



fitManagers ENHANCING NON-PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES

**FIT-MNG: ENHANCING NON-PROFESSIONAL
COMPETENCES OF MANAGERS TO BETTER
PERFORM AT WORK AND REDUCE WORKPLACE
ABSENCE**

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Project coordinator: EMILIA MARTÍN SÁNCHEZ

Project coordinator organisation: INSTITUTO DE FORMACIÓN INTEGRAL

Project coordinator telephone number: 0034915312100

Project coordinator email address: e.martin@ifi.com.es

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Executive Summary

The Fit-Managers project aimed at reducing the effects of stress at work through the development of an innovative training program based on the health-sport-nutrition-attitudes diamond. Fit-Managers training program helps executive and medium level managers to acquire competences to get fit. Being fit to face the business environment will help managers to reveal their full potential at work.

The project has been developed by a consortium representing the interests of project target audience and end-users, which are managers, middle managers, companies and VET providers. The partnership was composed by one research institution (University), two VET providers, one Company of Services to companies (among them coaching), one European Association representing managers all over Europe, all of them leaded by the Spanish Confederation of Managers & Professionals. With the expertise of these organizations and its complementarity it have been possible to develop a high quality product such as the Fit-Managers training programme.

The methodology followed for the development of both trainers and trainees courses was based on the results of the research stage, where the end-users were involved. Furthermore, Fit.-Managers trainee's course was tested by these managers focusing on the acquisition of healthy habits. This training programme followed a coaching methodology as changes related to habits require a period of training with the support of a tutor/coach.

RESULTS/PRODUCTS ACHIEVED

1. FIT-MANAGERS Training Program helps managers to develop non-professional competences to deal with stress.
2. A first generation of trainers-coaches trained on delivering the Training Programme, equipped with the abilities to devise the FIT-MANAGERS Programme to help managers to develop the necessary non-professional competences.
3. A tested group of managers with a certificate on developing non-professional skills for better dealing with their stress.
4. On-line community created to be an exchange platform for all people interested in the subject.

IMPACT

1. In long term, the absenteeism, staff turnover, and deterioration of individual relations within companies and working teams will be reduced.
2. A first generation of qualified professionals was trained with new non-professional competences to better deal with their stress levels in their working environments.

SUSTAINABILITY

The FIT-MANAGERS program will be available in partner organizations as it will be part of the services offered by each organization to executive and middle managers in their countries.

WEB OF THE PROJECT & ON-LINE COMMUNITY: www.fitmanagers.eu

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1. Project Objectives

In general terms the project aimed to reduce the effects of stress at work through the development of an innovative training programme on how to teach Managers (medium level and executives) to deal with stress.

In order to achieve this aim, the project pursued the following specific objectives:

1. Analysing the state of the art around the Stress at work effects, needs and challenges of managers and middle managers.
2. Designing a Training Programme that meet the manager's needs identified in the research stage.
3. Testing the Training Programme with final users (medium managers and executives) and future trainers.
4. Identifying further steps for the project after the end of it and setting up an Online Network-Community on the topic.

NEEDS ADDRESSED

1 out of 10 workers suffers serious alterations caused by stress during the working life. Stress is more persistent and dangerous for those workers in higher positions, namely managers and executive managers.

However, studies show that organizations investing in the development of non-professional competences increase work productivity by about 20% over a year. Being fit, healthy and well-fed contribute to a higher performance and better adaptation to an increasingly challenging business environment.

Managerial Community broadly accepts that business success is the result of professional and non-professional competences. However the training market does not have a Training product that efficiently addresses the effects of Stress at work or the available products are reserved and oriented to a limited number of managers. The well-known coaching offers tailored solutions to single managers but at higher prices.

Besides, traditional coaching focus on emotional, behavioural and psychological issues, but current research demonstrate that health, nutrition and sports are areas that could decisively contribute to combat Stress at Work.

