

S 22 Support material

Competitiveness of enterprises

Competitiveness of enterprises is largely determined by the employees who are not only qualified but also competent. Employees who can due to their personal attributes and abilities – gained in the course of their lives – cope with the challenges of a working world that is becoming more and more complex. Competences are therefore understood as the ability to self-organise. Self-organisation is accordingly any action in open problem situations and complex systems.

What are the key competences?

- The general ability to be active and creative on a self-organised basis – to be reflexive concerning oneself, technical and methodical relating to the ambient conditions and communicative with other people: These attributes are called selforganisation and self-learning competences.
- The ability to view oneself critically, a productive attitude and a sense of values: personal competences (questionnaire on personal competences)
- The ability to master all knowledge, skills and results of social communication, to actively implement personal values and to integrate them with all other competences: activity and action competence (questionnaire on activity and action competence)
- The ability to handle apparently insoluble problems creatively by proper use of technical and methodical knowledge: technical and methodical competence (questionnaire on technical and methodical competence)
- The ability to debate with others from a personal perspective, to cooperate and communicate creatively: social-communicative competence (questionnaire on social-communicative competence)

To provide colleagues with an example of their competence it is necessary to assess, to measure and to develop competence with appropriate methods and instruments.

1. Assessment of competences

The objective of using instruments for the assessment and detection of competence in the enterprise is to encourage the employees constructively and future-oriented and to support individual further development.

This calls not for standardised measures but rather for instruments targeting the individual strengths and weaknesses of the employee and the needs of the enterprise.

The aim is the early recognition of the need for further training of the employees in order to successfully handle both current and future requirements at the workplace.

The detection and assessment of competences calls for instruments containing an individual definition of the state-of-the-art of personal competences and simultaneously drawing conclusions for further vocational development measures.

The most varied methods are used, such as skills audits, biographical questionnaires, work simulation or trials and fact finding through so-called portfolios or assessment centres.

Different materials and exercises help in recognising one's own competences and to identify possibilities for improvement or development.

It is especially important in the context of change processes that enterprises address the question of how to assess the vocational proficiency of their employees and how existing deficits can be obviated. Apart from conventional forms of competence development, also measures that take place within the work process or in close connection to the workplace are deduced.

For example, existing processes and flows of work can be analysed in the form of workshops together with the employees. Thus, new approaches for improvements can result.

Another possibility is the systematic job rotation of the employees i.e. a specific change of workplace. In this way the flow of information is improved and the ideas of the employees concerning other sectors are expanded and corrected where necessary.

2. Skills audit

A skills audit involves identifying the skills and knowledge held by existing staff.

The outcomes of a skills audit are existing skill and knowledge profiles for particular individuals or groups within the organisation.

Reasons for the application

The following reasons speak for the application of skills audits:

- Skills audits are understandable without complicated methodical prerequisites and foreknowledge.
- Approximately 80% of all staff decisions in enterprises today are still based on pure "good feeling" judgements. Skills audits help to dispel this subjectivity.
- Skills audits take into account the formal, non-formal and informal acquisition of competences.
- Skills audits combine recording, judgement and validation of competence analyses.
- Skills audits, unlike most other methods, are suitable for the conception and initiation of appropriate further education and training steps in case of competence deficits.
- Skills audits are very effective with suitable procedural combinations and can be implemented with relatively low effort in terms of assessment and time.