

Tools guide

Skills framework and skills matrix



The Association of Product Management is a professional membership body that helps you manage your professional development. We produce and maintain a wide range of best-practice guides, tools and templates for our members to use.

What is a skills framework or a skills matrix?

A skills matrix is list of the key skills, competencies and attributes needed by a person to fulfil a job role.

On the simplest level, it is a reference document to help focus conversations on how work is completed across the team. However, once established, it can be adapted to improve recruitment and selection, to standardise performance management and to plan the most efficient spend of your training and development budget.

How to use these tools

In this suite of tools, we have created the following editable tools:

1. Skills framework

The skills framework is an editable Word document so that you can add to or delete skills based on your organisation's needs.

It is made up of six competency headings, each with five "what we do" and five "how we do it" measures that give a mix of hard- and soft-skills essential to good product management.

2. Skills matrix – product manager

The skills matrix is an editable Excel spread sheet so that you can change the skills or the scoring levels to suit your organisation's needs.

The skills listed match those in the skills framework, but they now have a predefined scoring mechanism that gives a red/amber/green status and space for comments.

The tool can be used as a self-scoring exercise for you to identify your own strengths and weaknesses or you can do it with a colleague or your manager for additional feedback.

You can use this for your own self-development by seeking out resources to help you strengthen your development areas. The tool also helps you gather evidence for your performance management meeting, and it gives you a case for investment into your professional development if you feel you need more formal training.

3. Skills matrix – product team

The skills matrix is an editable Excel spread sheet so that you can change the skills or the scoring levels to suit your organisation's needs.

The skills listed match those in the skills framework with a predefined individual and aggregated scoring mechanism that gives an individual and team red/amber/green status. The tool is used by copying the individual scores from the product manager matrix into the team matrix. The spread sheet will give you a team-level red/amber/green rating, so you have an instant skills gap analysis for your team. You now have the basis for your team's training and development plan.

It is also a useful tool to include in your business case if you have to bid for your training budget.

What to use these tools for

1. For recruitment and selection

Advertising for a defined skill set helps candidates self-select at the point of application. This means fewer but usually better-quality applicants.

Designing the selection process is easier with a skills framework, as you can set the interview questions and any selection activity to match the skill set you are looking for. You may be recruiting to fill an identified skills gap in your team, or you may want a good all-rounder with leadership potential. Having a selection process aligned to your skills framework is much more robust. It is easier to choose the most appropriate person based on demonstrable skills in a fair and transparent manner.

2. For standardising performance management

Each skill is assessed and scored on evidence-based criteria. The score gives a red/amber/green rating and on the product manager version, there is space for some narrative. The narrative should be evidence-based statements of achievements that support the score.

3. For team skills gap analysis

The team matrix gives an aggregated red/amber/green rating and highlights strengths and weaknesses across the team. This can be used either to plan a structured and targeted training programme for the team or to strengthen the team in its weakest areas through recruitment.

Summary

To summarise, a skills matrix is list of the key skills, competencies and attributes needed by a person to fulfil a job role. It can be used to:

- Focus conversations on how work is completed across the team.
- Improve performance management processes with effective and standardised measures that highlight individual and team strengths and weaknesses.
- Improve recruitment and selection methods for a better chance of employing the right candidate.
- Identify training needs and present a business case for investment in training.

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