7 Common Mistakes When Creating a Professional Skills Assessment

A strong assessment program depends on getting a few key decisions right. These are the missteps we see most often.

1 Starting from a blank page.

Your body of knowledge or competency framework already defines what competence looks like. Building the assessment on that foundation saves time and keeps results aligned with the standards your members and enterprise partners trust.

2 Relying on self-assessment alone.

Self-ratings are valuable, but they only capture how people feel about their skills. Without a knowledge component, you can't see the gap between confidence and competence.

3 Letting it drift into a practice exam.

When an assessment starts mirroring certification exam content, it blurs the line between diagnosis and exam preparation. Keep the assessment broad and focused on pointing learners forward.

4 Assessing at the wrong level.

An assessment made up entirely of recall questions won't show whether someone can apply what they know. Senior-level scenario questions can discourage early-career learners. Be sure to strike the right balance.

5 Skipping on subject matter expert review.

The credibility of your results depends on who writes and reviews the items. Choose SMEs who represent the range of roles, settings, and experience levels your assessment will serve.

6 Delivering a score with no next step.

A number without direction is a dead end. Every result should point to a clear next action, whether that's a course, a learning path, or a conversation.

7 Treating it as one and done.

Professions change, and so do the skills they require. Items need regular review, and learners should be able to reassess to see how far they've come.

FOR A DEEPER LOOK AT BUILDING A PROGRAM THE RIGHT WAY,

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