

Linking Benchmarking and Competency Assessments with Training

Assessing Training Outcomes and Effectiveness



Benchmarking and Competency Assessments *for* Employee Training

Linking benchmarking and competency assessments with training will help your organization measure actionable data about the effectiveness and success of your in-house training. This white paper explains what benchmarks to measure and how to assess competency for acquired skills with employees.

The Importance of Assessing Training Outcomes and Effectiveness

[Benchmarking](#) and competency assessments should be linked with training in order to evaluate all training processes and improve the results gleaned from them. According to the [TAS Group](#), 70% of the organizations that integrate a structured process of benchmarking and competency assessments see high performance among their employees.

According to the [TAS Group](#), 70% of organizations with structured benchmarking are high performers.

What's more, a [study](#) by Harvard Business Review (HBR) found that those with a standardized process for things like their company sales will enjoy a **28% increase in revenue** over those companies who forget to measure benchmarks and assess competency.

Similarly, other [research](#) indicates that 50% of high-performing organizations admit they closely monitor their processes but 48% of under-performing organizations don't even have benchmarking in place.

The data is clear: linking benchmarking and competency assessments with training will improve your company production, skills, and performance.

Not only is this lack of benchmarking detrimental to the performance of your employees, but it is estimated that by [2025](#) 50% of employees will need to be reskilled. Providing these skills via in-house training can be an anticipatory move on behalf of your company, but only if you have the benchmarking and competency assessments to prove the success of that training.

[Training Industry magazine](#) found that employers are already investing in more training and employee education, **increasing by 14% each year**.

To that end, your organization needs to be able to adapt success benchmarking systems and competency assessments to suit your organizational needs.



Clarifying Training Objectives

Start by looking at the objectives you wish each employee to receive from training programs and decide how they align with the goals and mission of your company or with the responsibilities of the position each employee fulfills. Choose several skills you plan to develop in your employees over the next few months (or years).

Your organization might already have training programs that facilitate improved skills and knowledge to move employees upward within their career and your company. If so, then you do not have to create new programs and can focus exclusively on

linking benchmarking and competency assessments with existing programs.

If you do not already have content, then consider what skills are going to contribute positively to better productivity or output in a given position or department.

- What skills does the accounting department need over the coming years?
- What new technology should your employees become familiar with in order to facilitate improved hybrid workplace models?
- What communication or leadership skills would improve communication and interpersonal relationships among your management?

You need to clarify the training objectives for either a) existing training or b) new training so that you know what benchmarks you can and should measure from each training, and concurrently, what competency assessments will produce the most actionable data.



Setting Expectations

Don't keep your measurements a secret. A recent Bureau of Labor Statistics [survey](#) in 2021 found that employees are more likely to leave a company if that company does not provide a place for feedback on

training, both onboard training and ongoing professional development.

So, when employees participate in training, they should be involved in the evaluation process and know generally why you are having them complete surveys and quizzes and provide feedback at the close of training programs, and what you hope to achieve in collecting that measurable data.

In [2021](#), 94% of surveyed employees would remain with their organization longer if the company invested in better training and learning. While you are investing, make that known to employees, otherwise they may not realize what programs you have, or why competency assessments are such a critical part of ongoing training efforts.

Keep employees involved in the evaluation process.