This project developed a Training Programme that makes medium managers and low executives benefit from a tested product that will help them to develop non-

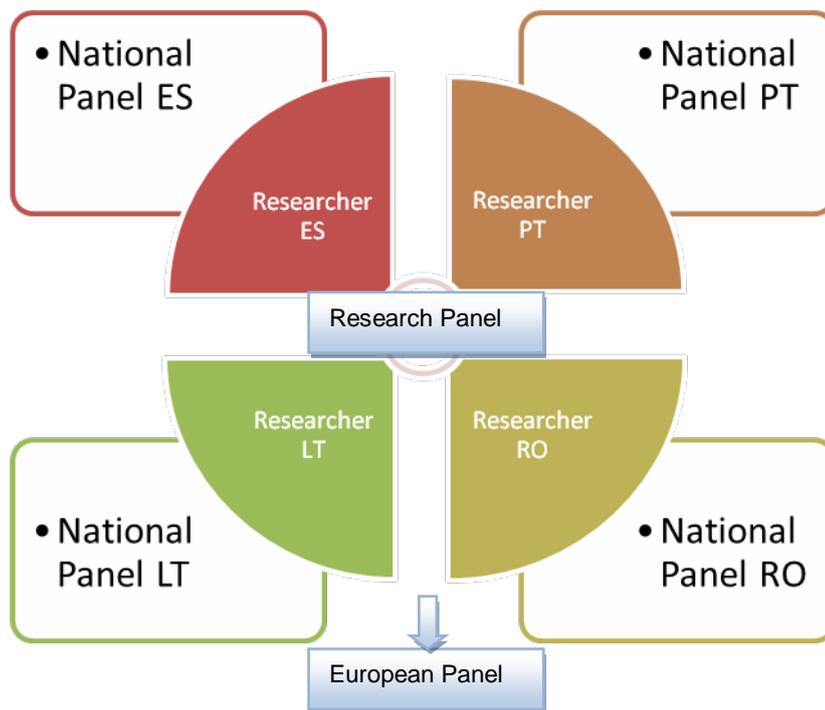
professional competences in the HEALTH-SPORT-NUTRITION-ATTITUDES diamond.

The managers with these non-professional competences will be better equipped to deal with Stress at Work and, ultimately, will have a positive effect on productivity and EU GDP.

2. Project Approach

The project initially stood on the Framework Agreement on Work-related Stress signed among main European Social Partners. CEC-Managers together with the Spanish representatives reached the conclusion that the market was not offering an integrated solution to tackle stress effects on work.

The project pursued a direct impact on manager's performance at work, increasing their competences to deal with the negative effects of stress in their work. To achieve this, the project counted on the following **elements**:



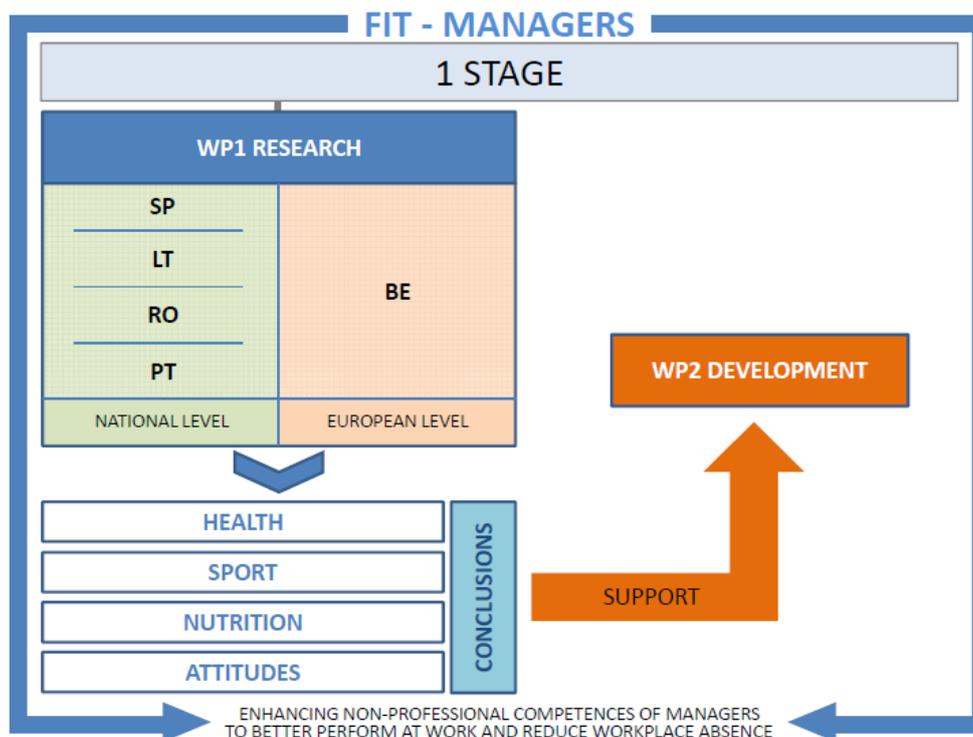
- **Online approach:** the project applied the online approach from the very beginning. It allowed partners to interact in a Web 2.0 environment and, more important, the interaction between partners and members of the National and European Panels.
- **Research Panel:** one expert in each country led the national panels in their countries, and their members also exchanged opinions about the methodology to follow.
- **National Panels:** these groups have participated in the project from the very first day, feeding partners with info on managers needs (in the case of enterprises) and current trend on research (in the case of research institutions).

