

**Management competencies: 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:

Possible areas for development

- Knowledge and skills
- Qualifications
- Experience
- Personal contacts

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.

	To get where I want to be in 2+ years from now	To get where I want to be in 5+ years from now
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?		

## **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.

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			Important to me	May be important later	Not relevant	Experienced / proficient	Adequate for current role	Need to improve	Not relevant
1	0	<b>Personal Effectiveness</b>							
1	1	Planning your workload							
1	2	Setting priorities							
1	3	Delegating							
1	4	Dealing with paperwork							
1	5	Planning and managing projects							
1	6	Team building							
1	7	Planning and managing meetings							
1	8	Negotiating							
1	9	Making business presentations							
1	10	Producing written reports							
2	0	<b>Marketing</b>							
2	1	Researching your markets							
2	2	Designing new courses and programmes							
2	3	Monitoring competitors' activities							
2	4	Pricing programmes and courses							
2	5	Preparing effective promotional material and promoting the school's services							
2	6	Arranging attendance at trade shows and exhibitions							
3	0	<b>Managing People</b>							
3	1	Analysing jobs and improving the school's internal organisation structure							
3	2	Creating job descriptions							
3	3	Recruiting and selecting staff							
3	4	Motivating staff							
3	5	Setting and reviewing salary structures							
3	6	Providing contracts of employment for staff							
3	7	Managing the school's staff appraisal system							
3	8	Identifying training needs of staff and providing training							

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			Important to me	May be important later	Not relevant	Experienced / proficient	Adequate for current role	Need to improve	Not relevant
4	0	<b>Delivering Your Service to Clients</b>							
4	1	Providing pre-course information for students							
4	2	Providing reception and induction for new arrivals							
4	3	Providing up to date teaching material and technology							
4	4	Scheduling classes							
4	5	Arranging class tests and public examinations							
4	6	Arranging a suitable social programme							
4	7	Providing suitable accommodation for students							
4	8	Providing cleaning, maintenance, etc.							
4	9	Liaising with British Council, ARELS, IATEFL, etc.							
5	0	<b>Managing Information and Finance</b>							
5	1	Making effective use of the Internet							
5	2	Making effective use of IT for administrative purposes							
5	3	Maintaining adequate records for statutory and administrative purposes							
5	4	Complying with current legislation on tax, VAT, employment law etc.							
5	5	Using management reports on the school's financial performance							
5	6	Creating a business plan							

**Application to your own career:**