



## **Chapter V**

# **Optimizing IT Skills Management Initiatives**

Ken Strauss  
Bookman Testing Services, USA

## **Abstract**

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*This chapter identifies the essential information required in effective IT skills management initiatives. It argues that foremost among this information is in-depth insight into an individual's specific areas of strength/weakness. In a logical step-by-step discussion, the chapter builds upon a simple assessment to finally arrive at the complexities of an assessment required to deliver this detailed insight for effective skills management programs. It then goes on to discuss reporting and analysis of detailed assessment results to maximize the benefits of skill assessments in hiring, training, and overall skills management programs.*

## **Introduction**

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As technology continues to advance at an ever-increasing pace, more organizations will come to recognize the importance of IT skills management

programs. It will become evident that a corporation's success will depend on the success of its information technology initiatives. Yet, the new rules of corporate success brought on by the rapid advancement of technology will dictate that IT initiatives depend not so much on the hardware and/or software technology selected, but more on the skills of the individuals responsible for implementing the systems and applications.

As technologies get more complex, requiring more knowledge, better skills, and specialization, it will become more difficult to find qualified IT professionals. Successful organizations will recognize the critical importance of effectively managing the skills of their current IT professionals. They will also recognize that the first step in managing those IT skills is to have a detailed, objective, and accurate inventory of the skills of their current staff, as well as the skills required for their future projects. With the proper evaluation of detailed IT skills, organizations will be able to save time, money, and optimize their hiring, training, project staffing, and career development initiatives.

Long before today's massive IT departments existed, industrial psychologists were assessing employee soft skills by treating each personality trait as a unique measurable attribute. In the 1990s, as corporate and industrial leaders recognized IT's critical importance to overall corporate success, attention began to turn towards assessing IT technical skills. Following the experience in assessing soft-skills, it was only natural to treat each technology as a singular unique attribute. However, this brought about a false start to IT skills management, as the real power behind an IT technical assessment lies in the evaluation of the many detailed skill sub-topics comprising the scope of a given technology. Analysis at this detailed sub-topic level harnesses the full power of IT skills assessment and opens the door to dynamic and effective skill management systems.

Most learning management systems (LMSs) and/or skills management systems treat IT skills like they do soft-skills—assigning a number on a scale representing the individual's success in achieving that particular soft-skill (i.e., 'works well as a team player' or 'shows initiative'). This treatment of each soft-skill as a unique attribute to be numerically evaluated was passed down to IT skill assessments. Each IT technology (i.e., Cobol, Oracle, Network Administration, etc.) was treated as a single attribute to be numerically evaluated. Thus an individual's IT skill profile would contain a series of numerical ratings corresponding to his/her skill level in various technologies (e.g., 5 in Oracle Programming, 4 in Powerbuilder, and 2 in Windows Programming).

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