These National Panels had a consultative role for partners during the research but also during the development stage, as well as in the dissemination and exploitation tasks.

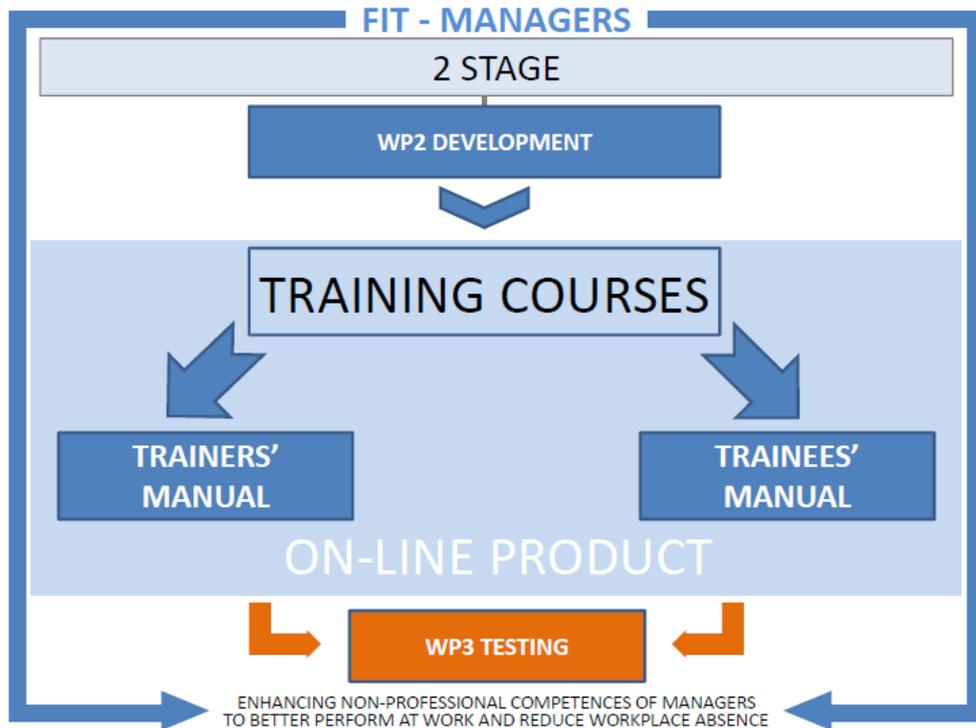
- **European Panel:** The European Representative of Managers (CEC-Managers) set up a European Panel of enterprises, research institutions and representatives of managers in 16 EU countries acting in similar terms that National Panels.
- **Online Network-Community:** Building on the previous, this online group facilitated the accessibility to potential users of the Training Programme.

