**Assessment Validation:**
**Training Outcomes To Improve Workplace Safety.**

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Validation of assessment drives continual improvement in training delivery and assessment. The validation process should be inclusive of a number of parties both internal and external and be driven by site and industry requirements.

Effective validation follows three distinctive phases;

- Before Assessment    -    the development phase
- During Assessment    -    the implementation phase
- Post Assessment      -    the feedback phase

This session engages participants in looking at the three phases and the purpose of each and provides practical solutions for development of a systematic approach to site/organisations Assessment Validation processes.

To have a safer more effective workforce; it is important to look at what we are doing and how we are doing it and find ways to make it better.

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What is Validation?

Validation is the formal process of

- comparing
- evaluating
- reviewing

assessment processes, methods, tools and the subsequent assessment decisions. Validation in itself confirms the validity and reliability of judgements of competence made by assessors during assessment of a worker or student.

The 3 Phases of Validation

1. Before Assessment: The Development Phase

Everything in training and assessment hinges on the validity of the resources being used. What this means is that 'before' any training or assessment takes place, the resources - tools, methods and processes of assessment must be checked and reviewed prior to industry application or field use.

This is done by 'validating' them against a set criteria, known as 'benchmarks'.

Benchmarks are base documents used to create training and assessment resources from. They can include training packages (eg. RII), units of competency, policies, procedures, legislation, manufacturer instructions, Australian standards, Acts. etc.

Resources are checked against these benchmarks to ensure that all information is reflected in the training and assessment process so that the end result is a participant being able to fully operate to the minimum standard accepted, to carry out a specific task in the workplace.

2. During Assessment: The Implementation Phase

Once resources have been validated and tested they are ready for use in the field. While the resources themselves have been validated, the possibility for variations or gaps to occur is amplified in the Implementation Phase.

Every trainer and assessor will interpret the resources based on their own skills, knowledge and experience, while this is expected, and inevitable; due diligence must be taken in the workplace to ensure that every trainer and assessor interprets what the minimum standards of performance are, for a specific task relevant to that workplace.

What is common in industry is that personnel will be signed off on a particular task, if they have the required amount of industry experience, usually at some point they will be required to train someone else in that task at a later stage; sometimes they have formal assessor qualifications, sometimes not. The common danger here is that at any given time, people are assessing others in the workplace to different standards or levels based on their own interpretation.

What doesn't often occur, is that prior to them being assigned this responsibility, they are not given additional training from common sources in the workplace (eg. training or HR department) to make sure that everyone is given the same, desired interpretation, so that while they may conduct their assessment slightly differently (this is a given as we are all individuals); they will have more clarity on the same 'workplace interpretation' which will give more similar outcomes as people are trained up through the ranks.

3. Post Assessment: The Feedback Phase

The Feedback phase is the most important as it gives 'real world' data and information that enables the quality of training and assessment to be monitored. As noted above, the biggest gap occurs through individual interpretation and assessment, by gathering quality feedback the gaps can be shortened and continuously improved to lessen the opportunity for incidents to occur.

It is common practice in most workplaces to gather some form of feedback after training or assessment, usually this is filed with training records, and in a lot of cases never accessed again; unfortunately missing an opportunity to gather vital information to improve training and assessment practices. It is also common for feedback to done as 'just' a process, a one-size-fits all approach which offers limited feedback.

A simple solution to this is to assemble a team of assessors from a range of positions within a workplace and schedule in quality feedback sessions – this practice in itself would be a process of validation and continuous improvement.

The goal would be to gain quality feedback on training and assessment outcomes and field performance levels of participants. For example a team might include operators, trainers, assessors, supervisors, HR and field staff who see and experience workplace performances from different perspectives.

The team would be reviewing the outcomes of assessment, looking for any gaps in performance levels. Indicators might include numbers of incidents or performance levels (individual or team comparisons). For example you might look at a similar range of people operating the same machinery and identify their skill levels, productivity, safety etc. Alternatively you might compare teams or crews and look at their safety, performance and output levels; then compare quality gaps (or interpretation gaps); this could signify the need to clarify 'workplace interpretations' for any specific tasks relevant to the training and assessment that occurs.

