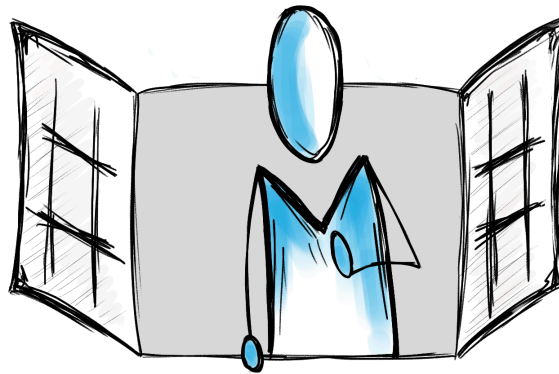


Workbook

Assessment Center

Practical benefits:

You know how AC tasks should be designed and compiled and are familiar with different types of tasks.



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Basics

An assessment center is a personnel diagnostic procedure and is used for **personnel selection and personnel development**. With the help of various exercises, tasks and tests, the behavior of the participants is observed and evaluated based on a created requirements profile. Assessment centers only have their full effect if they are addressed **quality standards**. According to DIN 33430 (ISO Norm), an assessment center represents a mix of procedures.

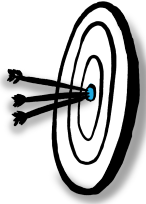
Assessment centers have become a popular procedure because they provide a personnel selection and management process that is adapted to the ever-growing changes development makes possible. In order to check at an early stage whether (potential) employees can cope with the challenges of an agile and changing working world, **Assessment centers use various exercises that are as realistic as possible which** show and require goal-oriented and situation-appropriate behavior. These exercises can be designed specifically for the company and should always be designed and selected based on a requirements profile. A sensible use and an appropriate **construction of tasks** are important success factors for a meaningful assessment center.



What typical assessment center tasks do you know?

Core elements of an assessment center

Goals of an assessment center



Assessment centers are part of the personnel diagnostic procedures and are used for this purpose **Recruit, select and develop staff**. Through the process, individual **Skills are recognized and promoted** as well as **Qualifications** for certain positions **be checked**. There are two possible starting points for conducting an assessment center in a company:

Personnel selection	Potential analysis
Goal: Recruitment and acquisition of suitable personnel	Goal: Alignment of company goals with existing potential among employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ External and internal (re-)filling of management positions, specialist positions, project management ➤ Internal promotion decisions ➤ Suitability assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promotion and development of young managers (trainees) ➤ Internal career planning and advice ➤ Needs analysis for further education and training/coaching ➤ Selection process for internal funding programs

Assessment centers are used primarily for personnel selection and potential analysis and can therefore have both **internal and external participants**. They are **complementary and in-depth** to the 'classic' applicant interview because they want to demonstrate realistic behavior (potentially under difficult conditions) and focus on non-technical skills.

In an assessment center, particular emphasis is placed on observing social and personal skills and interdisciplinary skills.

Characteristics of an assessment center

The prerequisite for conducting an assessment center is a requirements profile, which consists of the required competencies and skills that the future position/work area entails.



Further characteristics of an assessment center are:

- It is a one-day or multi-day event **Event**.
- **One or more applicants will be examined**.
- The participants go through several exercises tailored to the requirements profile.
- Observers **evaluate the behavior** and the performance of the participants **requirements profile**.
- The exercises are based on **future framework conditions and work requirements**.
- **There is accompanying and/or final feedback** to all applicants.

Since 'Assessment Center' is an unprotected term, it is important that companies adhere to current quality standards (DIN/ISO 33430) and quality criteria in order to be successful and... **TO DO** ensure procedures.

Process of an assessment center

The development of an assessment center requires several process steps that should be documented as part of quality assurance. The following individual steps need to be taken:

Creation of a requirements profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Includes the activities and attributes necessary for successful performance of the position ➤ Skills, knowledge, characteristics, work tasks
Selection and composition of the observation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appropriate and sensible designation of decision-making people ➤ Managers, technical experts, HR, representatives of co-determination bodies (e.g. equal opportunities officers)
Selection and construction of exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Compilation of exercises and tasks (adapted to the requirements). ➤ Diverse and realistic exercise selection ➤ Clear and coherent task instructions
Observation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qualification of the observation team ➤ Awareness of the challenges of human observation and evaluation processes ➤ Strengthening the ability to give feedback
Preparation & organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creation of a rating system ➤ Pre-selection of applicants ➤ Planning of time and space
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Oriented to agreed regulations and evaluation systems ➤ High and general transparency about processes and goals
Creation of an overall assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Evaluation of the overall performance in relation to the requirement profile ➤ Evaluation of the individual performances of the participants
Results discussions with participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feedback to individual participants ➤ Constructive, concrete and in relation to the requirements profile
Coordination with personnel development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementation of the results and judgments in personnel development measures
Evaluation of the procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analysis and critical consideration of the process ➤ Identify optimization opportunities in the process

According to which criteria should an observation group be assembled?

