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| Workforce of the Future - Identifying and Assessing Potential Employees  |

Introduction

At the heart of talent management and succession planning is the fair and accurate assessment of performance and potential. There are also the fundamental factors of the individual’s aspirations and their readiness to fulfil another role (should that be their desire). There are many ways of making assessments, both formal and informal. Services should consider the best approach to assessment depending on the occupation, skills, leadership competencies of the roles etc. they are assessing for the future.

The purpose of this guide is to outline several types of approaches that can be undertaken to support current or new processes in assessing future potential. The Organisation Development Team can also work with Services to design and tailor methods of assessment that will be most suitable for those being assessed.

Measuring Performance and Potential

**Performance**

Performance should be measured by a combination of **WHAT** people do (the tasks and objectives they need to complete as part of their role) and **HOW** they do it (the behaviours and attitudes they display in their day to day work and interactions).

Typical sources of individual performance information that are readily available may include:

* 1:1 data
* Appraisals/PCR, including the extent to which performance and development objectives have been met. At their best, these also include measurable behavioural indicators outlining the expectations of the post holder
* 360 Feedback
* Recent work challenges/specific assignments
* Performance metrics (individual, team and organisational)

Other methods of assessing performance in the broader context of succession planning include:

* Interviews
* Observation
* Assessment and Development Centres

These may include assessment in relation to specific skills and/or aptitudes individuals display (what they can do), along with a review against behavioural competencies for Grades 1-8 [Grades 1-8](http://connect.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=25531&p=0) and [Leadership](http://connect.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=21171&p=0).

**Potential**

In measuring potential, it’s important to recognise that everyone is different. They may be happy in their current role or aspire to move on to something new. It is also something that individuals can choose to increase or decrease depending on their level of motivation at a given point in time.

Formal and Informal Assessment

This process may involve:

**Questionnaires with follow up conversations**

Using a questionnaire, the individual and their manager can rate against a number of statements which provide more detailed definitions and are asked to provide examples of how they have demonstrated potential in these areas.

Through conversation, managers can share any evidence that they have observed of the level of interest an individual has shown in getting involved at the next level up, their interest in discussing their development and stretching themselves, and explore the information with the aim of getting a shared view on this.

Examples of questions include:

* Do you feel that you performed at a ‘stretch’ level, for example standing in for your manager or your involvement in a particularly challenging event? What potential did you demonstrate?
* What previous experience do you have or from outside of work that you feel reveals untapped potential?
* What would you like to achieve in your current role? Is your current role giving you what you need?
* How would you like your role to evolve or change? What is the attraction?
* What are your career aspirations currently? Please come prepared to share examples (if you have these) of how you are preparing yourself to be ready for increased responsibility or other career development opportunities.
* What development will you need to make the transition? What support do you need to do this? Based upon your performance in your current role, provide an indication of your readiness for another role.

**Free flowing conversation**

These are less formal, and may not use specific criteria, focusing more upon simple measures in relation to overall performance and a readiness to move. Some managers use ‘gut feel’ or a ‘crystal ball’ approach. The latter involves answering three significant questions, irrespective of assessment methodologies or rating systems. These are:

* How do these individuals set their agenda?
* How do these individuals take others with them?
* How do these individuals present themselves?

Criteria used to measure potential

**Learning agility** - This is about self-awareness and a focus on personal improvement. Individuals displaying potential within this area will actively seek experiences, feedback and remain open to opportunities to learn. They will use these learning experiences to adjust the way they behave and the actions they take. This is also about displaying flexibility in the way which they can develop themselves around the evolving needs of work and personal contexts within which they operate.

**People (interpersonal) agility -** This is about seeking others views, engendering trust and finding the common ground that leads to an agreed way forward. Individuals displaying potential within this area display confidence and credibility with colleagues regardless of profession and have or are developing a positive reputation/visibility across the organisation. They are able to build and maintain relationships with individuals at all levels, manage their emotions in difficult situations and display resilience and calmness when challenged.

