

Competency & Authorization Assessment



Name: _____ Date: _____

Completed by (if not a self-assessment): _____

Assessment context (project or role): _____

Overview:

The Competency & Authorization Assessment is a new diagnostic and program designed to accelerate the formation, growth, and sustainment of trust between employees and managers. Designed by April K. Mills, it draws on the U.S. Navy's nuclear power program's lessons learned for creating high-trust relationships and a high-trust organization.

Increasing trust requires that managers have confidence in the employee's ability to execute work within the technical, business, and change contexts. To build more trust a manager needs a way to clearly describe an employee's current abilities in these three key areas, and outline a plan for improving them. This is one purpose of the Competency & Authorization Assessment. When an employee uses the same tool to conduct a self-assessment, the manager and employee can compare their impressions in a productive dialog. Together they can accurately assess the employee's current skills and agree on a plan that will allow them to build more skill and more trust.

The Competency & Authorization Assessment focuses on three key skill areas: Technical, Situational Awareness, and Change Agency.

Technical skill may be an obvious expectation. What is often overlooked is a willingness to admit the limits of technical knowledge and quickly partner with other experts to accelerate innovation or problem resolution. Also, there is an ever accelerating need to keep technical skills current to the leading edge knowledge and methods. These technical partnering and continuous learning habits are added to core technical knowledge to produce a fully technically competent individual. Technical in this sense does not mean just historically technical knowledge (e.g., engineering, manufacturing, operations), but rather any technical knowledge held by someone in the employee's profession, be that engineering, design, operations, IT, HR, legal, or finance.

Situational Awareness has always been seen as a differentiator in employee performance, and with the rate of business change occurring, it has become crucial knowledge. It's always crucial to know who key players within the organization are. What this assessment adds is an expectation to maintain a growing network inside and outside the organization, to ensure you can sense changes in the markets and technology landscape. Added to this is a growing need for everyone to know the legal, ethical and technological boundaries of their work. Recent public events, like the VW emissions software violations, highlight that we all play a role in ensuring the organization is legal and ethical in all actions. Added to this, the rapid rate of change inside and outside the organization requires skill in staying up-to-speed on the latest efforts inside the organization to drive improvements, sales, or strategic shifts.

Change agency skill is the most recent addition to our growing awareness that to respond to the rate of change in the world and our markets requires us to change faster together. Published in 2016, the book *Everyone is a Change Agent* accelerates employee's knowledge of the *Change Agent Essentials* which allow anyone in the organization to drive change. These *Change Agent Essentials* form the foundation of change competency that all employees should have before they attempt to create change today. Added to these essentials is the responsibility to keep a manager informed as the employee acts quickly to drive change into and throughout the organization.

Competency Scoring:

For each competency listed on the assessment, rate yourself (or your employee) as Novice, Learning, or Competent. Here are some phrases to help you decide which of these competency levels apply.

- **Novice:** I have not done this much yet. This is definitely something that I could be better at.
- **Learning:** I have done this some. Sometimes I can be trusted to act autonomously, and sometimes I need additional help. It is not foreign to me, but it is certainly not comfortable every time.
- **Competent:** I've got this one. I can be trusted to do this on my own in most situations. My experience has made me very comfortable using this skill.

The exact ratings are not as important as the discussion that happens when an employee and a manager talk about their assessment of the employee's competence. Together they can identify differences that are causing trust roadblocks, and agree on an action plan that will allow the employee to build skills where necessary.

These ratings are a snapshot of current skills, measured on the day of the assessment, and they apply to the current work context only. It is normal for people who were completely competent in one context to be novices in many areas when they are thrust into a new role or being a new project with a new team. There is always a learning curve. Helping people more effectively and efficiently along that learning curve is what this process is all about.

Authorization Tier Scoring:

Once you have evaluated your skills (or your employee's skills), you can score it against the Four Authorization Tiers. The competency assessment describes the current state, so they are used only to determine the Current Authorization Tier.

