

Wuppertal Institute
for Climate, Environment
and Energy



Module B2

»Self-Check Crafts«

sustainability self assessment in crafts enterprises

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1. Module description

»If one does not know to which port he's sailing, no wind is favourable. « (Seneca d.J.)

The »Self-Check Crafts – sustainability self assessment in crafts enterprises « is an instrument for trade and handicraft companies to find out how future-compliant they operate. With the help of this self-check instrument, craftsmen review their business' current situation and determine its available strengths and potential while working out measures for improvement and implementation of the same.

The aim of this approach for enterprises is carrying out the self-appraisal to identify solid needs for action, information and training, based on thus self-revealed difficulties and experiences (or: strengths and potential) made.

Compared to many other stocktaking tools and/or company assessments, the instrument of self-assessment has the advantage of involving employees, of increasing participants' self-appraisal skills and of contributing to increased motivation by enabling target-oriented discussions.

The »Self-Check Crafts« is based on a number of prior experiences made with other self-assessment tools and makes use of their field-proven methods. The tool was tested together with different trade groups of handicraft enterprises and was adapted to the specific requirements of the crafts sector.

Beside the work material included in this module, the »Self-Check Crafts'« core elements include an instruction manual for carrying out self-appraisals (Rohn, 2007) as well as an evaluation form (Rohn, 2007b).

The aim of the module »Self-Check Crafts« is to make handicraft consultants and consultants of handicraft organisations as well as owners of enterprises in this field familiar with the »Self-Check Crafts« tool's integral aspects. Sustainability management is to be conveyed to handicraft enterprises precisely and in step with actual practice by these means.

2. Component A: Introduction to self-assessment and basics

Relevant key terms in this section: Self-assessment/~appraisal, RADAR-Method, excellence-model, EFQM, continuous improvement process

In this component you learn about...

- What self-assessment is
- The basic structure of a self-appraisal
- What models self-assessment is based on
- The purpose of self-assessment

Like sustainability management, self-assessment is a fairly new topic for enterprises. Self-evaluation tools for sustainability management are being created since the end of the 1990s

→ **B2-A1: Introduction and basics about sustainability self assessment.**

They target to ascertain the status quo and continuous improvement, thus building on subject matters that are of particular importance for companies and entrepreneurs, while using the approach of a company-internal self-appraisal rather than this being carried out by external auditors or consultancies that provide directions in terms of content → **B2-A2: Brainstorming about “external- vs. self assessment”.**

As a rule, self-appraisals are carried out by a team, however they can also be performed by individuals. Self-evaluation enables companies to work on relevant company issues internally thus allowing ideal opportunities to embed sustainability management within the enterprise. By intensely occupying oneself with the topic, »sustainability« becomes tangible, allowing enterprises to become conscious of how to implement aspects of sustainability management, be they the long-term strengthening of credit-worthiness, increased efficiency when utilising resources or measures leading to the compatibility of job and family, on their own → **B2-A3: Assessment instruments in companies.**

Meanwhile a variety of self-assessment instruments offering different »starting levels« and levels of complexity (Rohn/Engelmann 2004) are available. They begin with »start-up instruments«, that are carried out anonymously and online, e.g. the INC – Initialer Nachhaltigkeitscheck (initial sustainability check) and the MNC – Multikultureller Nachhaltigkeitscheck (multicultural sustainability check) (www.nachhaltigkeit.de) → **B2-A5: Initial Sustainability Check (INC).**

Examples of self-assessment instruments that form parts of innovation and improvement processes and that are more detailed and complex, yet quite comprehensible and demanding only manageable efforts, include the

- SAFE – Sustainability Assessment For Enterprises,
- fNC – future-Nachhaltigkeitscheck,
- BNC – Bochumer Nachhaltigkeitscheck,
- FABRIKregio,
- ÖkoBusinessPlan Vienna,
- KURSCheck.

This particular self-assessment tool is based on the BNC (Merten 2004).

Further self-appraisals that are part of complex management systems include the

- EFQM Excellence Model,
- be.st – benchmarking for sustainability,
- SusEx – Sustainable Excellence based on EFQM.

