



So you think you are a competent manager

Arthur McKeown, helps managers to identify key competencies using a self-diagnostic appraisal.

Many managers in EFL will have got where they are today with little or no formal training in management; their expertise is often in the technical knowledge and skills needed to be a successful classroom teacher. This situation is starting to change as more managers and their employers realise the benefits of continuous professional and personal development and of relevant formal management training.

This article has the following objectives:

- To help to identify some of the key competencies of a manager, with particular focus on the jobs of managers in EFL
- To match your current competencies, as a practising or aspiring EFL manager, to a model based on a self-diagnostic appraisal
- To help you to recognise possible gaps in the portfolio of skills, knowledge and understanding you will need for your future career
- To suggest some options that can help you to bridge these gaps

As a practising (or potential) EFL manager you may be technically proficient in the classroom. In the early days you may have been thrown in at the deep end, or you may have the benefit of support and guidance from a more experienced manager. The activities discussed in this article can help you identify other options for

knowledge and skills, qualifications, experience and professional contacts which can lead to your career development.

Thinking about your career

Each individual has a responsibility to themselves for thinking about and planning their career. One tool for this is to think about *where you want to go* and *how you might get there*. This can be summarised under the following headings:

- What knowledge and skills will I need?
- What qualifications will I need?
- What experience will I need?
- What personal contacts will be able to help me?

It may also be worth thinking about these points in the medium term (say, 2+ years) and longer term (5+ years).

There is some subjectivity in how you interpret these terms and apply them to your own circumstances; but the broad approach should be clear.

Possible areas for development	To get where I want to be in 2+ years from now	To get where I want to be in 5+ years from now
Knowledge and skills	-	-
Qualifications	-	-
Experience	-	-
Personal contacts	-	-

Skills and knowledge for EFL managers

This article suggests that there are a number of personal and functional skills and areas of knowledge which you need to have as an EFL manager; it challenges you to apply them to your own career development. It has been inspired by a model developed by Paul Hannon of Durham University Business School, who several years ago produced a personal development framework for enterprise / business centre managers and those in similar roles.

A useful starting point is to think about a number of roles which many EFL managers find themselves filling in the course of a typical working day:

- **The organiser** – the person deeply involved in planning, scheduling and implementing many of the tasks done in the school
- **Super teacher** - the person who is responsible for difficult or demanding clients, or able to walk into any class at any level on standby
- **The sales rep** - the person who is responsible for drumming up business and finding business for the school
- **The purchasing manager** – the person who is responsible for staffing, many different types of equipment and all the little items which are required for the day to day running of the school
- **The academic counsellor** - the person to whom students turn when they are looking for advice about suitable programmes and course progression

And there are lots of other roles:

- **The computer guru** – who is able to keep the hardware working and advise on the latest software packages which can be used in the school
- **The Redcoat** – who appears, jolly and smiling, at parties, excursions and other social events
- **The health and safety officer** – who makes sure that the school is continuing to comply with current legislation on a wide range of different areas

The check lists which follow provide a basis for your self-diagnosis, so that you as an individual can measure your strengths and weaknesses (as you perceive them) in a number of critical areas and think about how you can overcome any career-limiting gaps which you discover. The check lists presented here are not definitive; rather, they are deliberately generic and indicative of some broad areas which need to be addressed. Each individual needs to modify the criteria in such a way that they closely match the job which an individual manager does.

The following five areas of knowledge and skills are dealt with here:

- **Personal effectiveness**
- **Marketing**
- **Managing people**
- **Delivering your service to clients**
- **Managing information and finance**

How the checklists work

For each of these areas a number of skills and knowledge areas are identified. What appears here is not necessarily comprehensive or entirely appropriate to your particular position as a manager at present; rather, it is indicative of areas you need to think about as you modify the tables to fit more comfortably with your own needs.

As you work through the check lists look carefully at the tables which follow and make a personal response to each point. This can be done on two dimensions: first, you need to think about the *relevance*, current or future, of each item you yourself and then, secondly, you need to make a personal (and honest) *evaluation* of your ability in each area. In other words:

- *Do I have to do this, or is it likely that I may have to do it in the future?*
- *If I need to do it, now or in the future, and I am not as good as I should be – what can I do about it?*

The next stage is to summarise briefly the areas which you have identified as weaknesses or areas which need further development.

Each item on the check lists may therefore get both a *relevance score* and an *ability score*.

You also need to think about the practical steps which you can take and potential sources of help and support. You may be able to consider at least some of the following as solutions to the training and development requirements that you have identified:

- **Courses** of different sorts may be available, from local colleges or by distance learning or on line
- **Local clubs and associations** for business and professional people
- **Mentors** and more experienced colleagues may be able to give practical guidance and support
- **Books and other material** may be available for some of the areas which you have identified

The result of this activity should be a series of completed check lists from which you, as an individual, can identify some areas of strength and also some areas of weakness. You can then use the Personal Action Plan which you create after thinking about the items on the check lists to:

- Record the action which you intend to take, as a personal contract with yourself
- Measure your progress and success in achieving the targets you set for yourself.

Continuous professional development – a never-ending challenge!

This article describes a dynamic process: in other words, each individual manager should carry out an exercise of this sort at least once a year. The criteria will change as one's job changes and new challenges emerge. There is no end to personal development.

management competencies

References and further reading

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1 Personal Effectiveness	Important to me	May be important later	Not relevant		Experienced / proficient	Adequate for current role	Need to improve	Not relevant
Planning your workload								
Setting priorities								
Delegating								
Dealing with paperwork								
Planning and managing projects								
Team building								
Planning and managing meetings								
Negotiating								
Making business presentations								
Producing written reports								

Marketing	Important to me	May be important later	Not relevant		Experienced / proficient	Adequate for current role	Need to improve	Not relevant
Researching your markets								
Designing new courses and programmes								
Monitoring competitors' activities								
Pricing programmes and courses								
Preparing effective promotional material and promoting the school's services								
Arranging attendance at trade shows and exhibitions								

management competencies

3 Managing People	<i>Important to me</i>	<i>May be important later</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>		<i>Experienced / proficient</i>	<i>Adequate for current role</i>	<i>Need to improve</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>
Analysing jobs and improving the school's internal organisation structure								
Creating job descriptions								
Recruiting and selecting staff								
Motivating staff								
Setting and reviewing salary structures								
Providing contracts of employment for staff								
Managing the school's staff appraisal system								
Identifying training needs of staff and providing training								

Delivering Your Service to Clients	<i>Important to me</i>	<i>May be important later</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>		<i>Experienced / proficient</i>	<i>Adequate for current role</i>	<i>Need to improve</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>
Providing pre-course information for students								
Providing reception and induction for new arrivals								
Providing up to date teaching material and technology								
Scheduling classes								
Arranging class tests and public examinations								
Organising a suitable social programme								
Providing suitable accommodation for students								
Providing cleaning, maintenance, etc.								
Liaising with British Council, ARELS, IATEFL, etc.								

5 Managing Information and Finance	<i>Important to me</i>	<i>May be important later</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>		<i>Experienced / proficient</i>	<i>Adequate for current role</i>	<i>Need to improve</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>
Making effective use of the Internet								
Making effective use of IT for administrative purposes								
Maintaining adequate records for statutory and administrative purposes								
Complying with current legislation on tax, VAT, employment law etc.								
Using management reports on the school's financial performance								
Creating a business plan for								