**Cognitive (mental) agility** - This is about thinking through problems from a fresh point of view and taking a step back to consider the wider context. Individuals displaying potential in this area are able to make sense of complex situations and find ways to simplify them for themselves and others. They are also able to find solutions that work now and in the longer term.

**Change agility -** This is about being curious and liking to experiment with new things.

**Results agility** - This is about achieving results under tough conditions, demonstrating perseverance and courage of conviction and inspiring others to do the same.

The aim in measurement of performance and/or potential is the objective collection and clear expression of **evidence.** Accurate and clearly documented observations about how individuals have performed are critical to discussions. It is important to summarise the observations based on the evidence you have as to the extent to which the individual has displayed the behaviour or the extent to which they have met an objective.

* Weigh up the positive and negative
* Consider what was missing - ‘evidence by omission’
* Strong and weak evidence

**Recording evidence**

* Use your evidence and record it
* Leave blank if you have no evidence
* Summarise what has gone well/less well
* Structure evidence for use in giving clear feedback

**Nine-Box Grid**

The nine-box grid (sometimes known as the talent grid) provides a method to summarising where an individual (or group of individuals) is/are at a given point in time. By bringing together the dimensions of performance and potential the grid forms the basis of a conversation between individuals and their manager.

Thinking about this information as a snapshot is a useful metaphor as we know that individual performance and potential change can evolve constantly and can be influenced by both the individual and their manager. To this end the nine-box grid is NOT about putting people in a box but rather guiding them and their manager towards the most helpful conversation, finding the right solutions and taking action.

The nine-box grid can be found using this [link](http://connect.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=56724&p=0). In addition, the [attached document](http://connect.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=56723&p=0) helps support managers using the nine-box grid and provides further information of evidence and descriptions within each box.

* The X axis (horizontal line) of 3 boxes relates to performance i.e. the extent to which the individual has achieved their objectives and displayed the relevant behaviour for their role.
* The Y axis (vertical line) relates to potential i.e. the level of potential that an individual is displaying at a given point in time.
* A combination of X and Y axis defines the position on the grid that the individual is placed.

Remember, the purpose of the grid is to increase the quality of the conversation between the individual and their manager and ultimately for both parties to focus on how they can maximise the level of potential that an individual is displaying at a given point in time.

**After the review**

Feedback offers crucial insights and is a process fundamental to increasing the performance and potential of people in organisations. You need to plan your feedback carefully to ensure it is effective.

**Assessment and Development Centre**

An assessment/development centre is a detailed evaluation of an individual’s skills and developmental needs by assessing them on various competencies, using multiple tools, required to be successful on the job.

As part of the centre, an organisation selectively sends employees to an offsite, outside the office’s confines, to disconnect from the day-to-day routine, build employee engagement and enhance self-awareness. Participants undergo several activities such as role-playing, group discussions, behavioural interviews and business case presentations. Meanwhile, experienced assessors observe and evaluate the participants based on their demonstrative behaviour. Toward the end of each activity, assessors collate their observations and discuss each participant’s performance.

Once they reach an agreement on individual performance, they create a report, based on which participants get one-to-one feedback.

Although it can be seen as a challenging experience, the purpose is always to help individuals maximise their strengths, minimise their weaknesses and identify hidden potential.

**Other alternatives**

Both assessment and development centres use a number of simulation techniques to evaluate competencies however any other

effort for competency assessment can also use same the methods or look for other appropriate ways to evaluate behaviours.

**Observing the candidate at his/her work** is the simplest method. The natural work environment makes the employee much more relaxed and they display their job-related competencies at ease without the usual anxiety that accompanies assessment. This makes the job of the observers easy as well as allowing them to gather concrete and relevant examples of behaviours to be assessed simultaneously, as they can see them in action.

**Structured Interviews** are another popular method which open ended questions are asked to the participant which help explore a particular job-related competency better. It happens by asking very specific questions regarding a past performance, cited as an example for a competency by the participant and the observer tries to establish the competency by asking questions about it.

The list of questions can be long, but the observer must essentially bring out the fact that if a competency or behaviour is displayed, there is a well-defined intent behind it as well.

