

Welcome to Eco-Job Business Skills Assessment

Eco- Job Business Skill Assessment has been developed specifically for farming businesses – organic or otherwise – that wish to take advantage of the benefits that training and development can offer. Whatever category your business fits into, it is important to recognise that training and development is just as important – if not more important – in a smaller business as it is in any multinational conglomerate.

Eco – Job Business Skill Assessment has been designed to guide you, as the principal in the business, through a structured and logical approach to establishing the business needs. It is however significantly different to other approaches as it incorporates support from an Eco-Job Consultant, and you will be able to consider your development needs in a manner that best suits your business. The review with this support can be completed in 2-3 hours.

So how does it work?

As the business is at the centre of the whole process, it is important to start by considering your business, where it has come from, and broadly where you see it going. You will also need to consider your own personal aims.

The next step is to look at your business in more detail by considering the strengths and weaknesses as they currently exist.

Businesses are dynamic by nature. Change is constantly impacting on every business, so you need to consider how it will impact on yours. Because change of any sort will ultimately affect individuals, it is necessary to take a look at those changes that your business is likely to be subjected to, and to identify and address any development issues that arise.

Having considered how change affects your business you will need to review the key tasks in the organisation – those areas that you feel are critical to the operation of the company. Within every business there are key tasks which have to be achieved if the business is to operate effectively. Skill Assessment will give you an opportunity to take stock of these tasks and examine if they can be improved.

As people are central to success, it is necessary to consider their roles and how they contribute individually to the business. From here we can start to establish potential development areas that could build on the level of experience and expertise already in place. A significant issue to consider here is that of succession planning, particularly in family-based businesses.

Assessing general business skills then provides the final phase of the process. These are skills that are generic to most businesses. The key issue here is to start to identify priorities in terms of development. It is not possible to address every issue of development, but significant benefits can be achieved by addressing those issues that you identify as important to business success.

Finally the process is completed by putting together your own Training and Development plan for the business (or yourself if you are a sole trader). The aim is not to generate a long list of potential training courses, but to establish and address those areas of development that will help your business move in the direction you want in order to achieve business success.

Some of the questions may appear to be irrelevant to your business especially if it is a one - man organisation, and people development may seem unrealistic but remember your self, your family, any diversification that you may be considering and even those who you employ on a temporary basis - manual workers, semi-skilled and contractors. Experience has shown that concentrating on the questions will assist you to evaluate your business and how to prepare for change.

So now it's over to you.

Business Name

Enter opposite the name of your business and the business principals.

Business Background

The business will have developed over a period of time, be it short or long. The business background is important as it provides the basis for the future, Use the space opposite to consider some of the following:

- How and where did the business start?
- What do you produce?
- How successful do you consider the business has been?
- What areas of the business need developing or building on in the future?
- What new skills will the business need to meet the challenges of the future?
- What new skills are you likely to need in the future?

Business Aims

Every business needs to focus on what it is trying to achieve. If you have a business plan it will say clearly what the business is about, i.e. what it aims to do and how it is likely to develop.

Business planning is the first stage in forward planning and provides the focus for identifying where training can help the business. Whilst you may not have a formal plan, you will have an understanding of where the business is going and how it will get there.

The measure of effective training and development is that it directly relates to helping you achieve your business aims.

Please put your business aims in the box opposite.

Personal Aims

Personal aims are important because they provide a personal focus and stimulus for achieving the business aims. You can then measure success at both business and personal levels.

Personal aims and business aims can be the same, but are normally different. For example, the main aim of your business might be to increase profit by 20% over last year. Your personal aim might be to actually have the time to take up that new hobby you have always wanted to do.

Again, put down your personal aims in the box opposite - remember, they don't have to be sophisticated aims, but they do need to mean something to you.

Business Name:

Name of Business Principals.

Business Background:

Business Aims:

Personal Aims:

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

In any business there are things that are good and there are things that could be better. There are genuine business opportunities and there are things that threaten the success of the business.

These strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are important when it comes to identifying training and development needs and require careful consideration.

Using the grid opposite, spend 5 minutes on each of the areas on the left hand side. Be honest! Don't put something in as a 'strength' if it isn't really one. Remember, it is your business that you are thinking about, so be as objective as you can.