Objectives to Evaluations

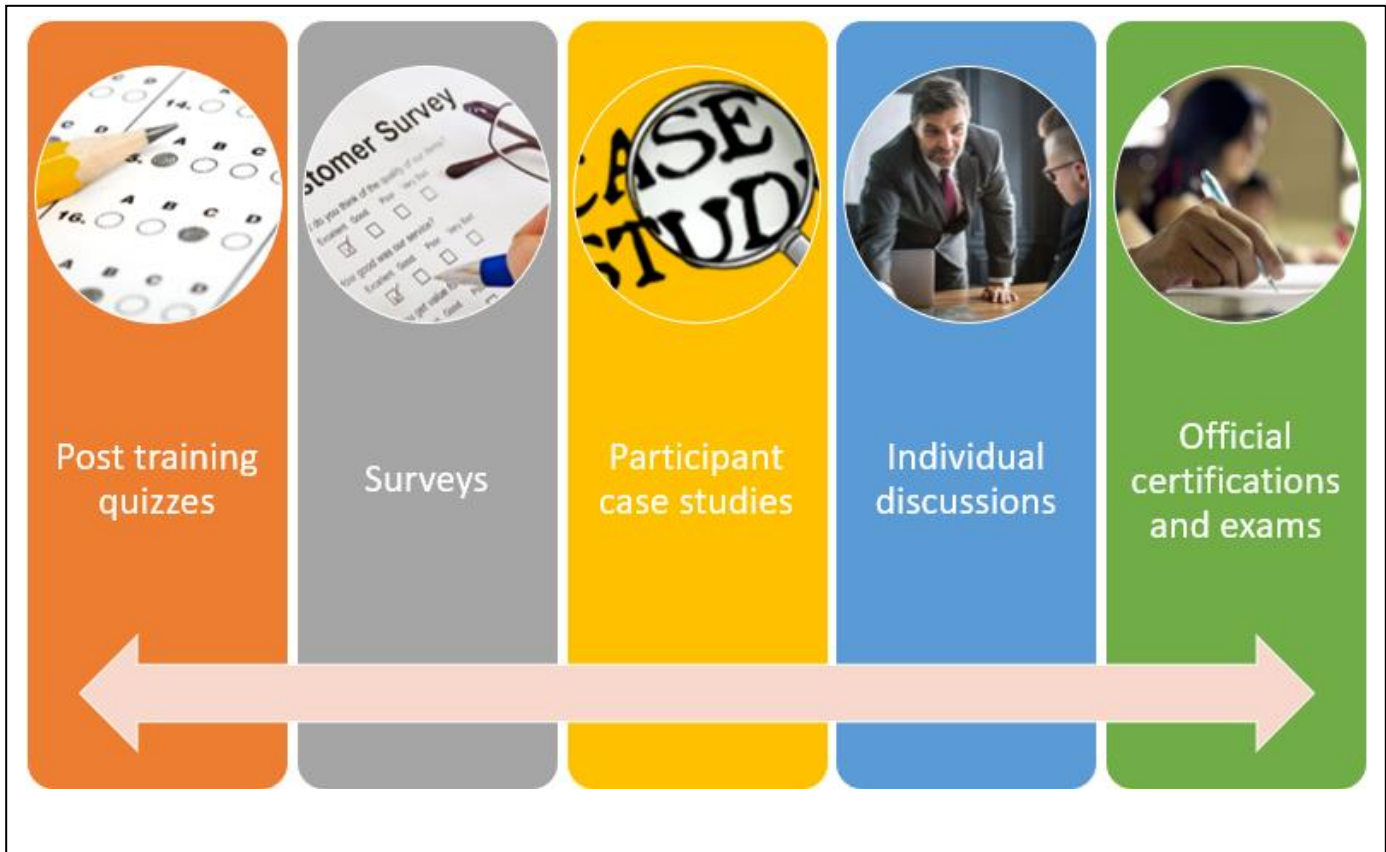
As you begin integrating benchmarking and assessments with your training, you could face objections. Supervisors in particular might lodge complaints about the additional time required to complete the assessments.

This is meant to be collaborative. Managers and company leaders should be just as involved in the ongoing training process as employees. You might consider allocating specific training times where no other meetings or responsibilities are expected of your leaders, particularly if they are proctoring training or conducting post-training interviews. You can also hire third parties to provide the training and handle the assessments on your behalf.

Measuring Effectiveness

When training is complete, your organization needs to be able to measure its effectiveness. This can include:

For example: *Your organization has recently implemented new safety measures relating to cybersecurity.*



In reality, the more measurable data you collect on the outcomes of your training, the easier it will be to assess the success and effectiveness, and more importantly, the return on your company investment.

Before you start any training program, you should plan for the benchmarks you want to measure and the ways in which you will collect the data. You should have assessments ready before, during, and after the exam too.

The more benchmarks you measure, the easier it will be to assess ROI on training.

To assess the effectiveness of the training program you provide participants with a survey. This survey contains 12 key questions with a ranking between 1 and 4 ('don't understand' through 'understand completely'). This provides your company with a baseline for the collective and individual knowledge on the 12 subjects covered in the course.

After each module the participants complete quizzes which assess how much they have learned from the module itself.

At the end of the training, your management has individual feedback meetings with each participant,

administers official exams, and conducts a final survey.

- *This survey is the same as what was distributed before the training but now you can compare the level of knowledge for each subject and see the gains made directly because of the training.*
- *The exam (and regular quizzes) will show how much has been learned and to what degree, potentially providing information on modules which should be repeated or revised for better understanding.*
- *The individual meetings serve as a chance to get feedback on the structure and design of the module so that future training can be more hands-on, or perhaps more flexible in the time frame, open book for the tests, etc...*

Using the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model

One of the most common evaluation models to measure the effectiveness of customized company training is that of the [Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model](#) from the 1950's. It is still recommended as a professional benchmarking system. With it, there are 4 levels to help you measure success and key indicators in each of the 4 levels.

LEVEL 1: Reaction

As the name suggests, this first level is meant to measure the reactions employees have to training and their reaction to the usefulness or the relevance of the training. To link benchmarking and competency with this first level you can use questionnaires, you can talk to individual participants both before and after to collect individual feedback or circulate surveys.



When you are finished with the first level of benchmarking and assessment, your organization should have a solid foundation for how well the training was received by your employees and whether there are any gaps you need to fill for future iterations.



