and skill levels needed, measure existing skills, and address any gaps. Here’s each in more depth:

**1. Identify the skills needed—and the level of proficiency required.**

The first step is to consider which skills are needed to execute your business strategy—current and future. Think about the technical and soft skills you’ll need to implement these strategies. The best way to do this is to list out your business objectives and map competencies to each of the objectives.

For instance, if your organization wants to focus on maximizing productivity, you’ll want to focus on skills that will help you achieve that goal. This could be data collection, measurement, and analysis; project management skills; or results-orientation. Also, look at trends related to the future of work.

* Are there skills that are becoming more prevalent?
* What technology will your organization need to adapt to—and build roles around?
* Are there positions you need to create to accommodate changes in your business model?

Once you have a list of required skills, make a note of the desired skill level for each critical skill (e.g., basic, intermediate, advanced).

**2. Measure existing skills.**

The next step is to determine the skills your current workforce possesses. This can be accomplished through tools such as:

* Performance reviews
* 360s
* Skills assessments
* Behavioral assessments

Compare the results with the skill sets required to execute your business strategy. Make note of any gaps to address.

**3. Address skills gaps.**

Hiring, training, mentoring, and outsourcing are all options for addressing skills gaps.

Which method you use depends on how soon you need the skill, how quickly the gap could be closed by upskilling existing employees, and your budget for learning and development.

**Mentoring**

If your current employees have the desired skills but need to advance their competence, mentoring might be a great option for you. While it takes time, it’s one of the least costly ways to upskill your employees. Connect employees with more senior team members who can help then hone and develop the desired skills.

**Training**

If your budget allows for it, you might hire a professional training firm to develop employees. For example, sales teams may bring in firms like Sandler Training to increase sales and negotiation skills. This allows your employees to learn from seasoned experts who teach this type of content for a living.

**Hiring**

You may find that the best way to fill a skills gap is to bring in a new hire or improve your existing hiring process.

**180° or 360° assessment.**

What a 360 Feedback Survey Measures:

* 360 feedback measures behaviors and competencies
* 360 assessments provide feedback on how others perceive an employee
* 360 feedback addresses skills such as listening, planning, and goal-setting
* A 360 evaluation focuses on subjective areas such as teamwork, character, and leadership effectiveness

What 360 Feedback Surveys do not assess:

* 360 feedback is not a way to measure employee performance objectives (MBOs)
* 360 feedback is not a way to determine whether an employee is meeting basic job requirements
* 360 feedback is not focused on basic technical or job-specific skills
* 360 feedback should not be used to measure strictly objective things such as attendance, sales quotas, etc.

**Competency assessment for recruitment.**

**Benefits of Implementing a Competency-Based Hiring Process**

There are numerous benefits to employing competency examinations in your organization’s recruitment process. This method gives you the unique opportunity to get to know potential candidates on a more personal level before allowing them to move further along in the hiring process and glean a general understanding of how their personalities and level of expertise fit into your company culture. Competency-based hiring can also help your organziation achieve the following:

* Greater value in recruitment process by making it easier for you to choose the best candidates for the position
* Create a more consistent and focused hiring model that highlights the pros and cons each candidate has to offer
* Eliminates biases from one candidate to another and allows you to make a fair and carefully considered decision based on the person’s personal and professional attributes
* Reduces the chances of having negative employee turnaround rates by guaranteeing that only the right people are hired for each position
* Provides top notch platforms and standards for companies to receive and react to constructive feedback from potential candidates
* Improves and supports the predictive hiring model which allows employers to effectively make decisions about what they expect from potential candidates based on the performance of past employees who occupied that role within the company