



Competence Assessment Tool

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Third and Fourth Stage



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction	3
2 Analysis of the questionnaires	4
2.1 Analysis of the first part	5
2.2 Analysis of the second part	5
2.3 Analysis of the third part	6
2.4 Analysis of the fourth part	6
2.5 Analysis of the fifth part	7
3 Personal Interview	8
3.1 Implementation	Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.



1 Introduction

After a thorough analysis of existing competence assessment tools, it was concluded that none of them fully meets the needs of the "REGROW" project. Therefore, a new instrument was developed, perfectly adapted to these needs. The assessment of the participants' existing professional competencies is carried out in a four-stage procedure:

1st stage: Applicant's self-assessment through written or electronic questionnaire.

2nd stage: Company's self-assessment

3rd stage: Comparison and analysis of the self-assessments for similarities and differences

4th stage: Personal interview by a company representative and/or consultant.

The four stages of competence assessment consist of two self-assessments, one by the applicant and the other by the hiring company. These self-assessments are evaluated by the company and/or consultant in the third stage and thus form a sound basis for the personal interview.

The self-evaluation on both sides and the subsequent evaluation leads to both the applicant and the company representative being aware of the competencies and competence requirements. Thus, an informed interview can take place in the fourth stage.

Prior to the interview that applicant receives part 1 and part 4 of the second stage (company assessment).



2 Analysis of the questionnaires

The third stage of the competence assessment process is the comparison of the two previously submitted self-assessment questionnaires by the company representative and/or the consultant. The two self-assessment questionnaires are structured in such a way that a direct comparison of the sections 2 - 5 is possible. For this purpose, the two self-assessments are designed complementarily, meaning that the evaluation should always assess both, the applicant's answers and the company's answers for each part. The five sections are dealing with the following topics:

	First stage (applicant)	Second stage (company)
First section	Personal background	Company facts
Second section	Professional background	Required professional characteristics
Third section	Skills	Required competencies
Fourth section	Looking into the future	Corporate culture
Fifth section	The ideal workplace	Workplace conditions

The two questionnaires are deliberately designed in such a way that there are no points to be achieved in any category or that an automatically calculated result is generated for individual competencies. It is not a test of competencies that leads to a winner. The reason for this design is that younger people in particular are not fully aware of their competencies and a comprehensive exploration of competencies requires a lengthy and detailed process. This is unsuitable for many SMEs. Also, certain competencies are formed only in the early years of a person's career. Thus, a way was chosen to make competence tendencies and requirements visible in order to start a personal interview prepared and with prior knowledge about each other. Furthermore, the aim of the first three stages of the process is to create a sound basis for the personal interview and not to achieve an incontrovertible final result. Tendencies and preferences are to be made recognizable.

Every person and every company is unique. This is why we deliberately refrain from using a hard evaluation scheme, but instead explain in general terms which results of the self-assessment must be paid particular attention to and how to make a good sense of the answers.



2.1 Analysis of the first section

In the first section of the self-assessment the applicant gives information about his/her person and personal interests. In the company's self-assessment, the first part deals with first information about the company and its services. In this section, the applicant also discusses items that are essential to him or her, as well as his or her key personal interests.

This information of the first section of gives a first impression about the applicant and the company. First points of contact can be identified, and similarities can be detected. The information can provide a good conversation starter.

What to look out for:

- The questions about preferences, interests and hobbies give the company a first impression of the applicant. An initial comparison with the possible future workplace and the company's focus areas can show whether a personal interest in the profession already exists.
- For the interviewer, the first section of the applicant questionnaire is also a good tool for an informal opening of the conversation.

The first section of the second stage (company information) is to be send to the applicant prior to the interview.

2.2 Analysis of the second section

The second section of the competence assessments deals with the professional and educational background, internships, professional experience and language skills. This section is almost identical in stage one and stage two, except the internship section.

The second section helps employers to easily assess if the candidate possesses the required formal qualifications: level of education, experience and languages.

The company's self-description is not to be shared with the candidate.