Types of exercises

Recruiting suitable employees is of great value for companies. A wrong hire results in monetary damage as well as dissatisfaction and potential conflicts in the teams. It is therefore essential to create a detailed requirements profile and a company-specific assessment process when hiring. The development and selection of goal-oriented and suitable exercises plays a major role here.

Basically, the following types can be identified in the exercises used in the assessment center:

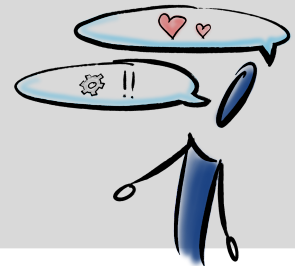
- Individual performances
- Individual tasks
- Group tasks
- Psychometric tasks (tests)

These types include different exercises, which are briefly explained below and linked to possible observable competencies/ skill areas to be described.

Individual performances

Possible observable elements:

- Communication skills
- Fluency
- Expertise
- Motivation
- Creativity
- Presentation behavior



Structured interview

All participants are asked the same questions according to a phase-oriented and clear process. These are targeted questions about required skills (e.g. questions about motivation, ability to work in a team, personality, resilience,...)

Self-presentation

Within a fixed time frame, the participant should introduce themselves based on predefined questions or categories, which may differ from those of other participants. They should use visualizations for support and incorporate new or unfamiliar information.

Individual tasks

Possible observable elements:

- Effectiveness and (self-)organization
- Resilience
- Strategic thinking
- Presentation behavior
- Role behavior (e.g. leadership behavior)
- Decision-making ability
- Analytical ability
- Engagement



Lecture/presentation

The participants should work on a specific, job-relevant topic and present it in an appropriate presentation form. The preparation time and the difficulty of the topic vary depending on the form of presentation:

- Topic presentation with sufficient preparation time and the aim of providing a comprehensive explanation and your own assessment of the given topic.
- Stress presentation with short preparation time and/or complex topic with the aim of performance under pressure and the focus on the most important elements.

Inbox

This exercise simulates the time-limited processing of a 'classic' mailbox inbox under certain conditions (e.g. afterwards for a week on vacation). Two options are:

- Systematic classification from 15 to 25 short cases from the perspective of the desired position
- Organization and scheduling of upcoming/emerging tasks under certain objectives and framework specifications

Case study

In the case study, participants independently work on complex and company-specific tasks by analyzing the problem situation and developing decisions and alternative solutions. There is no feedback from the moderator or observation team during this time.

Examples of organizational tasks:

- How can delivery processes in the warehouse be optimized?
- What might a reorganization of several departments look like after a budget cut (of X%)?

Extension of the case study: fact finding

The participants also conduct an interview in which they can and should ask about possible problems and information in order to then develop concrete solutions.

Role play

Role plays are one-to-one conversation situations in which certain communicative and realistic situations are simulated in order to be able to observe the participants' behavior as authentically as possible. Participants receive a framework, preparation time and the most important information about the counter role. There is no ready-made script; the participants act spontaneously.

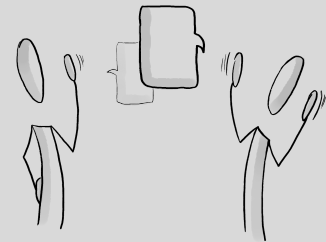
Examples of role exercises:

- Feedback with employees
- Development talk
- Negotiations with other areas of the company
- Customer conversations (complaint discussions,...)

Group tasks

Possible observable elements:

- Communication skills
- Ability to work in a team and cooperate
- Creativity and openness
- Dealing with conflicts
- Assertiveness
- Goal orientation
- Delegation ability



Group work

In group work, the participants dedicate themselves to a project-like task that involves developing solutions to problems, creating and developing concepts or constructing something together.