Tier 4: Novice for most skills. Appropriate when a person joins a new team or starts a new position or project. The goal of Tier 4 is to teach humility and knowledge of the limits of their knowledge and leverage their naive view to generate innovative ideas for the organization.

Tier 3: An employee proceeds to Tier 3 when some attributes are marked as Learning. The employee should demonstrate competence in the Change Agent Essentials, basic technical competence, and know when to connect with other technical experts before moving to Tier 2.

Tier 2: Proceed to Tier 2 when all attributes are marked as Learning or Competent. An employee at Tier 2 must not be still considered a novice in any attribute.

Tier 1: Proceed to Tier 1 only when an employee is competent in all skills and demonstrates the humility to continue to look for gaps in their personal knowledge. The employee must mark competent in all and stay competent in all to maintain Tier 1.

For the Target Authorization Tier you can select the Tier one higher than where the employee is currently to start progressing. Set a reassessment date soon to ensure a focus on rapid growth up through the tiers.

Process:

Pre-Work: Review & Read. Review the Change & Authorization Assessment skills and read Everyone is a Change Agent to familiarize yourself with the Change Agent Essentials.

Step 1: Self-evaluation. Review the competency attributes. Select your competency level for each attribute: Novice, Learning, Competent.

Use the notes portion to describe why you scored yourself the way you did. Be specific.

Score your assessment and mark your current Authorization Tier and your target Authorization Tier.

Step 2: Manager evaluation. [This should be done in parallel to the self-evaluation.]

Review the competency attributes for your employee.

Select what you think their competency level is for each attribute: Novice, Learning, Competent.

Use the notes section to describe why you scored them the way you did. Be specific.

Score the assessment and mark their current Authorization Tier and what you set as their target Authorization Tier.

Step 3: Meet & Discuss. Schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss the employee and manager assessments and scoring. Start by comparing the current Authorization Tiers and target Authorization Tiers for overall alignment and then work through the attributes as necessary to discuss different perspectives and scoring. The goal of this session is to align on the score together, not to prove one or other wrong. After you've agreed on the assessment, then discuss specific actions and opportunities to improve the employee competence to reach the target Authorization Tier.

Step 4: Reassess. Before you end the one-on-one meeting, fill in the Reassess On or Before line at the bottom of the assessment. Make it sooner, rather than later, to drive urgency to action.

Trust the Process:

As you, employee and manager, go through this process you will be building trust in yourselves and with each other. This will empower you to act with more autonomy to innovate faster. Both the employee and the manager will be able to do more of the work they love and will waste less time with check-ins and unnecessary meetings. The employee wins. The manager wins. The organization wins. Trust the process.

Assessment:

Technical Skills	Novice	Learning	Competent
Technically qualified and able to apply technical knowledge to project tasks without oversight.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partners with and learns from other technical experts to achieve shared goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pursues continuous learning to maintain a thought-leader role in the technical specialty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes: _____

Situational Awareness Skills	Novice	Learning	Competent
Knows the organization hierarchy and key players.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develops a growing network of internal and external contacts to improve sensing of activity, opportunity, and threat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understands the system interactions essential to organizational results.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aware of the legal, ethical, and technological boundaries necessary to ensure safe action.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain effective knowledge of on-going actions that could be partners or conflicts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes: _____

Change Agency Skills	Novice	Learning	Competent
Implements the Change Agent Essentials (from <i>Everyone is a Change Agent</i>)			
Drives change, not people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creates and maintains change buffers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sets concrete goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maps the Terrain: checks for settlers and declares boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Challenges assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focuses on sustainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tries: Acts quickly to experiment, learn, and improve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicates actions and results regularly to the manager to maintain the manager's awareness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes: _____

Current Authorization Tier

- Tier 4: Observe & Ask**
- Tier 3: Conclude & Recommend**
- Tier 2: Declare & Verify**
- Tier 1: Act & Notify**

Notes: _____

Target Authorization Tier

- Tier 4: Observe & Ask**
- Tier 3: Conclude & Recommend**
- Tier 2: Declare & Verify**
- Tier 1: Act & Notify**

