Technical Competency Assessment: A Strategy to Optimize the Value of Human Resource Assets

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Competent people are a company's most important asset; an essential pre-requisite to enhance reserves and increase production with innovative technology. The challenge is to establish a talented staff base. In addition to the problem of the industry-wide "maturing" workforce, further issues exist in organizations reengineering themselves from regulatory bodies into highly competitive international operators.

A sustainable future depends upon the ability to hire and develop national staff in significant numbers to successfully manage assets. This is made difficult by university systems which offer sound fundamental science programs, but where masters programs with applications training are locally inaccessible. Bringing new staff up to speed is further complicated by the switch from traditional departmental structures, to asset teams where cross-disciplinary skills are essential. Development programs for both entry-level and mid-career staff must be carefully planned with emphasis on fast learning of essential skills.

Optimizing training investment requires an appreciation of required tasks plus understanding individuals' competency. This allows companies to accelerate delivery of focused training in essential technology and understanding the breadth and depth of their technical expertise. Technical competency assessment is an objective, systematic process for measuring knowledge and experience. The goal is to identify technical strengths and gaps as they align with business/technical needs. The results steer training programs, build job descriptions, benchmark capabilities against competitive standards, and create career ladders.

This paper will focus on utilizing competency assessment techniques, using case studies to highlight advantages and pitfalls in the assessment process, and in developing staff and organizational technical capability.