# COMPETENCE
# MANAGEMENT

RelyOn Nutec
360° Safety

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# INTRODUCTION

In safety critical industries, where people work with complex machines and perform difficult tasks daily, skilled and experienced employees are crucial to avoid accidents or critical situations. Here, competence is key to ensuring a safe working environment. Competence consists of three aspects: skills, knowledge, and experience. At RelyOn Nutec, we offer competence management services to support our customers in all aspects of workforce competence. When referring to competence, people often assume that training equals competence. Even though the two are undoubtedly interlinked, they are not the same.

# WHAT IS COMPETENCE?

**KNOWLEDGE**

**SKILLS**

**EXPERIENCE**

**COMPETENCE**

Competence is an ongoing process and not simply a means to an end. It ensures that workers can safely carry out their daily operations and react efficiently and effectively to critical situations. To understand competence, it is crucial to consider the complexity and broadness of the term. Competence is a moving target as changes to the environment, equipment, and/or personnel make for a constantly evolving workplace. It is therefore impossible for organisations to be 100% competent at all times.

Understanding this process helps organisations set realistic goals and ensures that competence is dealt with correctly. To become a competent worker, skills and knowledge gained through training play an essential role. However, experience is equally important, with seasoned workers generally reacting more calmly and safely to critical incidents. Therefore, organisations must ensure that their workers gain enough experience before carrying out difficult or dangerous tasks. There are two aspects to be considered when it comes to competence: the individual and the organisation. Individuals need to do their daily job safely so as not to endanger themselves or other people. Organisations must provide an environment where people can learn and grow to become competent workers. But how does one assess and ensure ongoing competence?

# COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT

Competence assessment should happen during normal operations as workers carry out their daily routine. To measure a worker's competence correctly, the assessment process should be as unobtrusive as possible so that it does not impact or interfere with the way they carry out their work. Assessment, therefore, usually takes place at the workplace during a typical working day. Only critical situations and emergency response scenarios should, for obvious reasons, be simulated. Ideally, individuals should do what they would typically do when assessing competence, while the assessment captures the proof of competence. This is primarily done through direct observation by designated, qualified, and discipline-specific assessors.

Additional activities, such as pre-set questions or discussions, provide a record of knowledge assessment. On occasion, individuals might be asked to gather and present supporting documentation for their competence. All of these steps taken during an assessment should be documented thoroughly so external bodies can also audit the data.

A competence assessment ranges from level 1 (the lowest) to level 4 (the highest). How often competences have to be assessed depends on their risk level, with high-risk competences requiring re-assessment more regularly than the lower-risk ones.

Historically, this would be a costly and time-consuming process with assessments documented manually, which often led to extensive and confusing excel sheets. Fortunately, competence management software can now help simplify this process. Our competence management software application provides real-time visibility of the competence status of the workforce, supports proactive planning of assessments, and maintains and provides a complete (historical) record of all completed assessments. Our dedicated assessment app works online and offline, providing a highly flexible and efficient method of assessment.

# COMPETENCE ACCREDITATIONS

Organisations can apply for accreditation of their competence management framework with one of the accreditor bodies – OPITO and IADC. This can be done by demonstrating that they have the correct procedures in place, have defined their assessment and quality assurance strategy, and established how data would be captured and recorded. For an organisation to achieve accreditation, they have to demonstrate a competence management framework. Software systems themselves don't get accreditation, but the whole framework does. Since competences are ongoing and must be assessed repeatedly, accreditation is subject to annual or bi-annual monitoring.

RECRUITMENT

TRAINING
DEVELOPMENT

COMPETENCE
ASSURANCE

CAREER
DEVELOPMENT
/ SUCCESSION
PLANNING
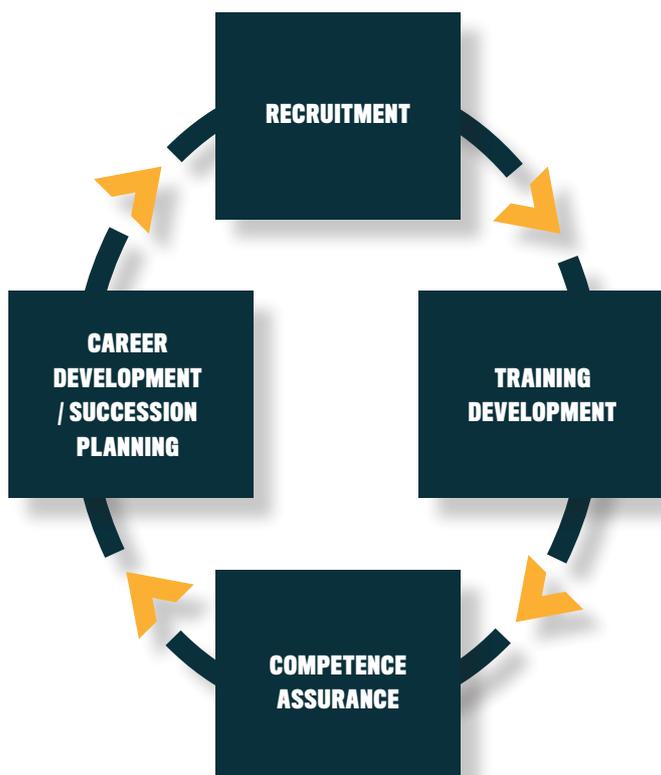
From an organisational perspective, it is essential to focus not only on meeting specific criteria but also on aligning internal processes to fully embrace competence management to bring out the best of the organisation. A fully integrated approach can help save time and resources and encompass all employee lifecycle stages: recruitment, training development, competence assurance, and career development/succession planning. One can imagine it like a circle that includes all stages workers can go through during their careers. The level of integration often depends on factors like the size and type of the organisation.

