

Compliance or competence?

What are the three most important things for success in business?

- Customers
- Cash (flow)
- Culture – and that's today's topic.

What is culture? It is the behaviours and beliefs of a particular group based on their values and principles or philosophy. These may be positive e.g. freedom, education or negative e.g. cruelty, crime.

In an organization culture can also arise from tasks that are repeated and put into routines producing structures and thus beliefs about the values of the organization.

This can produce a compliance or a competence culture for an organization.

Compliance: the act of conforming, acquiescing or yielding or a tendency to yield readily to others, especially in a weak and subservient way.

Competence: the capacity, skill, or ability to do something correctly or efficiently, or the scope of a person's or a group's ability or knowledge.

Compliance cultures tend to be:

- Narrowly concentrated on specific transactions and blind to all else.
- Fatally reliant on rigid sets of rules instead of more flexible behavioural frameworks.
- Rules bound as rules are added to detect previous breaches but don't detect new, and often imaginative, ways to breach compliance.
- High-maintenance, as yet more rules in the hope of covering everything only leads to ever more "false positives" about non compliance.

Competence cultures on the other hand tend to:

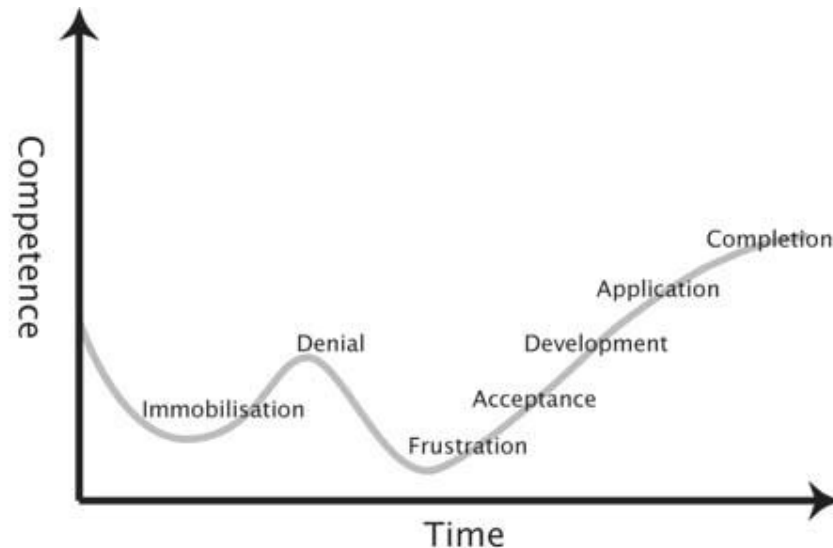
- Assess the knowledge and understanding required to carry out a job.
- Recognize the scope or range of situations across which someone is expected to perform.
- Help improvement with on the job training and peer assessment.
- Review behaviour against indicators that have been clearly shown to be associated with successful performance.

So how can you help someone become more competent and thus perform better?

Firstly, understand the competence curve which describes changes in our competence as we adapt to new experiences and abilities.

Our reaction to change is likely to go through a predictable sequence of phases that are mapped out on the curve. Understanding this allows you to help yourself and others.

The Competence Curve:

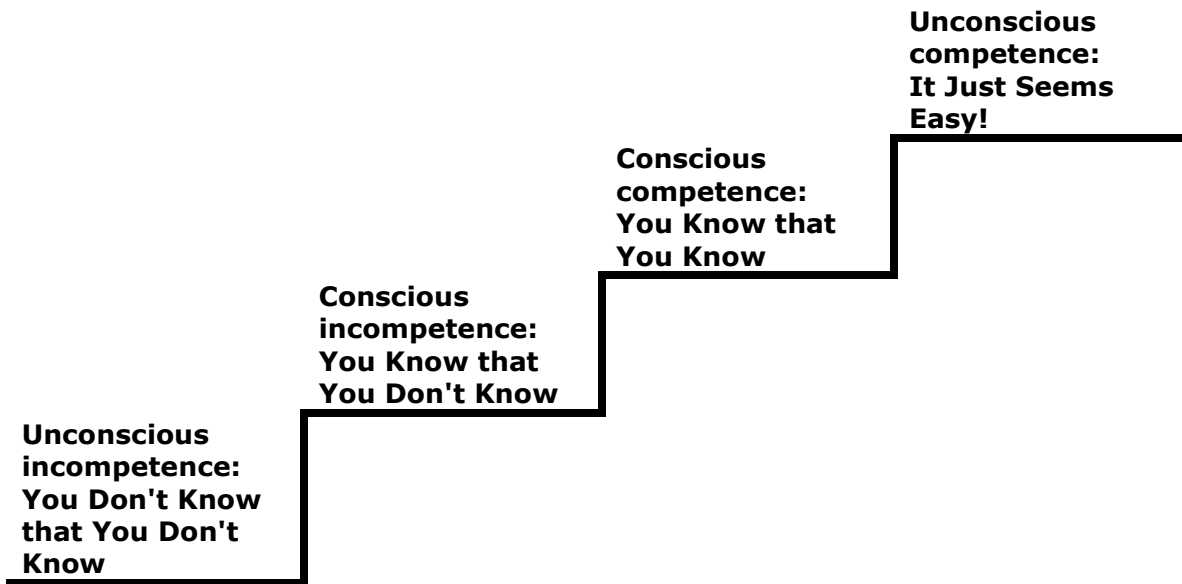


- False competence – “of course I can do this”
- Immobilisation + shock (mismatch between expectations v reality)
- Denial of the need for change
- Incompetence (resulting in increased awareness and frustration)
- Acceptance of reality (‘willing to let go’)
- Development (working out ways of dealing with the new reality)
- Application (internalising the situation and trying to make sense of it)
- Integration and completion (leading to changing viewpoint and behaviours)

If we understand this then when we find that we don’t know something important, we can be motivated to learn more.

Obviously if we’re blissfully unaware of our ignorance, there’s little we can do about it. So one of the first steps on the journey to acquiring new skills is therefore to be aware of what you don’t know.

Secondly, the Conscious Competence Ladder or Matrix can help.



Level 1 - Unconscious Incompetence (You Don't Know that You Don't Know)

At this level you are blissfully ignorant: You have a complete lack of knowledge and skills in the subject in question. On top of this, you are unaware of this lack of skill, and your confidence may therefore far exceed your abilities. You may need to be made gently aware of how much you need to learn to become competent.

Level 2 - Conscious Incompetence (You Know that You Don't Know)

At this level you find that there are skills you need to learn, and you may be shocked to discover that there are others who are much more competent than you. As you realize that your ability is limited, your confidence drops. You go through an uncomfortable period as you learn these new skills when others are much more competent and successful than you are. You need plenty of encouragement, toleration and help to improve.

Level 3 - Conscious Competence (You Know that You Know)

At this level you acquire the new skills and knowledge. You put your learning into practice and you gain confidence in carrying out the tasks or jobs involved. You are aware of your new skills and work on refining them. You are still concentrating on the performance of these activities, but as you get ever-more practice and experience, these become increasingly automatic. You need to keep focused on effective performance and have plenty of opportunities for practice.

Level 4 - Unconscious Competence (You Don't Know that You Know - It Just Seems Easy!)

At this level your new skills become habits, and you perform the task without conscious effort and with automatic ease. This is the peak of your confidence and ability. BUT..... you need to avoid complacency and stay abreast of changes. You may also need to remember how difficult it was to reach this state so that you are tolerant with people at the Conscious Incompetence stage!

Finally, understand how competence develops.

To develop competence:

Knowledge must be gained in order to develop skill(s)