What to look out for:

- Compare the required with the stated qualifications and take notes about differences.
- Check whether differences are knock-out criteria.



2.3 Analysis of the third section

In this section the self-assessment of the skills (candidate side) and the desired candidates' characteristics (company side) are compared. Each statement in the candidate questionnaire has a complementary skill in the company questionnaire, e.g.

"I'm good at leading the way." corresponds to "Leadership"

"Criticism helps me to improve." corresponds to "Open to criticism"

There is no automated comparison or calculation of some form of a matching score, because each employer must decide how important the different skills are to them. Similarities and differences can give you a hint of how to approach the interview with the candidate.

What to look out for:

- First decide which skills are the most important for you regarding the open position.
- Look for large differences and elaborate them further in the interview.
- Take into account that this is a self-assessment. Small differences might be not so relevant but can be interesting to elaborate further in the interview.
- Candidates that are humble might rate themselves lower in the self-assessment, candidates that are more extroverts might rate themselves higher than they really are.

2.4 Analysis of the fourth section

In this section of the assessment the candidate can state ideas about his or her future and the company gives information about the corporate culture. As the company section about the corporate culture will be shared with the candidate it is important to understand it as a part of the assessment, in which the company is selling itself to the candidate.

The candidate has the opportunity to provide information about his wishes and desires for the future and to further elaborate his or her interests. This information is extremely valuable for the company as they can get a first idea of the long-term fit of this candidate.

What to look out for:



- Take the opportunity to get a good understanding about the candidates wishes and professional desires. This section is interesting to discuss in detail with the candidate in the personal interview.
- The best employee is identifying him- or herself with the corporate culture, its values and the business purpose. Look out for a good fit to achieve a long-lasting employment relationship.

2.5 Analysis of the fifth section

In the last part of the assessment a comparison between desired workplace conditions (applicant side) and existing workplace conditions (company side) takes place. The individual preferences for workplace conditions are extremely important for applicants. Especially skilled workers and the younger generation of workers are aware of workplace conditions and a competition between employers about the best workplace conditions.

The assessment of the workplace conditions is beneficial for the company in two respects:

- 1) Find the candidate whose preferences fit best to the company's workplace conditions.
- 2) Identify the desired workplace conditions of your candidates. After 20 candidates you can identify a pattern of the workplace needs of typical applicants in your sector/region.

What to look out for:

- Check if you might need to adapt your workplace conditions if large differences between candidates' preferences and the company's' offers appear frequently.
- In case a candidate seems to be a good fit, try to adapt your workplace conditions to convince the candidate to work for you.
- If the candidates' preferences and the company's offer differ frequently, this can be a sign that there is also a misbalance with your workplace conditions and your current employees.

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3 Personal Interview

The personal interview is the last stage of the competence assessment and the hiring process. In this part the final decision of offering a contract is made. But also, the candidate is deciding about whether he or she wants to work for the company or not. To conduct the interview as fruitful as possible it is essential to take all the information provided in the first three stages into account.

The candidate most likely wrote plenty of applications and especially if he/she is a good candidate will receive more than one job interview invitation. The information gathered about the candidate's skills, background and wishes in the first three stages is more than other companies might have prior to the interview. Therefore, the interviewer's goal should be to make the best of it. Not being aware of the candidates' answers can even backlash if the candidate feels not taken seriously. Good preparation from both sides is the key to a successful interview.

The structure and procedure of the interview with the participants after the self-assessment and the methodological approach to the interview will have to be flexibly adapted by the interviewers to the personnel, organizational and time constraints as well as any other possibilities and framework conditions of the company. There can be no binding guidelines or rules for this.

Nevertheless, some information on the procedure and methodological approach can be given and used as a possible roadmap. However, the sequence of the following process information can also be changed in individual cases. Modifications or changes to this roadmap, which continue to pursue the goal of the interview, are also possible.