This would be great to incorporate as an ongoing practice, but even if every 3-4 months selecting a handful of key tasks to review, this would have a positive impact on the quality control of training and assessment practices and create an ongoing validation procedure that could grow into a strong preventative and proactive culture in your workplace.

# Validation Process Flowchart - Handout

| Validation | Industry Gaps | Solutions |
|---|---|---|
| **Development Phase**<br><br>• Create training resources<br><br>• Ensure benchmarks are reflected in all resources<br><br>• Test & trial - validate | • using external consultants with no current industry or validation experience<br>• using internal personnel with no validation experience<br>• not having resources correctly validated | • use a combination of internal and external people to create a validation team<br>• arrange specialist training for personnel to fully understand validation<br>• engage experienced personnel to test & trial resources prior to field use |
| **Implementation Phase**<br><br>• Occurs after resources are validated<br><br>• Ongoing monitoring & reviewing<br><br>• Continuous improvement | • No formal, regular monitoring & review processes occur<br>• continuous improvement practices not fully acted upon<br>• quality control lost through individual interpretation of performance benchmarks | • clarify 'workplace interpretations' for field assessors to create similar outcomes<br>• ensure assessors are not taking 'short cuts' during the training/assessment process<br>• create a short review checklist for assessors to provide feedback after training (monitoring processes, methods & results) |
| **Feedback Phase**<br><br>• Monitor & review assessment outcomes<br><br>• Seek quality feedback<br><br>• Update resources, processes & document outcomes | • review outcomes not implemented<br>• changes implemented as a response rather than prevention<br>• relevant parties not experienced in & review validation process<br>• quality reviews not schedules | • schedule in validation & review sessions eg. quarterly<br>• monitor 'quality' feedback from validation & review sessions; implement relevant changes<br>• arrange specialist training for workplace assessors and supervisors to fully understand validation processes and consequences |

**Case Studies – Handout**  (real case studies experienced by the presenter)

**Development Phase Example:**

- Mine site engaged Brisbane based consultancy to develop training package resources
- Mine site audit showed resources were not current (ie. they were developed from a superseded training package)
- All training was suspended, all current tickets (over a 6 month period) had to be redone
- The whole training package resources had to be redone and validated by another consultancy.

Findings:

- A consultancy was hired that did not have a direct connection or relevance to the mining industry
- Personnel were not fully trained and/or did not have experience with the formal validation process to pick up errors
- All training had to be redone
- All resources had to be updated

**Implementation Phase Example:**

- Training department issued training packages to workplace trainers and assessors when training was schedules (ie. quality controlled and only accessed by relevant personnel)
- Workplace assessor (not formally qualified) would go through the training packages prior to working with the participants and pull out any material he deemed irrelevant or old (he was conducting emergency response training)
- Workplace assessor would add in additional materials he deemed needed to be in the training package

Findings:

- By removing any of the training or assessment components, this immediately invalidated all documents and training outcomes
- Participants should not have legally been signed off as competent
- No quality reviews took place as this was not flagged by any supervisors, training or HR departments
- Upon formal training this employee had to advise the SSE – all training had to be redone, any incidents that may have occurred with how emergency response personnel responded, had to be investigated

**Feedback Phase Example:**

- A non accredited, industry experienced trainer was training a new employee on a piece of heavy machinery
- There were no formal processes for gathering feedback
- He 'assumed' the new employee was learning everything accordingly
- End of the day, he parked up the machine, exited it illegally (to site requirements) and took a short cut across part of a traffic road area
- the new employee followed his actions – he slipped off the machine (was not injured), he crossed the same section of road and was almost run over by a vehicle as he was unaware that it was an active section of road

Findings

- The experienced employee 'assumed' his trainee was competent
- He did not follow procedures (as over time and experience he had learnt some short cuts that he could carry out in a 'safe manner' because of his level of awareness and experience)
- The new employee did not have any experience to fall back on
- The new employee was not fully functional or integrated into that workplace
- The experienced employee did not use any formal feedback processes to correctly monitor and review his trainee
- He was training him based on his own experience and interpretation rather than the 'workplace interpretation'
- The experienced employee was not formally qualified as a trainer or assessor