The »Self-Check Crafts« is subdivided into ten business subject areas and/or task areas:

- (1) Clients, Products and Services
- (2) Personnel
- (3) Training and Development
- (4) Mission Statement and Strategy
- (5) Organisation and Leadership
- (6) Production
- (7) Cooperation and Innovation
- (8) Finance und Legal Security
- (9) Regional Company Environment
- (10) International Markets / Globalisation

Each of the ten topics comprises five to seven statements that are oriented to characterise a future-compliant form of management.

The result of the self-assessment shows how much progress the crafts business has made towards a future-compliant management.

The self-assessment for businesses of the crafts sector and the corresponding evaluation forms (see Component C) are based mainly on the EFQM (DGQ 1999) Excellence Model's RADAR Logic (or RADAR Cycle – see image in figure 1). Supported by this method a company can systematically set goals (**R**esults), develop a course of action to achieve these

goals (**A**pproach), implement this plan of action (**D**eployment) and finally analyse the action plan and its implementation (**A**ssessment and **R**eview).

The self-assessment for sustainability management introduced here, methodologically belongs to the »AR – Assessment and Review« section. It analyses and evaluates quality and conclusiveness of planning, of implementation and of constant review and evaluation (= controlling) in addition to assessing whether efforts are still in line with the goals they are meant to achieve and, whether progress is appropriate.

This form of self-evaluation usually results in a list of strengths and potential (= areas with room for improvement) within the company. The result is a cyclic process within which either a new or improved plan of action is developed or in which goals are changed, which again demands the planning of a new course of action.

In doing so, the self-evaluation team's task is to set the main direction while the detailed planning of goal changes or the development of action plans is the responsibility of the appointed persons within the company.

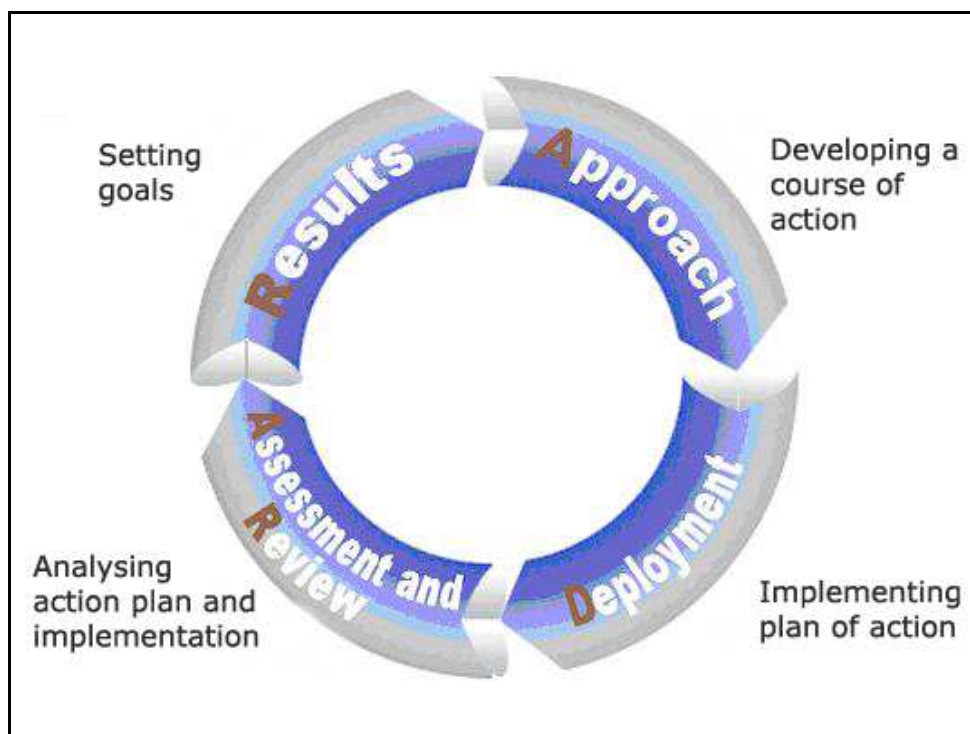


Figure 1: EFQM RADAR Cycle

The RADAR-Cycle forms a systematic basis for the continuous improvement process within a company. By employing this method on a regular basis, the enterprise is equipped to improve itself continuously and to make full use of its potential → **B2-A4: RADAR-Cycle**.