The methodology followed to undertake the **activities** of the project was the following:

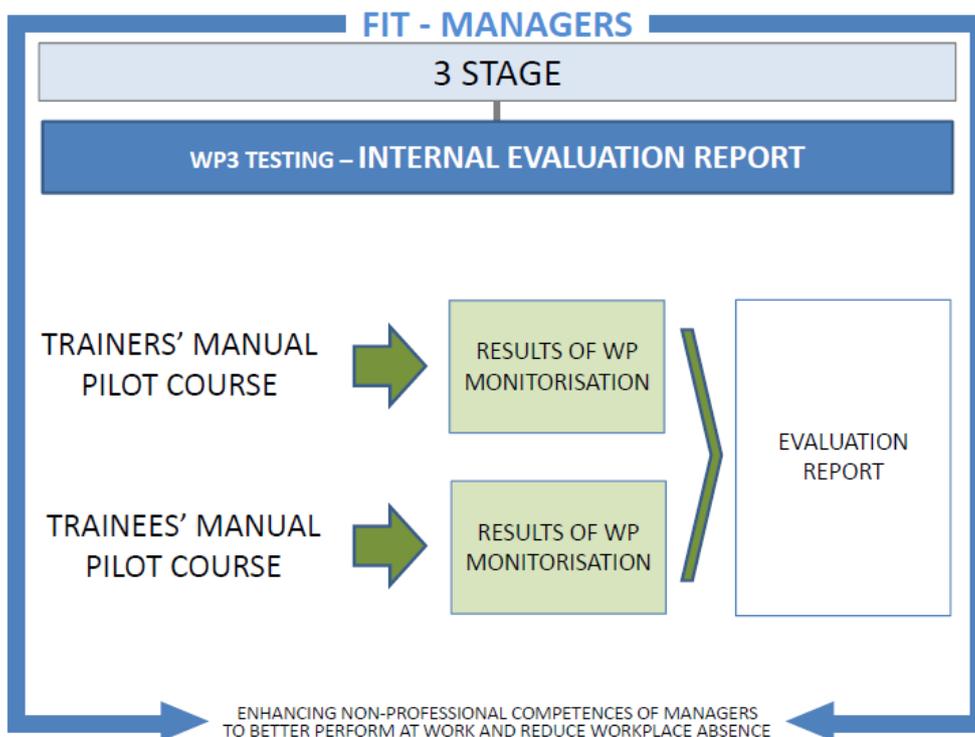
First stage (Research stage) has been fully dedicated to set a Research, National and European Panels as 3 level forums through which Stress has been analysed. This analysis has occurred on the needs dimension (asking enterprises-managers on how Stress affects their work) and on mapping the current research (asking research institutions).



Second stage (Development of the training) has been dedicated to elaborate the FIT-MANAGERS Training Programme (Trainees Manual + Trainer Manual) and an electronic solution for it: e-learning platform.



Third stage (Testing stage) both the Trainees Manual and the Trainer were tested on real potential users of the FIT-MANAGERS Training Programme. The evaluation elaborated report shows the results of the testing stage and the progress of the participating managers.



This methodology allowed us to base the development of the training products on real needs of the managerial staff and their level of stress. It also drove us to focus the training modules on certain contents.

The pilot stage gave an overview about the effectiveness of the FIT-MANAGERS program on trainees, as the participants were representative of the managerial staff of companies in Europe.

Concerning the **evaluation strategy**, three activities were developed within the project:

- Evaluation done by the target group during:
 - o Pilot experience, as they were asked to fill an evaluation questionnaire about their satisfaction with the FIT-MANAGERS program.
 - o Valorisation activities: in the seminars held at national level and in the international conference in Brussels, as the target group had the opportunity to express their opinion about the project and the program.
- Quality plan: an external evaluation was made, so partnership had the opportunity to make improvements on the process and on the products.

Concerning the **valorisation strategy**, which aimed to give value to the product and results of the project, actions were carried out to inform, disseminate and future use of the results and products achieved in FIT-MANAGERS project.

A **web page** of the project was developed, which include an **on-line community**, based in Web 2.0., addressed to:

- Executive or medium managers, as being part of the community gave them the opportunity to take an active role in developing the training program the best suited their needs, and enabling to participate in very interesting discussions, consult blogs and access the tested training product.
- Experts in vocational training, coaching, stress, etc. Their participation allowed their exchange of ideas with their peers about the inclusion of the HEALTH-SPORT-NUTRITION-ATTITUDES perspectives in coaching, and for fighting against stress. They could publish their own articles in the blog section, discuss with colleagues, access to documents, etc.

The on-line community was developed and tested by partners, but also by the National and European panel, so it is ready to be used as an enlargement of the research and discussion on the topic among interested entities, managers and experts after the end of this project.