3.1 Preparation

A good professional preparation of the interview is the key to the ultimate goal of successfully hiring a new employee. The following instructions can help to implement the job interview outstandingly:

- The interviewer should deal intensively with the CV, the self-assessment (first stage) and the results of the analysis (third stage) before the interview begins.
 - Derive initial questions from the documents.
- The applicant should be given enough preparation time as well, to deal with the first and fourth parts of the company questionnaire.
- Determine which departments, specialists, managers or employees will be involved.



- Create an individual interview guideline that is made available to all stakeholders of the company in advance.
- Determine how and by whom decisions are made in the application process.
- Decide whether there will be one or more selection rounds in the application process.
- You can also prepare a short task that the applicant has to solve during the interview.

Organisation

Some organizational aspects need to be taken into account as well:

- Ensure the reception of the candidate. A friendly welcome is an important first impression that the candidate receives from you.
- Prepare the room for the interview. Arrange the tables pleasantly and prepare water or coffee.
- Allow enough time for the interview. A candidate should not meet the next candidate in the hallway, and you should not have to rush out of the interview because you have another appointment.
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3.2 Interview Implementation

If you are conducting a job interview, you should also be able to moderate it competently. Specifically, this means that you should ask meaningful questions and present your company authentically.

For a successful job interview, it is advisable to prepare an individual interview guide in advance that covers all of the following content.

1) Smalltalk

Smalltalk is the introduction to a structured interview. A brief greeting is followed by a short introduction of the interviewers. After that, the information in the first part of the applicant questionnaire about interests and hobbies can provide a more interesting introduction than, for example, questions about travel. At the end of this part, a brief overview of the following interview should follow.

2) Candidate presentation



Then it is time for the job candidate to present him-/herself. You can give an open question like: "Please tell us something about yourself!" or guided questions referring to the skills required for the position like: "Why did you apply for this job?", "Why do you want this job?", "Why should we hire you?". Ask open-ended questions, i.e. questions that cannot only be answered with "yes" or "no".

Keep in mind: The getting-to-know-you phase is the applicant's stage. As an employer, you should keep a low profile as much as possible and only act as a source of inspiration.

3) Job presentation and skills

In this part of the interview, the company first introduces itself. The interviewer explains details about the advertised position and provides important information about what is expected of future employees.

After the candidate's and the job presentation a deeper discussion can start about the job requirement and the skills. The results of the analysis of the second and third part of the assessment are particularly helpful here. In this way, suitable and non-suitable competencies can be discussed, and precise follow-up questions can be made on the basis of the previous analysis.

- 4) **Company presentation and workplace conditions:** Then a more detailed presentation about the company itself, the culture and the workplace conditions can follow. Take into account that the candidate already received part four about the corporate culture. Take some time to ask specific questions relating to both, the corporate culture and the candidate's profile. After that the conversation can address the working conditions. It might be the time to better understand why the candidate has several preferences and what the company can do to match the preferences.

Also, give concrete information about the workplace conditions like:

- Salary
- (Flexible) Working hours
- Holiday arrangements
- Benefits
- ...



5) Open discussion and questions: In this part the interviewer can address the wishes and personal and professional goals of the candidate. Tell how he/she can fulfil the goals within the position he/she is applying for and how your company has the right environment for this.

Towards the end, the candidate is given the opportunity to ask questions. Questions show interest and that the explanations have been followed attentively. The more detailed the questions, the better.

6) Closing:

Once all questions have been clarified, it is obligatory to thank the applicant at the end of the interview and to explain what is happening next:

- Will there be another interview?
- When will the applicant receive a reply?
- Who can he/she contact with any queries?
- How can the applicant settle any travel expenses?

3.3 Follow-up

After all interviews have been completed, the selection of the suitable new employee follows. It will be easier for you to make a selection if you have documented the interviews. It is therefore advisable to make at least bullet-point notes about the respective applicants during the interview.

Very important: You should keep to everything you agreed to during the interview. This applies in particular to the outlined time frame. Inform all candidates promptly of your decision. This means that, in addition to the commitment and the contract offer, you should send a rejection letter to the other applicants as quickly as possible.

If there are any delays in the decision-making process, inform the candidates immediately. Open and appreciative communication has a decisive influence on your corporate image.