3. Component B: Process of self-assessment

Relevant key terms in this section: Project team, individual evaluation, shared company assessment

In this component you learn about...

- How to go about the self-assessment with the »Self-Check Crafts«

The following outline will describe how project leaders and/or external consultants can apply the self-assessment. External consultants have the special task of facilitating and structuring the discussion process in the company.

While persons performing the assessment should base implementation on the procedure described, parts may be adapted and/or single elements may vary → **B2-B1: Self-assessment – process within the company.**

- (1) In a first interview, external consultants and the company's person responsible discuss contents and boundary conditions (objectives, number of participants, schedule etc.). It is recommended to adequately inform the entire workforce about the project in advance.
- (2) Next, a project team of three to eight people is built, with whom the self-assessment will be carried out. While experiences made during the pilot project »Berufsbildung für ein Nachhaltiges Wirtschaften im Handwerk« confirm that the assessments can also be conducted by less than 3 persons, cuts need to be made as far as the initiation of discussion processes is concerned. Moreover, positive experiences were made with larger groups of up to 20 people during the »Bochumer Nachhaltigkeitscheck« project (www.nachhaltigkeit.de). In case the integration of the performing level (people undergoing or having completed their apprenticeships, trainees, semi-skilled labour etc.) was desired, the initiation should be handled with particular care (see step 3).
- (3) Once it is built, the self-assessment team is instructed on the method. Special attention should be paid to detail during this phase and it is recommended to do this in the presence of the external consultant in order to ensure that the independent completion of evaluation forms is successful. Participants are requested to evaluate the statements in accordance with their

personal opinion and preferably alone (see Component C). In case individuals lack in information, this is clarified jointly with the team in the ensuing workshop (see below), since this is the only method of optimally uncovering shortfalls in information flows. Open questions are settled and an overview of the first workshop (see step 5) is provided.

- (4) Completed evaluation forms are collected in advance of the workshop and sent to the project team member responsible for the process in the company (possibly the consultant). Kindly ensure that procedure and deadline for this are coordinated in advance.
- (5) **First half-day Workshop** (accompanied by external consultant)
 - a) Valuations that hold a consensus within the team (usually those that do not differ by more than 2 to 3 »marks«) are determined and their average is defined.
 - b) Scores evoking differences, are discussed in order to jointly agree on an appropriate score.
 - c) Averages are established (see results).
 - d) (If required) statements/evaluations for which participants require further information in order to answer them, are specified.
 - e) Compilation of first visualisation.
- (6) Looking up of information pertaining to open points (if applicable).
- (7) **Second half-day Workshop** (accompanied by external consultant)
 - a) Clarification of open evaluations.
 - b) Identification of strengths and potential room for improvement (see component D).
 - c) Deduction of specific measures based on the results (see component E).
 - d) Drawing up of an action plan of measures (see component E).
- (8) Optional: Initial workshop (Qualification module) for the company on »Sustainability Management in the Crafts Sector« (one appointment, time needed: 2 to 4 hours, optional whether prior to or concurrently with step 3)

→ B2-B2: [Movie about the self-assessment instrument SAFE.](#)

Figure 2 summarises the self-assessment procedure. It includes the required number of meetings as well as a time frame. The time frames are rough estimates based on prior experiences made and may vary depending on requirements and/or company situation.