When implementing a competence management framework, the first step is assessing what the organisation already has in place so that those can be included in the process. The integrating process involves defining competences so job descriptions can be aligned with competence profiles and required training can be identified based on competence. Individuals can then be promoted based on competence profiles instead of subjective factors.

The next step is to align the organisation's appraisal system with the competence assessment. To achieve this, the highest level of measure from the competence profile would become a criterion within a section of the appraisal; key competences are integrated as measurables into the annual performance review. This saves time since it is then built into the way the organisation manages its employees daily.

Additionally, it is crucial for any successful competence management framework to address re-assessment. Since competence is a process and not a means to an end, it must be continually assured.

# STEPS OF IMPLEMENTATION

| AUDIT | > | DEFINING COMPETENCIES | > | TRAINING | > | IMPLEMENTATION |

### 01. AUDIT/REVIEW: AUDIT THE ORGANISATION, PROVIDE A REPORT

To assess an organisation's procedures, we first analyse the organisation and provide a detailed report. This is important since established processes can, and should be, integrated into the competence management framework. Additionally, the organisation's goals for the competence management system should be taken into account. Some organisations are happy with a simple application, while others strive for a fully integrated approach encompassing everything from recruitment to training.

### 02. DEFINE COMPETENCES: DEFINE THE JOB ROLE COMPETENCES

To ensure that the right people are hired, including pre-defined competences in the job descriptions is vital. This is a critical step in ensuring a competent workforce, as it lays the basis for employing the right people. If competences are not included in the job descriptions, applicants who might not be fit to carry out the tasks safely could get hired. This would result in competence problems for the organisation.

### 03. TRAINING: START TRAINING THE INDIVIDUALS (WITH THE COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS IN MIND)

Once competences are appropriately defined and gaps are identified, the organisation can start to train its employees. Aligning training programmes with the required competences play a crucial role in ensuring a safe work environment. Additional training can help close gaps where a lack of competence might have been identified.

### 04. IMPLEMENTATION: PILOT, LESSONS LEARNED, THEN ROLL IT OUT THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE ORGANISATION

In the last step, the implementation takes place. It is helpful, to begin with, a small section of the business and to identify any problems before implementing the system throughout the whole organisation. This way, more significant issues can be dealt with, and the process becomes smoother for the entire workforce. Implementing a new system is always a challenge, so it is in the organisation's best interest to make the transition as seamless as possible.

**05.** Competence management software plays an essential role in ensuring all steps and processes are recorded correctly, and this is not only important for securing accreditation. Internal processes can also benefit from detailed documentation. Should a complication occur, a comprehensive record-keeping system means that a mistake can be located, analysed and corrected much quicker.

# WHY DEMONSTRATING COMPETENCE IS IMPORTANT

By ensuring that workers carry out their tasks safely and responsibly, competence significantly reduces risk at the workplace. A safe work environment is of the highest importance, especially in safety critical industries like the oil and gas industry. Ensuring high levels of competence not only has internal benefits, but clients often feel more inclined to engage with organisations with a solid competence management framework in place. Having competence frameworks accredited might help organisations attract new clients and improve trust between organisation and client. A robust competence system will deliver real value to a business by satisfying the expectations of clients and regulators and providing a platform for continuous improvement.

An adequate competence framework will help improve safety and productivity among the employees. Since the framework can include all steps in the employee lifecycle, high competence is ensured in all stages of employment. This helps reduce non-productive time and creates trust among the employees themselves. Defining the right competences can help focus the employees' efforts on the most important things to the organisation and, ultimately, generate success.

For employees themselves, competence profiles give a valuable indication of what "good work" should look like and support them to improve their skills in the right areas. Managers will find it helpful to promote and manage their workers based on clearly defined competences and not just on their subjective judgement.

# MANAGING COMPETENCE:
## TRADITIONAL VS IT SOLUTION

Competence can be managed traditionally, with the help of Excel spreadsheets. Naturally, Excel is highly flexible, and each organisation can use it in its way to keep track of competence levels. All defined competences can be added to the spreadsheets. Excel imposes no restrictions on how particular and in-depth an organisation chooses to go with their competence management and documentation, or how precisely they want to differentiate between types of equipment, for example. Additionally, organisations can distinguish between role-specific and common competence, and it is up to them to leave room for interpretation.

