

## Once is Never Enough When It Comes to Measuring Skills

Just like everything else in business, employee skills are dynamic, yet most companies have traditionally relied on a single skills snapshot to determine employee skills. A given employee may have taken a pre-employment test, a post-training assessment, or possibly a test for certification—but is that the skills picture you need?

Many managers are beginning to derive more value and more use out of multiple skills measurements, even for the same skills. Repeat assessment opens the door for several business-improvement possibilities, including:

**Pre- and Post Training Tests:** Pre- and post-training skills assessments are replacing traditional single-delivery pass/fail tests. Your ability to apply the following two tactics can dramatically increase training effectiveness.

- **Assess Skills Before Training**—Training is designed to raise skills levels, yet a simple post-training assessment only reveals the “after” picture. A pre-training skills test performs double duty. First, many participants may be able to “test out” of training, thus reducing class size and expense. Second, the pre-test will often reveal the skills progress enabled through training.
- **Document Your Return on Investment in Training**—How do you make the case for improving training in today’s economic environment? Document your results. “Before-and-after” skills assessment scores from attendees provide a highly effective tool for tracking training progress. For pinpointing areas for improvement, pass/fail results give little useful information. Detailed scoring enables subject-specific analysis and improvement.

**Enable Employee Self-improvement:** Traditionally, testing has always been associated with some form of learning program, including training and formal education. However, skills measurement on its own can play a significant role as learning catalyst. Employees are able to test their skills on their own terms against their own goals, and improve at their own pace which is often faster than the improvement enabled by periodic corporate training programs.

- **Make Tests Repeatable**—For many companies, this is the biggest skills assessment challenge. Traditional, proctored, paper-and-pencil tests cannot be taken on the employee’s own time. Also, repeating such tests means that the employee receives the exact same questions the second time. Newer, computer adaptive testing models can deliver repeat assessments for the same skill, and provide different questions with each test.
- **Deliver Feedback Immediately**—The sooner a test-taker receives feedback, the more motivated he or she will be to take the next step to improve skills. Likewise, delivery of immediate feedback makes repeat testing more attractive to the test-taker.
- **Provide “Next Step” Resources**—Along with immediate scores, feedback from the assessment should direct the test-taker to appropriate improvement resources, including books, mentors, or training modules. An important note: The test-taker is most motivated to improve immediately after receiving results. In general, the sooner the feedback is delivered, the stronger the improvement will be.