

# Applying quality control to competence development and maintenance

David Arber of Redkite talks about organisational competence frameworks, as well as Redkite Tracker

## THE USE OF A COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

utilising national standards is now endemic within the UK fire sector, and many organisations are already realising the benefits of implementing training and development schemes with in-built, auditable quality control mechanisms.

The latter issue is important, yet is often overlooked. It is not only important that everyone can agree to be developed to, and then maintain, a level of competence. It is also important that quality assurance processes are built in to ensure that there is a consistent standard of attainment not only within one organisation but across all participating organisations and, ultimately, the sector. To a large extent, this is what the assessor, internal verifier and external verifier layers embedded within the N/SVQ processes provide – but this process can be expensive and not all organisations have the wherewithal to implement such rigorous measures.

Alternatives do exist. The Airport RFFS are overseen by the Civil Aviation Authority Safety Regulation Group which, in its role as industry regulator, routinely oversees training and development records to ensure compliance with the Aerodrome CAP 699 standards. Whilst audits are not carried out to the same standards as those carried out by external verifiers, the fact that there is oversight is a powerful incentive to ensuring quality. Some Airport RFFS have added a further level of quality control whereby an

external oversight service is provided by another Airport RFFS, sometimes from another group or, where this option is not available, from a third party.

Redkite Systems has been aware of the need for this type of provision for some time and has recently set up Redkite Interactive Support Services (RISS) to provide a range of training, support and consultancy services to our end users. RISS is already providing an external oversight service and is working with a number of Airport RFFS to provide an external verification facility which includes advice on the quality of records held on the Redkite Tracker system and guidance on achieving the requirements of the amended CAP 699 standards. Much of this work has been undertaken by John Arnold who has also been helping with the cross-mapping of generic roles and advising on the changes required to the way Redkite Tracker is used to help ensure Airport RFFS meet the new standards.

## Minimising Cost

John has recently been working with Newcastle International Airport Fire and Rescue Service which has been developing a method of recording the competence of its managers in line with the amended CAP 699 standards. To this end they have enrolled their watch managers on to the Watch Management NVQ Level 3 through Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service's approved centre. Newcastle

International Airport RFFS is utilising the Redkite Tracker system as an electronic candidate portfolio which allows for distance verification by the NVQ centre and dovetails with its existing competence procedures.

The distance verification by Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service NVQ centre is an example of the way Redkite Interactive Support Services utilise modern remote, internet-



based tools to minimise the cost and impact of providing training and support services where a physical face-to-face meeting is not required. Many of our customers have already made use of this facility and have found it especially helpful when they require help in a specific area or where staff are only available at times that are not within normal 'office' hours – something that happens frequently with our Airport RFFS clients. This service is of special interest at this time, when many airports are making the transition to the latest version of the CAP 699 standards.

The value of training and developing staff to the standards embedded within a competence framework is now widely recognised in the UK. Significant cost benefits have accrued within the Airport RFFS sector where airports have managed to achieve full maintenance of competence status and many overseas Airport RFFS are also adopting or using a competence approach.

Although the standards differ across national boundaries, the basic principle is the same. Redkite Systems has recently supplied several organisations within the United Arab Emirates with the Redkite Tracker system, and meeting the needs for the region is an interesting challenge. Some of our Redkite Systems UAE clients have needed to redesign the user interface to include Arabic script. This has been done to allow the updating and viewing of training records to be as simple as possible for end users, whilst retaining the sophisticated functionality of Redkite Tracker in the background. We are looking forward to the ongoing challenges we will inevitably face as we move this project forward in the future.



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