

Learning and Development

by David Arber

Monitoring system offers increased flexibility



In this article, Redkite looks at some of the debates around the management of information within fire and rescue services

FLEXIBILITY IS CENTRAL TO THE REDKITE

Tracker system, and one outcome of this led to an interesting debate between a group of users at a recent meeting. The question was asked: *Should individuals update their own personal records or should line managers update records on their behalf?*

There is no ready answer to this question. The Redkite system accommodates both approaches and even allows mixing of the two approaches, if required.

NVQ candidates may be required to update their own records in order to build an electronic portfolio. Staff in general may be required to update their own records as part of an activity tracking requirement. Junior, middle and senior management may feel it only appropriate that they update their own records – and so on.

Whoever updates records, you can decide whether a brief description of the activity is required or not. Where it is required, a pick list of pre-defined 'set statements' can be used to reduce the time needed to update records, reduce the likelihood of error and remove the need for copious typing.

The system allows individual staff to record activities they have undertaken and identify whether they believe they require further training or development or are, in their opinion, carrying out activities to an adequate standard.

As part of an in-built safeguard, the Redkite System does not let an individual self-certify themselves as competent. They can record the fact that they believe that they are undertaking their everyday work to the required standard but only an assessor or other authorised person can deem them as competent.



Either route will require that information entered is ratified. Where individuals are updating their own records then the onus for ratification will fall on the assessor/line manager. Where the assessor/line manager updates records, then the onus for ratification falls on the individual. To aid this latter requirement, the Redkite System includes a customisable 'feedback questionnaire' designed to ensure that individuals can reflect and feedback on assessments made on their behalf.

A further layer of quality control is also built into the Redkite System. Assessments and their outcomes can be sampled by internal verifiers to ensure that which ever route is adopted quality is upheld.

Periodic reviews and personal development planning also provide opportunities for assessor/line management and individuals to come together to overview and ratify records that have been updated. In many cases it will be at this point that competence is 'signed off' for individuals.

If individuals are required to update their own records then they must have access to suitable resources and will need to be trained. Some training will be required irrespective of the route adopted as individuals should be encouraged to check their records periodically, complete 'feedback' questionnaires and partake in the periodic personal reviews discussed above.

Where line managers update records there is probably less training required. Line management, in general, have some computer skills and access to computers. Firefighters in general have not usually had exposure to computers in their everyday role and will therefore probably require more training.

Certainly where our clients have allowed all individuals to update their own records, ICT and system training requirements seem to be problematic. This is not a system issue but seems to have more to do with staff movement as this can lead to a need to continually revisit sites to train staff new to that site. This can make service-wide implementation more difficult.

A further issue revolves around the question

of quality and quality control. Some users feel that individual inputs can place a burden on line management who are required to validate and ratify inputs made by their staff. This can take considerable time and is ameliorated to some extent where line managers update records as the need for them to ratify is removed and the onus for this is transferred to each individual.

In the short term and to aid implementation the argument for assessors/line managers updating records probably just wins out. In the longer term, as individuals become more familiar with the concepts and the system, it probably will not make a lot of difference which route is adopted – but only time will tell!

As I said at the beginning, from a Redkite perspective you are free to adopt whatever route you choose.

Update on Redkite Question Master

The local authority Question Master sub-user group met recently and agreed to construct a question bank and assessments linked to the Firefighter NOS.

This is an exciting development with huge potential as we build what will become a national database of assessments for the fire sector. Already, our users are looking at the development of learning resources which draw down on the assessments to provide knowledge evidence for relevant NOS.

Airport News

Redkite Systems welcome Kent International Airport and Lübeck (Hamburg) Airport, Germany. They become the latest airports to adopt Redkite Systems. The systems used in Lübeck Airport are being translated into German for use in all departments within the airport.

Redkite Tracker and Question Master are now available on our web server as a hosted solution or you can run them on your own web server, if you prefer.

For information: Call 01926 814846

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