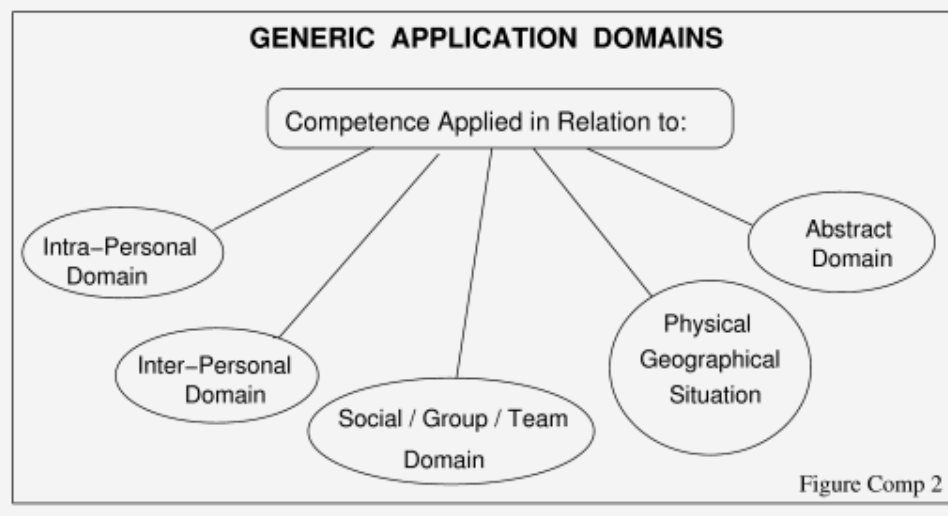
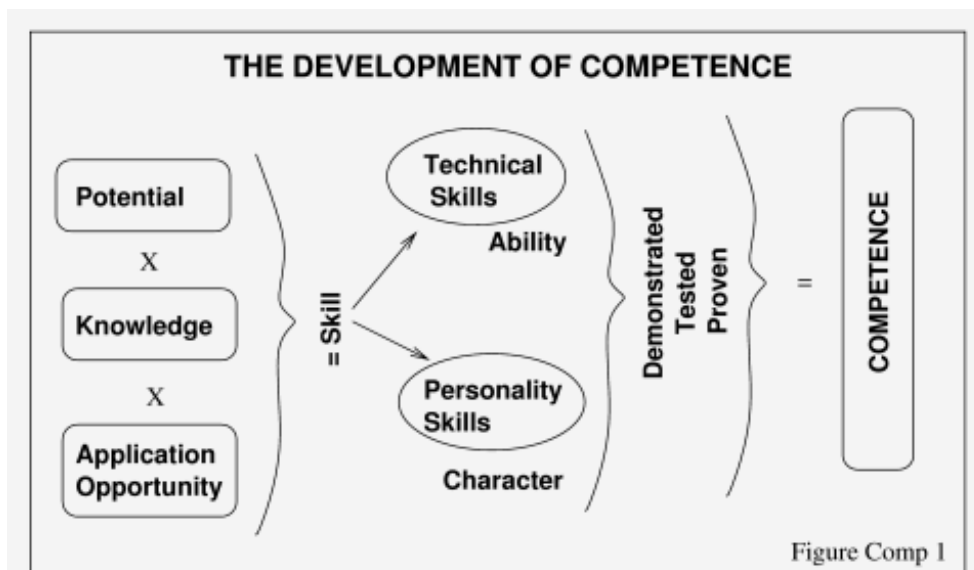
Theory must be put into practise



You have to mix the two to get the reaction



Only when skill is tested or demonstrated can it be classified as competence



By the way, competence does not necessarily lead to performance though it is much more likely to do so than compliance. A few things need to overlap. You figure it out.

THE COMPETENCY – PERFORMANCE GAP

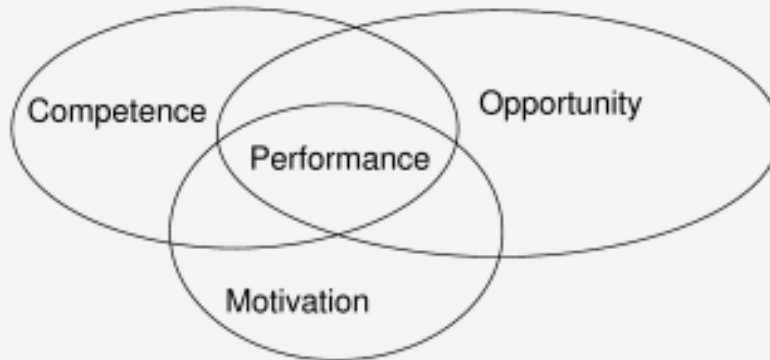


Figure Comp 3