However, with an organisation's growing size and maturity, these processes become more complex and confusing. Here, an IT system can provide clarity and structure to the competence management process. Keeping track of workforce competence becomes quicker and easier. Existing gaps can be identified immediately, and training implemented to close these before issues in competence occur. Additionally, an optimised competence management process saves time. With sophisticated reporting and data analytic tools, managers can quickly see a complete overview of competence levels without having to look through countless Excel files. They can fully dedicate their time to other tasks.

However, implementing a competence management software solution is not without its challenges. With an IT system now overseeing the competence levels, competences need to be clearly defined. There is no room for interpretations or vague descriptions, and a clear division between global, job-overarching, and role-specific needs to be made.

The broadness of the term competence poses a challenge for organisations to find the right way to deal with competence management. There are conflicting views and definitions of competence which are often hard to combine in one single approach. This struggle translates to management software as well: While some people want a simple, user-friendly overview, others strive for detail and demand a more complex and extensive solution.

# THE RIGHT
## COMPETENCY SOLUTION

Since there is often no concrete description of how to deal with competence, it can come as a challenge to organisations to establish an entire competence management framework on their own. Nowadays, there are many solutions and

applications that support organisations in their competence management. When it comes down to choosing a system, a few things should be kept in mind:

**CUSTOMISATION**

**INTEGRATION**

**EASE OF USE**

• **CUSTOMISATION:** Customisation plays a crucial role in ensuring the system delivers to your requirements and is accepted by employees. From simple updates, such as customising certain terms, to more extensive changes which will make the competence management system your own. This will help to ensure it will be used daily and will become part of your organisation's operations.

• **INTEGRATION:** To ensure a smooth implementation and a successful start to the new competence management system, it is essential to integrate seamlessly into existing processes and applications.

• **EASE OF USE:** A competence management system should simplify your life, so an intuitive and easy-to-use interface should be prioritised. This increases the chances of successful and easy integration, as well as acceptance among the employees.

# HOW WE CAN HELP

Organisations often feel overwhelmed when creating a competence management framework when there is very little guidance on dealing with competence properly. RelyOn Nutec aims to support organisations throughout the process – from assessing the processes an organisation already has in place, defining competences and training goals, implementing the competence management framework, and getting the correct accreditation. Our competence management service ensures that organisations develop the proper framework and then maintain that framework in line with international standards.
Our competence management software application is highly flexible and can be individually configured to meet your organisation's needs. It is designed to meet the requirements of all major accreditation bodies.

The main features of our competence management system include:
• Digital and real-time tracking for your employees' competences as set by your competence framework
• End-to-end coverage of the assessment process, including comprehensive data/evidence storage and audit capabilities
• Comprehensive digital assessment using a custom app on or offline
• Highly configurable system which can fully align with your existing framework
• Fulfils competence framework accreditation requirements

Once the system is implemented, the assessment and verification time can be reduced by up to 40%. Additionally, our competence management system

seamlessly integrates with other platforms to ensure complete visibility and management of the workforce's competence. It provides a comprehensive overview of the competence levels, assists in managing employees' careers, and can assess the entire organisation so that gaps in competence requirements can be found and closed. Our competence management system is always made "fit for purpose" to best accommodate your organisation's needs and goals. Rider is a flexible and dynamic system and therefore can support multiple competence management systems.

When implementing a competence management system, we always make sure to meet the client's individual needs. Thus, it is essential to align goals and basic understandings so that misconceptions can be avoided.

## • WHAT DOES THE ORGANISATION WANT TO GET OUT OF IT?
Often organisations have very different views on why they want to implement a competence management system. Here, defining goals and milestones is a crucial process. The "why" plays an essential role since it also has implications on the "what" and "how" of the implementation process.

## • WHAT DO THEY MEAN WITH COMPETENCE?
Since competence is such a broad term, understanding of the word can differ significantly. Therefore, it should be clarified beforehand what the organisation understands under competence to prevent miscommunication.

Clarifying those objectives beforehand ensures that the customisation of the competence management system can be used to its full potential so that organisations can get the most out of it.

# CONCLUSION

Competence is an ongoing process and, therefore, can be hard to manage. It plays a crucial role in ensuring a safe workplace to protect employees, other people, and the environment. Organisations should, therefore, take measures to ensure the competence of their workforce. A competence management system can help simplify the process and improve an organisation's overall competence level. Choosing the right implementation partner plays a crucial role: They provide guidance, support when issues arise and ensure the new application integrates seamlessly into existing processes to make the transition as easy as possible.

It is not easy to find the right balance to define competences detailed enough to be useful yet not too complex to be implemented in an IT system. To prevent frustration, it is good to clarify internally beforehand how the organisation understands and defines competences and what they expect from a competence management system. This also helps with the decision process when it comes to choosing a competence solution.

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