The following framework factors can be adjusted:

- Group work with or without moderation
- Competition or consensus oriented

Possible tasks for group work:

- Planning a company outing
- Building a bridge (from paper material)

Group discussion

The participants are given a topic - usually a debatable political question or a social problem related to the company - which they prepare for in a short period of time and then discuss in the group.

There are also factors **that changed and adapted** can be used to change the goal and the observable skills.

- With or without role play (assignment of an identification/position)
- With or without discussion leader

Possible topics for discussion could be:

- Pros and cons of Britain leaving the EU
- Introduction of quotas (men's quota in kindergartens,...)
- Desk sharing through restructuring in office buildings and increased home office

Psychometric procedures

Possible observable elements:

- Judgment skills
- Holistic and systematic thinking
- Creativity
- Language skills (spelling, foreign language,...)
- Intellectual processing capacity
- Comprehension



Intelligence test

Intelligence tests are used in assessment centers to test general and specific intelligence and to test logical thinking skills. The participants usually complete several tests consisting of words, pictures and numbers.

Examples of intelligence tests:

- Number series tests
- Progressive-Matrizen-Tests
- Linguistic thinking

Personality test

Personality tests are carried out in the form of questionnaires to assess typical behavior. They show a picture of the self-assessment of the participants. An alternative to this are projective methods, in which the participants are given creative/free tasks.

Examples include:

- Draw or paint a person/yourself
- Interpret images/patterns

Compilation of exercises

When selecting and designing exercises, those responsible should always adhere to the requirement profile. Depending on the relevance of individual skills, suitable exercises can be compiled accordingly. It is important to know which exercises and task types open up which possible observation areas.

- If it is important to observe communicative behavior with others, group work and presentations are the most suitable methods.
- If the criteria in the requirement profile fall within the area of conceptual skills, exercises such as the in-basket test or case study are appropriate.

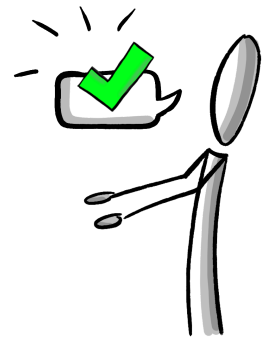
Exercises should not be selected based on practicality in their organization or implementation, but rather based on their validity - i.e. they reflect the requirement profile.

To ensure that different areas of competence are covered – assessment centers should **not only check** the **social skills** – diversity in the types of tasks helps.

One quality criterion for a good assessment center is to select at least three different types of exercises in which the same criterion is observed. The goal is to create as many observation opportunities as possible. However, the exercises should not include more than five criteria in the evaluation system. It is preferable to define the criteria with desired or specific behaviors (4–5 per criterion) to enable a constructive evaluation.

To summarize: **guide** when selecting and putting together exercises:

- ☐ See the requirements profile as a starting point
- ☐ Create an overall overview of required and observable skills
- ☐ Derive individual exercises
- ☐ Select 4-7 exercise types
- ☐ Testing the diversity of skills (social/personal skills and leadership/entrepreneurial skills)
- ☐ Limit criteria to be observed with associated behavioral anchors per exercise (recommendation: max. 5)



Construction of exercises

Not only a suitable selection and combination of exercises enable a targeted procedure, but also the **construction** of tasks contributes to a high value in the meaningfulness of an assessment center. When designing exercises, it is important to always focus on one question:

Can the exercise be used to obtain a reliable measurement in accordance with the requirements profile?

An exercise should be designed in such a way that the relevant behavior or required skill is elicited and becomes visible to the observers.

To ensure the reliability of the exercises, there are several **rules to be followed in construction**:

1. During an exercise, each observation element must be measurable multiple times.
2. The criteria are described using different behavioral anchors, all of which demonstrate the presence of the element.
3. The exercises allow for a variety of socially appropriate behaviors and are not designed to require a specific coping strategy.
4. The adjustable factors (e.g. time frames, depth of information) in an exercise are selected to facilitate the required behaviors rather than hinder them.
5. Co-actors (e.g. in role-playing exercises) follow standardized reaction patterns, enabling a realistic comparison of behaviors.
6. Transparency regarding the target dimensions and requirement criteria is ensured so that observation elements remain unaffected by differing assumptions.



Observing the mentioned procedure when selecting exercises and adhering to the rules in their construction are key to a valid and reliable approach in assessment center exercises. This increases the success of an assessment center and thus supports personnel development, ultimately leading to greater acceptance of such measures.