



**THE WORKPLACE:
A SKILLS-IN-PRACTICE-ENVIRONMENT**

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Skillsgrid

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Introduction

The modern workplace has become a challenging reality for both employee and employer. The challenge for the employee is to find the career, job and specific working environment where he/ she will be successful. The word 'successful' is used very carefully because it entails – for the Shadowmatch and Skillsgrid Team – more than just productivity success. It includes fulfilment, joy to work, success, positive reward, learning and growth as well as progress. In a world where careers have changed radically and people are sometimes frustrated with the work they do, employees (especially the younger ones) tend to easily resign, show their frustrations at work and slip down into poor performance.

For employers the task of optimal employment is equally challenging. Finding people with the required knowledge and skills is a challenge. If the problem of workplace-fit is added to this challenge, it becomes a very daunting task to precisely recruit people for optimal workplace success. The fact that the workforce of a business is the most powerful business enabler as well as the most expensive business engine, makes it important for every business leader to do as much as possible to optimally recruit the best people for the business.

Critical Components for Workplace Success

Every job and workplace environment is sensitive to three core aspects and demands on people wanting to do the job.

1. **Knowledge (I know!):** This refers to information that the employee has learned and now know with regards to the job at hand. Some jobs are very knowledge intense and others are very thin in terms of the knowledge demands. With knowledge, reference is made to theoretical knowledge, information, understanding of how things work and memory of learning material. A pilot must understand the principles of flight, the mechanics of aircraft, weather, navigation, air law, etc.
2. **Skills (I can!):** The ability of somebody to physically and successfully execute a task in a smooth and efficient manner. This is the best definition of skills. It has a few key concepts to notice: It is always physical and practical, something must be done. The skilled person does this in a smooth manner. Think of a musician playing the piano. It must be efficient/ successful. This indicates that the way in which a skilled person executes a task must meet and preferably exceed expectation. Let's take the example of the pilot. If someone wrote all the pilot theory exams and got distinctions on all subjects, he/ she must still learn the skill to fly and land an aeroplane - preferably in a smooth and successful manner.
3. **Employee Workplace Compatibility (I fit!):** This is probably the most challenging aspect of the three. The question is: Does the behavioural patterns of the employee meet the behavioural expectation of the working environment? It is in this area where Shadowmatch is used with great success and unnecessary failures are prevented amongst many businesses and learning institutions.

Workplace Skills

Every job is skills dependant. Every job has an execution side. Things must be done. The smoother and more efficiently things get done, the greater success for both employee and employer. The skills content of a job sounds much simpler than what it is. The challenge is to determine what skills are necessary for the job and what level of skills are necessary.

The list of skills necessary for a job is never generic and it is impossible to determine what should be on the list unless the list of skills is compiled by someone who has been successful in the job for a period of time, who is regarded as fully skilled for the job and who is capable to identify the necessary skills for the job. Let's take the pilot example: Does it mean that you are fully skilled as a good, professional pilot if you can fly and land a small aircraft or passenger plane in a smooth and efficient manner? No! Pilots must have strong verbal skills to talk to different people on the aircraft radio. They must be able to communicate with passengers. Writing skills are also critical because incident reports and flight records must be provided. Writing technical and weather reports are part of the job. Research indicates that writing skills are critical for the success of engineers, lawyers, medical doctors and many more professional people. This is one example of a skill sometimes not recognised as critical for success.

Another daunting question relates to the level of skills required for a job. How skilled must the individual be with regards to every skill necessary for the job? Imagine five levels for a specific skill. **Writing skills** can be a good example.

Level one – no / limited skill: The person struggles to express him/herself through written words and is only able to write short notes for self-reference.

Level two - basic skill: The person can write basic notes for internal colleagues only.

Level three – skilled: The ability to write everyday content without mistakes. Can write emails to clients, write a letter to an employee and even an official letter to a service provider.

Level four - highly skilled: The person can express himself effectively through writing. The person is comfortable to draft written content without assistance and without mistakes.

