

For more information call us on:

0115 985 6576

Development and Assessment Centres

At Keystone, our team of associates have accumulated a varied wealth of development centre experience.

Client sector experiences include:

- Automotive
- Retail
- Utilities
- Nuclear power
- I.T.
- Support Services
- Third Sector (charity)
- Construction
- Financial Services
- FMCG
- Mobile Phone/Network



We have been engaged through the whole cycle, from initial design, through event facilitation and post-event feedback. Our typical activities have included:

- Consultancy support in determining the rationale for the development centre event
- Competence design for use in the development centre event
- Timetable design, including competence/activity matrix
- Activity development
- Observer assessment guidelines, model answers and behavioural scoring guides
- Delegate materials
- Pre-communication and positioning of development centre event
- Training of observers/assessors prior to the event
- Provision of qualified/experienced development centre event observers
- Management of small and large scale events
- Collation of delegate observations and production development reports

- Event analysis for organisational report
- Follow-up delegate (1-2-1) feedback and coaching

Research demonstrates that there is no substitute for objectively observing and systematically measuring how people actually perform "on the ground". A well designed development centre is the most effective tool available for assessing individuals in both individual and group based environments for selection or development.



We provide a complete range of assessment centre and development centre design and delivery services, from competency matrix design through assessor training, exercise design and the provision of psychometric testing. Even if an organisation has no prior experience of this most effective assessment method we can design and manage the whole process from scratch using either our own established procedures or assessment tools, or designing entirely new and highly organisationally relevant systems and exercises.

From the most basic unassigned role exercises to highly complex assigned role problem solving and decision making exercises for senior managers/directors, we apply psychometric rigour to every centre we provide to ensure it is highly accurate, stable and job relevant. There is no such thing a 'standard' assessment or development centre - some can last as little as half a day, while others can go on for three days or more. However, all demand considerable commitment from the host organisation.

At Keystone, we have experience of providing both assessment centres and development centres. The type of centre can vary between the traditional assessment centre used purely for selection to the more modern development centre which involves self-assessment and whose primary purpose is development. One might ask the question, "Why group assessment and development centres together if they have different purposes?" The answer to that question is threefold.

Firstly, they both involve assessment and it is only the end use of the information obtained which is different i.e. one for selection and one for development; secondly, it is not easy to draw a line between assessment and development centres because all centres, be they for assessment or development, naturally lie somewhere on a continuum somewhere between the

two extremes; thirdly, most assessment centres involve at least some development and most development centres involve at least some assessment. This means that it is very rare to find a centre devoted to pure assessment or pure development.

The issue is further confused by the political considerations one must take into account when running such a centre. It is common practice for an assessment centre with internal candidates to be referred to as a development centre because of the negative implications associated with assessment.

When we have provided assessment centres, our assessment centres usually:

- Have a pass/fail criteria
- Are geared towards filling a job vacancy
- Have less emphasis placed on self-assessment
- Focus on what the candidate can do now
- Are geared to meet the needs of the organisation
- Assign the role of judge to assessors
- Place emphasis on selection with little or no developmental feedback and follow up
- Give feedback at a later date
- Involve the organisation having control over the information obtained
- Have very little pre-centre briefing
- Tend to be used with external candidates

When we have provided development centres, our development centres usually:

- Do not have a pass/fail criteria
- Are geared towards developing the individual
- Address a longer term need
- Have a 1:1 ratio of assessor to participant
- Do not have line managers as assessors
- Have a greater emphasis placed on self-assessment
- Focus on potential
- Assign the role of facilitator to assessors
- Place emphasis on developmental feedback and follow up with little or no selection function
- Give feedback immediately
- Involve the individual having control over the information obtained

- Have a substantial pre-centre briefing
- Tend to be used with internal candidates

Our philosophy about design

Our design experience encompasses all aspects of the design process. We work in partnership with clients to define the objectives and outcomes for the development centre before we commence any design process. For us this is a critical phase, to ensure that any solution developed really matches the client needs and provides tangible business outputs to support wider initiatives, such as talent management and succession planning.

Often we have been required to develop competence framework, and for us, this is the key foundation for any design work. Activity and event design always starts with having a clear view of which skills and behaviours need to be assessed at the event. Understanding which behaviours are business-critical is key, and then creating an event to elicit performance assessment in these areas.

Our philosophy about delivery

Our key principle in development centre delivery is that the delegates must feel relaxed and encouraged to want to deliver their best. As mentioned above, a 'true' development centre event is not about recruitment or selection; it's about highlighting key strengths and skills gaps for further and more focused development.



Hence, at Keystone, we feel a different climate should be created at the event: one that's free from the appearance of an assessment centre. The use of short 1-2-1 coaching sessions with the delegates throughout the event, for example, would create a more supportive and engaging feel, whilst still remaining objective in the performance appraisal.

As a minimum, we tend to work on a delegate to observer ratio of 2:1, although wherever possible, 1:1 provides the better insights and observations.

'Train The Observer' programmes



We also provide Train the Observer programmes for those organisations that see the need to develop their internal capability to facilitate development centres. Typically, our programmes run for 2 or 3 days, providing 'hands-on' assessing experience. We employ actors and use video footage of situations, to allow delegates to assess 'real-time' and then discuss their observations and

conclusions during a review process. We also explore the appropriate use of activities and how to deliver/facilitate 1-2-1 feedback post event.

1-2-1 feedback and coaching

The essential part of the development centre process is the provision of effective feedback to the delegates and information back to the organisation to manage their talent going forwards.

Our approach focuses on creating personal development reports and having 1-2-1 feedback session with the delegates soon after the event. Our 'coaching style' conversation focuses on raising awareness in the delegate of their skills, performance and development gaps identified during the event.

From an organisation perspective, we look to work with teams to highlight wider issues and actions from the development centre as a whole which could be used for talent mapping, succession planning, competence framework development, etc.

For more
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