

# Are you a business

Attracting, developing  
and retaining  
talented employees

## PART FIVE

As an employer, you may already measure the costs of recruitment, but have you considered the 'butterfly effect' of damaged customer relationships caused by lack of staff performance assessment?

**T**he purpose of employee assessment isn't simply about identifying development needs; it's also about ensuring that new knowledge, skills and behaviours are being effectively transferred and embedded in the workplace by encouraging 'conscious competence' to translate into 'unconscious competence'.

If a technician undergoes a course in high-pressure fuel systems, it can

reasonably be assumed that this 'tangible skill' will be transferred to the work place?

But, on the face of it, 'soft skills' are not so simple to measure. For example, how would you begin to assess the key competencies of an aftersales advisor (arguably the most crucial role in any service outlet right now)?

In fact, this type of customer-facing role has many different facets and areas that can be readily and easily assessed, such as:

- Knowledge displayed v knowledge required
- Skills displayed v skills required
- Experience
  - Behavioural competency
  - Attitude

Drawing on assessment methods for ATA accreditation as a customer service advisor, these can be categorised as:

### Multiple Choice Questions

Either multiple choice or written responses will help in identifying experience, skills and knowledge, such as legal legislation, data protection and consumer law. Internally, question papers can be used to assess against your own company's processes and procedures, such as complaint handling, product knowledge and customer question techniques.

### In-Tray Exercises

Similar to case studies, these can be used to mirror reality through assessment.

Experience, applied knowledge and behavioural competency can be assessed by this method, such as prioritisation exercises, marketing exercises, writing replies to fictitious customer complaints and customer feedback. In-tray exercises may also be used to gauge an employee's decision-making abilities through ownership and empowerment questions.

### Customer 'Role Play' Scenarios

A highly effective assessment method, albeit the most feared. If done correctly this can be used to assess on-the-job basic skills, attitude and behavioural competency, applied knowledge and experience.

### Performance Benchmarking

When you know what 'excellence' looks like, you can begin to focus on growing and developing the talent that your employees already possess – you have the beginnings of a 'benchmark'. From this, you can assess your team with a positive tangible objective which will allow you to grow the team through:

- Effective feedback. Be objective, not subjective. Feed back what you and others have seen. Avoid the tried, tested and failed method of positive-negative-positive 'sandwiching'; just tell it how it is.



# 'butterfly'?



- An agreed effective solution to training needs and an awareness of the best learning/development methodology.
- Support and coaching using 1-2-1s and appraisals.
- Matching your employee's competencies against the requirements for the role and business strategy – always keeping in mind how the role should develop in the future.

Performance assessment should never be used as a punishment stick or as a means to weed out unpopular



employees as the ripple effect through the rest of your team may be fatal. When assessment is conducted professionally, the employee also engages in a learning experience.

Praise the good and develop the areas of improvement – this is the key to a successful assessment. Engaging employees through performance assessment and development equals success.

As a business, you may already measure the increasing costs of recruitment, but do you measure the

'butterfly effect' of lost experience, damaged customer relationships, lost team dynamics and lost profit? These will far outweigh the costs of engaging in performance assessment without even considering the long term benefits to be gained.

In September of last year, I ran the first pilot for ATA customer service advisor assessment. The results were outstanding. Not only did the candidates – two of whom have since been promoted – get a huge sense of achievement, but I also saw energy, passion and a reassertion of a strong sense of purpose and pride in their role. **MIM**



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