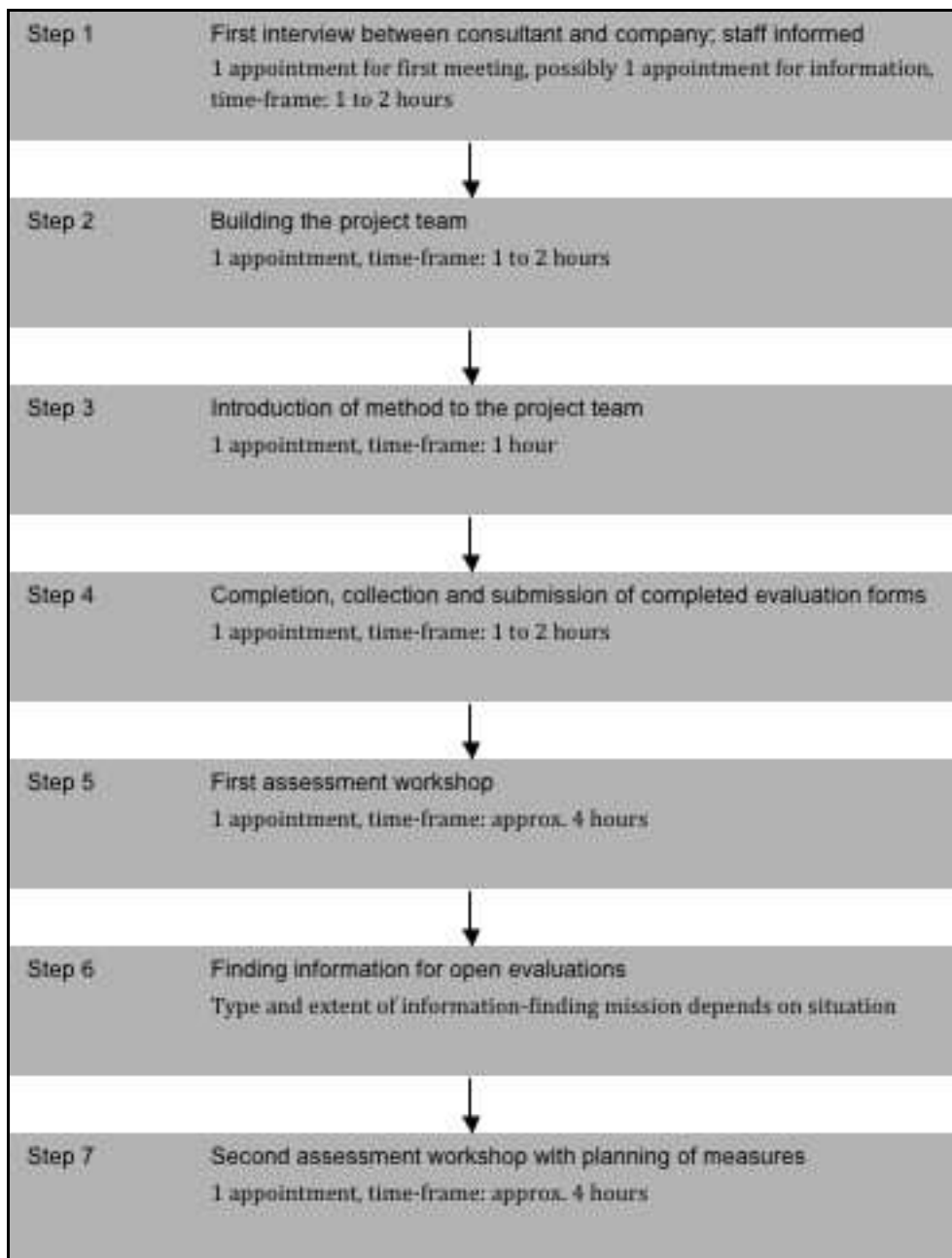


Figure 2: Overview of self-assessment process

→ B2-B3: "Self-Check Crafts" - planning of the implementation.

There are two basic options for conducting the self-appraisal: as group process or single company reviews.

Handling of group process

As in the BfNW-Crafts pilot project, this self-assessment instrument can be handled in the form of a group process, allowing for meetings between a number of businesses for the purpose of exchanging experiences in addition to the company-internal measures and workshops. Experiences are exchanged on the process of establishing the status quo (evaluation, strengths/potential, measures for improvement) and on common and specific requirements of action and training that may be dealt with in joint qualification workshops.

Handling of single company reviews / organisational development process

Outside of the BfNW-Crafts pilot project, the self-assessment instrument is usually carried out in the form of single company reviews or rather as organisational development process. The concentration on the company-internal process in this instructions manual takes into account this standard.

