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Assessment and Development Centres

Beacons Consultants design and run both Assessment Centres and Development Centres for organisations throughout the UK and also in Europe.

We also provide a range of Assessment Centre materials for hire or purchase.

[Download](#) this page as a pdf file.

What are Assessment Centres?

Assessment Centres are a means of helping an organisation to identify the suitability, strengths and potential development areas of people - either internal or external - in relation to a particular job or role.

They are structured events, usually one or two days long, containing a series of exercises and activities, often including psychometrics, with the objective of assessing competencies in a group of people through their observed behaviour and their performance in certain tests.

What are Development Centres?

Development Centres are Assessment Centres with key differences. This may be semantics - but organisations should be clear about the differences.

The answer is that they both involve Assessment. It is in the end use of the information obtained where the difference lies.

An Assessment Centre should be used for selection purposes, and a Development Centre for personal development - leading to team and organisational development.

In a nutshell, Development Centres take the assessment process inside the organisation and not only help to identify key talent for the future, but also give participants and their managers action plans to make the most of their skills

This table summarises the differences :

Assessment Centres	Development Centres
have a pass/fail criteria	do not have a pass/fail criteria
are geared towards filling job vacancies or selection	are geared towards developing the individual
address an immediate organisational need	address a longer term organisational need
tend to be used with external and/or internal candidates	tend to be used with internal candidates
may have fewer assessors and more participants	can have a 1:1 ratio of assessor to participant
involve line managers as assessors	may not involve line managers as assessors (possibly all external)
place less emphasis on self-assessment	place more emphasis on self-assessment
focus on what the individual can do now	focus on the individual's potential
are geared to meet the needs of the organisation	are geared to meet needs of the individual as well as the organisation
assign the role of judge to assessors	assign the role of facilitator to assessors
may give no feedback to the individual	always give detailed feedback to the individual

retain "ownership" of the outcome/feedback within the organisation	pass to, or share "ownership" of the outcome/feedback with the individual
hold very little pre-event briefing	hold a detailed pre-event orientation briefing

Why do organisations value Assessment and Development Centres?

- They provide an objective and robust method of improving both the individual's, and the organisation's, awareness of skills, strengths and gaps.
- They provide a unique opportunity to objectively observe and measure how people actually perform tasks, make decisions, relate to each other, and demonstrate self awareness.
- A well-designed customised Assessment or Development Centre is an effective tool for measuring the key behaviours important to employees' present success and future potential.

Beacons Assessment or Development Centre Activities

The design of the programme depends on which competencies need to be assessed. With the benefit of many years experience in assessment and development, Beacons Assessment or Development Centres generally include:

- an in-tray exercise
- a structured interview around values
- an appraisal or counselling or coaching role play
- a business case study, customised so to be relevant to the client company
- one or more communication exercises, including a formal presentation
- several different practical group activities
- up to four psychometric tests (see below)

The number of participants will vary in size, usually between 8 and 16.

The number of facilitators may be as many as a 1:1 ratio with the participants, depending on client requirements.

Please call us to discuss how we would design a typical Assessment or Development Centre.

What about the outputs? How are they used?

The "outputs" take the form of :

- notes written by facilitators against the competencies agreed
- rating of each competency 1-6, where 1 = limited evidence of competence demonstrated and 6 = mastery of the competence
- the results of the psychometric tests
- organisational and team norms and comparative ratings (optional but very useful once a critical mass of employees have gone through the Centre)

The outputs are discussed within a few days of the event in a one-to-one meeting between participant and Beacons facilitator.

The ownership of the precise detail and comments about their personal performance remains in the hands of the participant.

The participant commits to agreeing a personal development plan with their manager, based on their assessed development needs.

The organisational norms, trends and the core training needs identified are reported to the client organisation.

Why psychometric tests? Which particular tests might be used?

The British Psychological Society defines a test as "an instrument designed to produce a quantitative assessment of some psychological attribute or attributes"

The tests used cover two main areas:

- 1) measures of aptitude and ability
- 2) measures of personality and values

What are the benefits?

- Administered in a standardised manner
- Scored in a standardised way
- Interpreted according to a standardised format
- Constructed according to psychometric principles
- Valid assessment of competence by enhanced consistency

Examples of tests and what they measure

Measures of Aptitude and Ability	Measures of Personality and Values
Graduate Reasoning Test To assess high level reasoning ability for graduate & management calibre individuals	Occupational Personality Profile To obtain an accurate measure of occupationally relevant personality traits
Critical Reasoning Test Battery To assess high-level critical reasoning ability for graduate & management calibre individuals	Fifteen Factor Questionnaire To obtain a detailed and comprehensive assessment of personality within a well established framework
General Reasoning Test To assess general reasoning ability for individuals within a wide range of ability	Jung Type Indicator (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI) To obtain a personality type classification within an established framework
Clerical Test Battery To assess clerical aptitudes and skills for all grades of clerical administrative staff	Values and Motives Questionnaire To obtain a profile of individual values
Technical Test Battery To assess aptitudes relevant in technical roles for applicants and trainees at craft or technician level	Occupational Interest Profile To assess vocational interests and work needs

[Read an article](#) on the growth of Assessment and Development Centres.

The Next Step

For more information about using the Beacons approach to Assessment or Development Centres to meet the needs of your organisation, or to discuss our [Management Development](#) and [Corporate Team Building](#) programmes, please [contact us](#).

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The Midlands, Bristol, West Country and Wales
London, Hampshire and Surrey
Tel : 01275 848 791

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