Other dissemination products developed are:

- a **general brochure**, which was elaborated at the beginning of the project, in order to disseminate the next activities and products of the project.

- a **closure brochure**, focused on the final product: the FIT-MANAGERS programme for executive or medium managers.
- **7 newsletters**, which were elaborated during the development of the project, and informed the target group and the interested public about the progress on the project activities.

Information and dissemination activities were held in the partner countries: three dissemination seminars, inclusion of information about the project in different webpages, links to the website and on-line community, sending of dissemination materials (brochures, newsletters and internal publications), dissemination of the project in other events, etc.

In order to foster the exploitation or future use of the project products, a commercial agreement and exploitation seminars were developed, in order to multiply the effects of the project impact and to prepare the steps for future developments and extension of services and /or products to tackle Stress within the partner organizations.

For the project sustainability, it was considered the recognition of the FIT-MANAGERS training program by ECVET, and how it could be included in the National Qualification Framework and the European Qualifications Framework. For that a future adaptation of the training products and a more specific study about how to adapt them would be necessary.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

Our major project outcomes in the reporting period include the following:

(a) General report on the research, which includes information from:

(1) Report on the survey on managers needs on how to deal with stress in the context of their companies. In the research stage of the project each partner country in the project (Portugal, Lithuania, Romania and Spain) developed a survey addressed to executive and middle managers, with the objective to know the managers needs on how to deal with stress in the context of their companies.

The survey was answered by 160 managers from partner countries.

It includes a description of the survey methodology used as a common framework by all participating organizations; the survey tools and the research results.

(2) Report on the research carried out among research institutions, researchers or experts about how good health, nutrition, sport and attitude habits can reduce stress, how managers can be trained to have these good habits, and how to develop the training program for managers. Each country (Spain, Portugal, Lithuania and Romania) has carried out interviews with the members of the national panel of experts, using the guide elaborated for this purpose.

(b) FIT-MANAGERS training program, which includes:

(1) Trainees' course, available at <http://platform.fitmanagers.eu/> with access to the training contents, practices and on-line facilities for the communication with the coach/tutor. This course was tested by 8 trainees from Spain, Portugal, Lithuania and Romania.

(2) Trainers' course, available at <http://platform.fitmanagers.eu/>, which contains instructions for trainers to carry out the practices and how to do the monitoring of the trainees' progresses.

The impact of those two courses on trainees and trainers was very positive. Trainees could feel tangible changes in their habits and a reduction of their feeling of stress, and trainers considered the FIT-MANAGERS program as innovative, and in general very good.

(c) The website & the on-line community www.fitmanagers.eu, which includes all essential information about the project, its objectives, the implementing partnership, the activities and dissemination actions. The on-line community gives a discussion space for executive and middle managers, experts in coaching, stress, vocational training, etc.

d) Dissemination materials were produced in order to share information about our project and our products:

- newsletter issues 1 to 7, available at <http://www.fitmanagers.eu/page/newsletter-project>
- FIT-MNG project launching brochure which is available in English at <http://www.fitmanagers.eu/page/brochures-project>
- FIT-MNG project closure brochure which is available in English at <http://www.fitmanagers.eu/page/brochures-project>

Furthermore in order to maximize the dissemination effects of the flyer it has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, French and German.

4. Partnerships

The different tasks of the project were assigned to partners according to its expertise and experience:

1.- Confederación de Cuadros - Project Leader:

As promoter of the project and active organisation on helping managers to solve its working problems they led the WP 1 and the WP 5 - Management and Coordination and WP6 - General Meetings

2.- IFI - Project Coordinator:

As training provider, European consultancy firm and e-learning technological expert, IFI coordinated all the aspects of project activities (WP1 to WP4) and was responsible for WP8 - Project Website. Also, IFI was responsible of bringing the technical expertise to develop the online aspects of the Training Programme.

3.- CEC-Managers - Dissemination partner:

They brought in its broad network of contacts across the EU to coordinate the WP 7 Information and Communication. They also contributed to the Exploitation of results.

4.- FEPSET:

As a training provider, they led WP3 where the training programme was tested.

5.- KTU:

KTU led WP7-Quality Plan as an University-Research Institution and because its wide experience in LLP and other EU programmes.

