

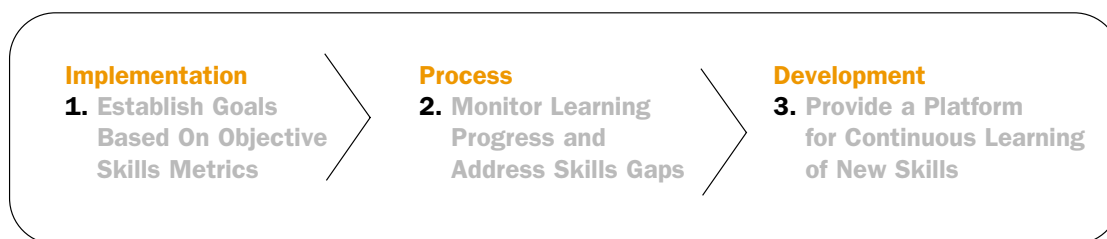


Every organization that introduces change has a learning curve—a dip in productivity as people adjust to new systems, organizations and processes. The learning curve is also a constant part of most knowledge workers' career paths—whether learning new skills to meet the evolving needs of their existing job roles, or learning skills that lead to new positions with more responsibilities and higher pay.

Most decision-makers would agree that effort spent on developing employee skills is a crucial investment of company time and resources. Increasingly, managers and executives are seeking new strategies for maximizing their skills investment by using skills measurement systems to accelerate the learning process.

Skills measurement systems are helping employees recognize and adopt new skills, focusing the learning process on clear-cut goals, and providing a platform for continuous improvement. By knowing how skills measurement can influence the acquisition of new skills, managers and decision-makers can effectively establish expectations among employees and executives for reducing the skills learning curve.

Skills Measurement Systems Accelerate the Learning Process





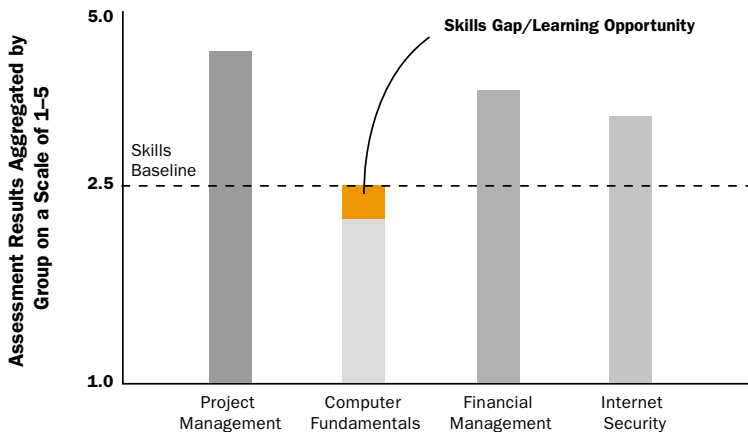
Goal Setting—Create a Catalyst for Accepting Change and Adopting Needed Skills

Whether a company seeks new ways to enhance skills across a particular department or group, or to boost individual competency in supporting new systems or processes, the ability to acquire new skills is essential. But merely encouraging employees to embark on a skills development effort will not guarantee acceptance or participation. Employees need tangible goals and objective tools for facilitating learning—online skills measurement systems provide both.

With online measurement systems in place, managers can put concrete skills objectives at the employee's fingertips in the form of minimum score requirements in assigned skills assessments. Employees can repeat assessments as needed to track skills improvement, achieve baseline scores, or set goals for developing new skills.

When companies implement new systems or processes, employee acceptance is frequently an issue. The time spent preparing individuals to adopt new ways of working is often significant. A skills measurement system can help companies reduce this "acceptance time." Through the system, each employee can take an initial assessment in assigned skills, or access specific learning resources online. The result: the skills measurement system jumpstarts the learning process by providing an immediate course of action.

Identifying Skills Gaps



This simplified example shows how skills measurement systems can report skills results across the organization, quickly revealing points of action for training and skills improvement.



The Learning Process—Monitor Progress and Address Skills Gaps as Needed

How can managers and decision-makers monitor and ensure the effectiveness of an employee skills development effort? Part of the solution requires a system that is accessible at any time, with the ability to report progress at any level. This solution can report assessment results for individual employees, as well as aggregated results for the group, department, project team, or even the entire organization.

An online skills measurement system meets all of these needs, providing an unprecedented level of reporting flexibility. It provides a unique resource for employees to achieve an objective view of their skills without depending on the schedule limitations and subjectivity of traditional measurements such as peer or manager reviews. Employees can assess skills at any time. They can receive immediate results, and they can repeat assessments to track progress.

Skills measurement systems also provide benefits for managers. With online access to skills data, decision-makers can monitor learning progress in detail. They can see exactly where assessment scores are falling short, which skills need improvement, and in even more detail, what area within each skill needs attention. They can then take action, through training or mentoring, to address skills gaps before they compromise the learning process. As a result, companies can shorten the duration of the learning curve, as well as validate the successful acquisition of new skills.

Facilitate Continuous Self-Learning

One of the most important benefits of a skills measurement program is its streamlining impact on training and development. By providing employees with online access to skills resources, from assessments to learning materials, skills measurement systems help reduce the corporate training burden.

Skills measurement systems also expand the employee's ability to develop skills on a continuous basis. The fact is, individual learning already occurs as a continuous process—employees are constantly learning, through on-the-job experience or through formal training. However, most traditional training programs are only scheduled periodically, and most skills assessments focus on formal training material. The learning that happens between those training events is often less focused. The individual often lacks a way to track progress, and may be taking “educated guesses” about which books, training modules, or mentors to use.

A skills measurement system fills in the formal training gap, providing employees with continuous access to resources for acquiring new skills or for validating or refining the skills they are acquiring through experience. The result is a repeatable process that helps employees focus their learning efforts beyond company mandated skills development objectives.

How Are Organizations Reducing the Learning Curve Today?

Online skills measurement is enhancing skills development for a variety of companies and government organizations today.

Software development company Information Builders is measuring and tracking the skills of client users to help them accept, learn, and successfully implement the company's software. IBM has used skills measurement to facilitate continuous learning and address skills gaps. And financial services leader Wells Fargo is now providing employees who have completed all formal corporate training in their fields with a path for further skills development using skills measurement objectives as new mileposts for growth.

As these examples show, online measurement systems are helping a variety of organizations streamline the acquisition of vital skills. Whether a company implements a new system or process, or requires skills to meet future service needs, online measurement systems provide a vital improvement resource.