**Simulation exercises** are worth exploring. As these exercises represent situations from the work life of the employee, they can easily relate to it and therefore job-related relevant behaviours are exhibited. Some of the important tools used under simulation exercises are:

**Role Play** - Using role play in simulation exercises reveal a great deal of information regarding the behaviours. The role play may have a little situation described which is given to the participant and similar information is provided to the observer however the observers are provided with certain leading questions which help to elicit the behaviours to be observed.

**In Tray** - It basically contains some correspondence and other information on which the participant has to take decisions after appropriate prioritisation. It is a time bound exercise and if it is conducted as a detailed written exercise, the participants also have to explain the reason behind their decisions.

**Case Study** - A case studies for the assessment sake can be defined as detailed information regarding the different aspects of an organisation, person or situation depending upon the competencies to be judged and has some problem themes running through it. The participant is required to carefully analyse various relevant aspects of the problems and issues and reach a conclusion regarding the same with a logical reason to support his/her decisions.

**Psychometric assessments/Aptitude Tests** are another popular method for not just assessing the competencies but also understanding the strengths, personality types and motivation of the participants. There are psychometric tests which measure specific competencies like teamwork, leadership, emotional, etc. Cognitive

ability tests provide great information regarding aspects like conceptual problem solving, business and financial acumen, etc.

Review and Follow Up after Assessments

Review and follow up is important for any process but indispensable after assessments. It is crucial that a comprehensive and robust review mechanism is planned in detail along-with the assessments. When assessments are being used for developmental purposes like for identifying high potential employees, for succession planning or role change, it acts as a navigator for the participant and the manager to align the development actions based on post assessment feedback.

Even when assessments are done for selection or rejection purposes like promotion it always helps the participants if a short review happens. It prevents de-motivation in people not selected as well as reminds them of the areas that they need to work upon. Frequent reviews and follow ups ensure that the learning continues for everyone.

When assessments are used in a Development Centre, a detailed [Individual Action Development Plan](http://connect.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=56695&p=0) is the end result which outlines the developmental objectives to be achieved by the participant. A review must be a very detailed process.

So, what does a review comprise of after assessment:

* It must assess how far the learning or developmental objectives have been achieved
* How confident the individual feels to undertake the task in future
* How the newly learned skills or procedures will be used in future
* Areas which still cause problems or need more practice
* Aspects of learning found difficult and what can be done to make them easier
* Kind of support required by the participant
* Structure and timescale for the learning experience
* What will be the next stage of learning?

The reviewer who may be a reporting manager or the immediate line-manager has to partner in the learning process of the participant. They have to be aware of the developments and progress they make and also need to understand the difficulties being faced by them and provide support on an ongoing basis.

Sometimes all does not go well with the participants regarding the entire feedback and developmental actions suggested and the development goals in particular. This may be due to:

* The participant not making much progress
* Lower levels of motivation and commitment
* Confusion regarding the relevance of developmental goals
* Changing priorities
* Lack of support

The role of the reviewer, who might be a reporting manager or immediate line-manager, hence becomes broader in scope with such participants. The most important aspects becoming:

* Listening patiently to obstacles and difficulties faced by participants and take initiative to remove them or suggest alternatives
* Confronting participants when he/she does not follow through on commitments
* Speaking directly with the participant even when discussing difficult or sensitive issues
* Communicating in ways that reflects respect for one’s own worth and the worth of others

Reviews after assessments also provide information regarding the quality of assessments done and feedback provided to the participants.

Conclusion

This guide provides an outline of a variety of flexible approaches to assessing potential candidates. However please note that this list is not exhaustive with several other methods available, some of which may incur costs such as:

[MBTI](https://eu.themyersbriggs.com/en/tools/MBTI)

[Insights Discovery](https://www.insights.com/products/insights-discovery/360%20degree%20)

360-degree feedback

Please find below further reading regarding succession planning and assessing potential participants:

[CIPD Succession Planning](https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/resourcing/succession-planning-factsheet)

[CIPD Talent Management](https://peopleprofession.cipd.org/profession-map/specialist-knowledge/talent-management%23gref)