Some thoughts to help you are below:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Strengths | What is the business good at? Has the company a strong asset base? Is it the quality of the product? Are the people its strength? |
| Weaknesses | What are the things that happen that frustrate you? What needs to be improved? What is it that holds the business back? |
| Opportunities | What potential does the business have? What else could you produce? How could you develop the business further? |
| Threats | Who is the competition? What factors could restrict business success? What would happen if key individuals left? |

Once you have thought through opposite, use the right hand boxes to think about what you might need to do about each area you have identified. Don't be surprised if some of your strengths are also potential weaknesses and so forth. Remember, weaknesses are ultimately potential strengths.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>The key strengths of the business are:</p> | <p>Potential development areas to build on strengths:</p> |
| <p>The most critical weaknesses of the business are:</p> | <p>Potential development areas to minimise weaknesses</p> |
| <p>The realistic opportunities for the business are:</p> | <p>Potential development areas to realise opportunities</p> |
| <p>The primary threats to the business are:</p> | <p>Potential development areas to minimise threats</p> |

Changes and Challenges

Every business has to cope with change, the size of business really doesn't matter. From the weather to the exchange rate, from the price of your inputs to the price you get for your product. Change is with us constantly and will be with your business.

From a training and development perspective, change is one of the most important factors a business has to consider. Wherever there is change in the business, somewhere along the line it will have an impact on what someone does, be it you or someone who works with or for you.

The key to making the most of any change, is to manage it, and this can only be done by really considering what the likely impact of that change will be within your business.

There are 3 types of change we need to consider:

External changes - These are changes over which we have little or no control. Legislation, bank interest rates, consumer demands and the weather are examples of external changes.

Internal changes - These are those changes that we do have control over and that we instigate. They include such things as purchasing new equipment, recruiting new staff producing a new product or adopting a new system. With internal changes, the decision to adopt and make the change rests 1aI within the business.

Challenges - Linked to internal changes, challenges are those areas where we decide to improve or develop existing processes, people, outputs. Very often the challenge will be to improve production or reduce costs, and again will usually have implications for people.

Take 10 minutes or so and consider those changes and challenges that you believe will have an effect on your business over the next year or so.

For each change or challenge, identify what effect/impact it is likely to have, Will it mean that tasks have to be done differently, and if so, will the individuals that do it need help?

An example of an external change could be as follows:

| External change | Impact effect | Possible |
|-----------------|---|---|
| New legislation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/Self will need to operate to new standard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff need to update on requirements of new legislation |

Changes and Challenges

External Changes

What external changes are likely to affect your business?

What impact/effect will these external changes have on your

Areas for possible development

Internal Changes

What internal changes are likely to affect your business?

What impact/effect will these internal changes have on your business?

Areas for possible development

Challenges

What challenges is your business likely to face?

What impact/effect will these challenges have on your business?

Areas for possible development

Key Tasks

Now that we have taken time to look at the business, we need to turn to the actual work that is done, and the people that are involved.

Think about your business and the way it operates. Identify the 5 main tasks which are critical to your business? You may be able to identify many more, but take those 5 that you consider have a high level of importance to the success of the business. Put each task down in the appropriate box opposite and for each, consider:

How well is the task done?

How well should the task be done?

Is action needed to improve the task?

How well is the task done? - Use your own words to describe how well the job is done - be honest

How well should the task be done? - You will know just how well each task should be done. You will have a mental picture of what is acceptable and what is not. You will also know when it is being done well, and to the standards that you expect. Again, write this down in the box opposite for each task.

Is action needed to improve the task? - If the task is done well and to the desired standard, there may be no need to take any further action.

If, however, there is a gap between how well the task is done and how well it should be done, then there may well be need for action.

Use the sheet opposite to go through this process.

Finally, are there any tasks that you may need in the future and that will be central to the business success but which currently you do not have the capability of carrying out? - If there are, what do you need to do about them?

Take about 15 minutes to carry out the following exercise.

Note: There are now national EU standards for each and every occupational area. Known as Occupational Standards, they provide clear performance criteria for each occupational area and provide a National Standard against which tasks can be measured. These standards can be translated into qualifications and are known as National Vocational Qualifications. Such Standards may be of help to you in providing a national benchmark.