Level five - expert: The ability to express oneself fluently through writing . A person on this level of skill is able to write very advanced and creative content for highly qualified readers, proof-read advanced content and intelligently and professionally structure content.

Example: What level of writing skill is necessary for the job of a call centre agent working in the customer service call centre of a medical aid? It might sound like an easy question to answer. It's not! Imagine this customer service agent has to make notes on the system in a way that the next agent can easily read the notes and fully understand what the query was about. In addition to this, he/ she needs to write emails to medical doctors and administrative people in the finance division of a hospital. What if the reports the agent write has to serve as reference documents when a claim has to be presented in a court of law? What level of writing skill is necessary for the job? Can you decide if you haven't done the job successfully for at least six to eight months? This is only possible if you are fully on top of the practical job content?

The difficulties employers have with this are not always visible. The mistakes made when the skills necessary and the level of each skill for a job is anticipated on a gut-feel level (sometimes by management), manifest indirectly in high staff resignation figures, poor performance, unhappy employees and a workforce culture of low motivation. When these

symptoms are analysed, poor recruitment practices will rarely be identified as the reason. Consultants and analysts tend to focus on poor leadership, management, business processes not working optimally and poor working conditions. Sometimes salaries are blamed. All these symptoms have roots in poor recruitment and placement practices.

With reference to the above: Three aspects of recruitment and development of employees must be part of the recruitment process:

I Know! Does the applicant or employee in the job have the knowledge for the job? Normally the academic qualification of the individual will clarify this. Previous experience also helps growing the knowledge index for a job.

I Can! Does the applicant/ employee have the skills on the correct level for the job? This is where Skillsgrid as a system should be used to fill the gap.

I Fit! Does the applicant/ employee have the behavioural patterns conducive for success in a specific working environment amongst a specific group of people? Shadowmatch fully addresses this challenge.

Introduction to Skillsgrid: The System

The Shadowmatch Team has developed Skillsgrid as an intelligent system to enable the Human Resources function in a business to largely improve on the way people are optimally deployed to jobs in an organisation.

Functions of the System

Skillsgrid is an internet based software solution helping businesses to improve their quest for optimal recruitment and placement of employees and new recruits. The work starts with creating a Job Specific Skills Benchmark. This is done by the top performers in the job. They answer 25 skills related questions and they also compile a framework of how important each skill is for the job. This takes a benchmark individual maximum 30 minutes to do. The system then generates a visual outline of the skills needed for the job as well as the level of skill applicable to the job. It consolidates the answers of the top performers to reflect the most balanced skills profile for the job. Once a Job Skills Benchmark has been created, the following can be done:

Employees

1. **Matching:** Match individual employees to the benchmark relevant to the job they are doing and visually see on which skills they are either over-skilled or not adequately skilled. This informs performance discussions, skills development initiatives and propensity of the individual to successfully do the practical part of the job in a smooth and efficient way.
2. **Multimatch:** Match an employee to multiple skills benchmarks in the business to determine the optimal skills match to possible alternative jobs in the business. This information enables the business to redeploy employees if and when divisions shrink, close down or when individual employees struggle to perform optimally in

their current jobs. It is much better to successfully redeploy people than to replace them.

3. **Skills gap audits:** Once every employee is on the system and all jobs have skills benchmarks, an export of the data can be done. This export will indicate the skills employees lack for their respective jobs. This is critical for skills development reporting as well as possible analysis of the data to determine generic and specific skills development programmes that will improve the success of the business.
4. **Find people skilled for specific jobs in the business:** By using the skills benchmark, the system can search and find people in the business with skills for a job even if they currently work in other divisions in the business. It happens from time to time that companies decide to recruit internally to fill vacant positions in the company. This function enables the business to scientifically identify people most skilled for the job where a vacancy exists.
5. **Skills development support:** The system will highlight the skills where an employee needs development for the current job. Training programmes can be sourced to immediately support employees in their quest for success.

