

How to... identify skills gaps

Firms need to ascertain what skills they have before they can analyse what is missing

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Employers often say they have skills gaps in the workforce. But identifying exactly where these gaps are is another matter.

Companies need to understand what skills they require, now and in the future. They have to ascertain what skills they have before they can analyse what is missing. You need to know where you are or where you need to get to. Here's how.



1 Understand business needs

Setting out business objectives is imperative. Only by deciding on the direction of the business and how to get there will you achieve an alignment of skills.

A strategically aligned training, skills or development policy is vital, and by analysing business needs you can invest wisely.

2 Know what skills are available

Companies need to understand what skills are needed for particular job roles before they can analyse what skills are available – national occupational standards describe what skills, knowledge and understanding are needed to undertake a certain job to a nationally recognised level of competence.

National occupational standards can also be used to identify skills gaps and how to fill them. Skills management tools allow firms to gauge their actual and optimum skills profile, which can then be used to decide where and how to make cuts or invest.

3 Find what's missing

It's not easy to understand the skills mix in the workforce. A methodical approach is essential. Tools can make the process easier. Profile, for example, is an online tool that assesses the skills competencies of individuals and teams, identifies skills gaps and manages training and development needs.

4 Fill the gaps

Vocational learning or work-based training such as apprenticeships or diplomas are tailored to meet the needs of industry and can help to improve the productivity and profitability of a business. Such training programmes are a great way to fill current skills gaps and ensure that future staff are equipped with the right skills and qualifications to meet current and future business needs. The mixture of on- and off-the-job learning ensures they learn the skills that work best for the business.

5 Develop your people

The current and existing workforce is just as important as the new generation of graduates. Investing in the existing workforce will help employees to reach their potential, provide a multi-skilled workforce and create an exciting workplace to attract quality recruits.

6 Use support

Sector skills councils (SSC) and the National Skills Academy help employers to address skills needs and training by setting the skills standards for industry-relevant and quality-assured training and qualifications.

Proskills SSC and the Proskills Academy, for example, represent the interests of the process and manufacturing sector by researching industry needs, ensuring standards and qualifications are in line with employer needs and providing training.

There are also many other learning providers, colleges and consultants that can give companies advice, training and support.

7 Aim for the future

Look at tomorrow, not just today, to ensure the right skills infrastructure is in place to support business performance and growth. Use your workforce effectively and invest in them so that they emerge with the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to lead the way in the 21st century.

Key points

- Set clear business objectives.
- Use tools to help identify the skills gaps in the workforce.
- Find the right training that is relevant to both business and employee needs.
- Look to the future and invest in the upskilling and multi-skilling of employees

(En virtud de intercambio editorial)

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