6.- Elite training

As a company specialised in coaching and competence development, they led WP 2 and because of its platform of contacts from other EU projects and experience in project valorisation, it was also responsible for WP 10 - Exploitation of Results.

The Consortium represented somehow all the actors involved in the battle against Stress:

Representatives of the Managers: Partner 1 and Partner 3 are legal representatives of the managers, encompassing a network of 16 EU countries and gathering more than 1.5 million managers across the EU.

Training Providers: Partner 2 and Partner 4 are specialised on delivering training courses, many of them in an online format. Besides, they are engaged in LLP project, being Partner 2 a specialised firm on managing EU projects and animating transnational partnerships.

Research Institution: Partner 5 is a higher education institution which has researched extensively about development of non-professional competences among managers. They also have participated in several EU projects on the topic.

Service to Enterprises: Partner 6 is a Romanian enterprise specialised on delivering services and training to large companies. Among other services they offer coaching for managers.

With the FIT-MANAGERS partnership the project has had:

INTERDISCIPLINARITY: The partnership has brought together different organisations and actors to facilitate the development of a highly innovative solution to reduce the effects of Stress at Work. In fact, the Research Panel has put together different fields of expertise.

TRANS-NATIONALITY: The partnership has brought together organisations that represent all the corners of the European Union. Besides, the project leader participates in an organisation that is a network of networks and that have presence in 16 EU countries.

TRANS-SECTORAL: the nature of the project leader organisations and CEC are multisectorial organisation that groups managers for all the sectors and all of them have been called to benefit for the resulting projects.

The characteristics of the partnership facilitated the development of the work during the project. In general, the commitment and the involvement of all partners were high, and the distribution of the activities and work was according to the knowledge and expertise of each partner organization. Within the project all organizations have had the opportunity to learn from the experience of the others, and to apply it in the products of the project.

All partners have had and still have contact with the target group of the project, executive and middle managers, some of them are representing directly their interests, and others are working in the research and/or elaborating training tools to help managerial staff of companies to deal with their daily stress.

The partnership has benefited directly of the FIT-MANAGERS program developed in the project, enabling them to incorporate it in their daily activities and services.

5. Plans for the Future

During the project development, partners and target users found the project relevant and interesting, and they see the future of the project in their organization as they received excellent feed-back.

Since the beginning of the project, all partners have believed that the Project had a real potential for exploitation in the future.

Therefore, all partners contacted several companies, SME's and institutions during the project and they found that are many companies interested in Fit-Managers training programme.

A commercial agreement was elaborated by the partners in order to formalise the future commercialization of the FIT-MANAGERS trainees' course. The agreement achieved by all partners established the free use and sale of this course by all partners, giving them all rights to translate or to change it according to their customers' needs and requests.

All partners foresee a high potential of commercialization of the course and that is the reason why they wanted to agree on the basis for its future use considering the translation to the partner languages as the first step to be done.

The signing of this agreement leads to guarantee the sustainability of the project results beyond the financing of the project, and all partners agreed on including them in the activities/services of their organizations.

The project results will be also used as part of other training programmes targeting managers and in other consultancy services provided to companies.

Partners have already started to think in a commercialization strategy to follow in the next months.

6. Contribution to EU policies

This project has contributed to the objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the following way:

- The project identified a lack of adequacy and accessibility of products in the training market to teach managers how to combat stress at work and avoid its negative effects on productivity. Thus, the project developed high quality lifelong learning products aiming to reach a broader audience among EU managers.
- FIT-MANAGERS supported the realization of a European area for lifelong learning in how to deal with stress at work, as the characteristics of the partnership and its geographical representativeness made the products available at European level.
- FIT-MANAGERS products were made following the necessary quality criteria, and trying to answer the training needs identified in the first stage. They have also been approached from a holistic point of view: the project's HEALTH-NUTRITION-SPORT-ATTITUDE diamond.
- The innovation of the project products was given by the innovative approach, the coverage of new skills and competences and the test of a totally new qualification based on non-professional competences in a health issue such as stress.
- The project, through the elaboration of the trainers manual (also tested product), has developed skills and competences of VET teachers, trainers and tutors as well. Fit-Managers products give them a new approach to teach managers with competences that, in the long term, will increase their performance at work and, at the end, their companies will be more productive and competent.