LEVEL 2: Learning

This is where you measure the skills and knowledge your employees gained specifically because of the training. You can use a variety of metrics to measure the skills and knowledge your employees gained such as test scores or certifications before the training and after, performance KPIs before and after, quizzes throughout the course, supervisor feedback.



At this stage you should be able to tell if the training program you have has achieved its objectives. This is where many of the competency assessments will inform your organization what specific skills have been developed as a result of the training and offer any areas of improvement with regard to the delivery method used and the content used.

LEVEL 3: Behavior

This third level is where you figure out how your training impacted the employee satisfaction and performance levels. You can evaluate the ways in which completing a given training program has influenced your employee's performance and delivery through many ways such as:

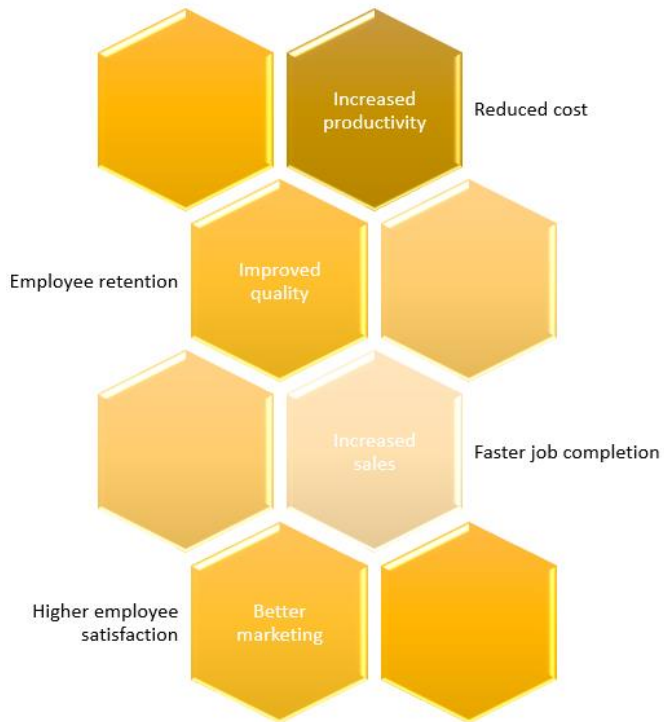


When assessing this third level, you want to address topics such as how the content learned in training has been implemented in the workplace, and whether your employees are now confident sharing their new skills and knowledge with other employees.



LEVEL 4: Results

The final level is where you procure tangible data on the results of your training program. This should include key indicators like:



At the end of this level, you should have a clear understanding of what your improved business results are because of your training, how much your customer satisfaction levels have improved, how productivity and quality of work have gone up, and how much your employee retention levels have changed for the best.

Challenges (and solutions)

Some of the biggest challenges with linking benchmarking and competency assessments with training have to do with good communication and expectations.

There are challenges that may arise during the implementation of this or any other benchmarking model or competency assessment however, there are approaches and solutions your company can consider making this integration easier.

The biggest challenge for those in a position of leadership is engaging interest and commitment from other managers in the competency-based approach. For those departments or managers who have already provided training without any measure of effectiveness, requiring additional work in order to link benchmarking and competency assessments with training may be a challenge.

The solution is to prepare managers and leaders for the assessments. This means describing how the outcomes will be measured, providing evidence of company objectives and distributing this information in a report for all those who will be involved.

- Clearly articulate what you want the employees to be able to do moving forward with your company
- Explain how the training programs your organization has will facilitate this achievement
- Provide information on how assessment of growing competence for employees is critical for evaluating the return on investment

Not all competency or benchmarking assessments will look the same either.

The second challenge is ensuring that the competency assessments you integrate into training are not done so just for the sake of having assessments, but rather, to assist your employees in gaining the overall level of competency and skills you want for a specific training program.

The solution is to have a multitude of potential benchmarks and assessments in your [Benchmarking toolkit](#), and to curate the right ones for individual training programs. If, for example, your organization is conducting management communication training quarterly or annually, you might consider revising the measured benchmarks and assessments after each round of training based on the responses you get following the completion of the previous training program.



Final thoughts:

No matter the benchmarks you collect or the type of competency assessments you utilize, apply them in a structured way to all of your training programs.

Be clear about the expectations and the value of each item you are assessing, both with leaders and with employees. Keeping track of actionable data can facilitate regularly improvements to training programs, increase production and satisfaction rates among employees, and improve company profits.

THE EXECUTIVE EDUCATION ADVISOR CAN HELP YOU LINK BENCHMARKING AND USE COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS WITH YOUR TRAINING. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ASSESSMENTS FOR TRAINING, PLEASE VISIT WWW.ZSCHOOL.COM.

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