Recruitment

1. **Matching:** Match job applicants to the Job Skills Benchmark and determine the individual's propensity towards success in the job. This radically reduces the risk of recruitment processes based on gut feeling and in some instances thin processes.
2. **Multimatch:** Match a well qualified applicant to multiple Job Skill Benchmarks in the business to determine optimal placement for the applicant in the business.
3. **Large numbers** – ease of use: Work easily with large numbers of applicants for one job as well as large numbers of applicants for multiple jobs. The system is systematised and fully automated, working with large numbers of employees, applicants and jobs are easy.
4. **Skills gaps:** Identify skill gaps amongst applicants before they start working. This enables the business to immediately embark on specific skill development initiatives for new recruits. This is especially valuable where companies operate in an environment where skills shortages compromise optimal recruitment initiatives.
5. **Database:** Build a database of applicants for future recruitment initiatives if and when vacancies become available in the business. This is a normal recruitment practice. Get the data of applicants on the system and contact them when their skills match a Job Skills Benchmark in the business.

Additional Functionalities and Benefits for the Business

1. Every employee's skills can be captured onto the system in one day. If properly planned, a full skills audit of any size business can be done in one day.
2. The automation level of the system enables a business to capture the skills of employees and manage the availability and allocation of skills in the business.
3. The system is web-based and can thus be accessed from anywhere.
4. The business will always have an updated skills register of all employees. The system has an automated function to remind employees every six months to update their Skillsgrid Profile so that when new skills are learned, the data is continuously updated.

Skills and Definitions

Following is a list of skills and definitions used by the system to create a broad based skills framework for each job as well as every employee in the business. The system works with five groups of skills and five skills in each group. Herewith the list:

People Skills

Coaching / Mentoring: Your capabilities to effectively assist others to develop themselves by means of setting and achieving goals.

People: The ability to effectively communicate and interact with people within the working environment.

Caregiving: The ability to take care of people in need. Be it physically, socially or emotionally.

Negotiation: To effectively engage with an individual/ group when there is a dispute or differences of needs, put a collaborative plan together that brings synergy between the parties.

Social Media: The ability to effectively create and manage the presence and profile of a business and/or an individual person on different social media platforms.

Communication Skills

Facilitation: Being able to effectively facilitate a group of people towards reaching a specific goal during a work session/ meeting.

Presenting: The ability to effectively present information to an audience and answer presentation related questions.

Selling: The ability to effectively convince a potential client to buy and then to conclude the sale.

Verbal: The ability to effectively share information by expressing it through speech (English).

Writing: The ability to effectively share information by expressing it through written words (English).

Technical Skills

Artistic: A feel for, ability and technical skill to effectively create visual artwork.

Physical: The ability to effectively use your body to perform a task.

Technical: Your capabilities to effectively work with, repair, put together and build objects/ physical systems.

Machine Operation: Capable of legally working and operating machinery of sorts. (Pilots, machine operating skills, skipper and boatman, crane operators etc.)

Musical: The ability to make music by either singing or playing a musical instrument.

Management & Planning Skills

Management: The ability to effectively organize, direct and control human resources.

Project Management: The ability to effectively plan, execute, guide, control and coordinate resources towards reaching a specified goal.

Financial Management: Your capabilities to effectively manage and direct monetary resources.

Admin: Your capabilities to effectively compile, control, update, file and retrieve documents related to a business or institution in a professional manner. These documents can be either paper or computer based. In short: Effective record keeping.

Business Process Design: Knowledge, experience and ability to effectively design optimal business processes.

Cognitive Skills

Training: Your capabilities to effectively impart knowledge to someone or instruct them to learn to do something.

Computer Literacy: Your capabilities to effectively utilize a computer in a day-to-day working environment.

IT: Your capabilities to effectively use computer and related technology platforms to create/develop applications general computer users eventually use. (Programming and System Development).

Maths: The ability to effectively comprehend and apply numerical concepts.

Planning: The skill to effectively turn chaos and nothing into something, put it into structure that is possible to execute.

Following is an example of the visual outline of skills and a benchmark profile: See next page...