4. Component C: Evaluation sheet

Relevant key terms in this section: Planning, implementation, review/measuring, analysis, radar chart

In this component you learn about...

- How the assessment sheet is structured
- How the company assessment is conducted
- How the results are prepared for further processing

As described in Component A, the assessment sheet is based on the RADAR Model and consists of ten sections with five to seven statements each. Figure 3 shows subject 1) »Clients, Products and Services« as an example.

Relevance of statement for your company		Assessment Sheet for Section 1) Clients, Products and Services								
		Planning a) The points below are supported by a systematic approach.	Implementation b) The plan of action was implemented accordingly...	Review & Follow-Up c) Procedure and implementation are measured / reviewed and improved where applicable.						
Kindly assess the individual statement's relevance for your company and provide the reason for your assessment.		fully applicable	more or less applicable	absolutely not applicable	to 100%	to 50%	to 0%	fully applicable	more or less applicable	absolutely not applicable
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> X <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		Place a cross in the box below with the appropriate number to mark your evaluation score between 10 and 0 for each of the following statements.								
Explanation		1.1 Our company knows its clients' needs as well as their satisfaction with our products & services - also regarding their aspects of sustainability (e.g. environmentally friendly production, biological foods, fair trade, energy- and resource-conserving products / services).								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
Explanation		1.2 We consider our clients' requirements when we develop new products.								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
Explanation		1.3 We inform our clients about our products and/or services regularly as well as providing them with information on their sustainability (e.g. ingredients, environmental soundness, fair trade, etc.).								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
Explanation		1.4 We continuously ensure that our products / services are well-known.								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
Explanation		1.5 We have a marketing concept that includes all our products and services.								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
Explanation		1.6 The quality of our products / services is very high also as far as social and ecological aspects are concerned (e.g. raw materials, design, production, durability).								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
Explanation		1.7 We are aware of the significance and benefits of recognised seals of quality and use the same for our products / services.								
relevant <input type="checkbox"/> not relevant		10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0								
		Average score of evaluation a)			Average score of evaluation b)			Average score of evaluation c)		
		<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>		
		Average totals: a) x 1/3 + b) x 1/3 + c) x 1/3								
		<input type="text"/>								

Figure 3: Extract of assessment sheet (Page of assessment)

The left column of the evaluation form provides space for evaluating the relevance of each statement for the particular company. Because the self-assessment was designed for a

variety of organisations (different sizes, business sectors etc.), it covers a wide range of interests and needs. Thus, it is possible that single points do not apply to a particular company. Any statements that are not relevant for your company can be left out once the reason for its irrelevance was explained in the frame of the further evaluation process → **B2-C1: Self assessment – the assessment sheet.**

As a general rule, all statements are to be assessed if anyhow possible!

→ **B2-C2: Relevance of statements.**

Each statement/conclusion in the self-assessment is considered from three points of view. The task is to determine to what extent the statement applies to the particular company. The three angles are (see figure 3):

- (1) The point is supported by a systematic approach.
- (2) A plan of action was implemented accordingly.
- (3) Procedure and implementation are measured / reviewed and improved where applicable

→ **B2-C3: Assessment of sections and statements.**

A scale of scores from 10 to 0 is available for each evaluation criterion. Thus, three »marks« are allocated to each point/statement.

The following measures and guidelines serve as orientation for evaluations to describe the true situation as realistically as possible:

Planning should be as sound (clearly supported, based on defined processes and geared to interest groups) and integrated as possible (conform to company policy and strategy and prudently linked to planning in other areas).

During implementation, it is important carry it out systematically (structured and methodically sound) and according to plan in all relevant parts of the company. When evaluating, it is important to ask whether the effectiveness of planning and implementation are regularly checked and reviewed, whether those involved are able to learn from the results (e.g. identification of good practice and potential for improvement) and whether measuring / analysis is followed up by an improvement of activities; - in other words: whether measuring and learning are analysed and whether findings serve the process of planning and the introduction of measures for improvement.

If only a single or chance reference can be made for sound and integrated planning, systematic implementation and regular and consequent evaluation, a score of 0 or 1 is appropriate. Substantiation on some occasions accounts for a score between 2 and 3, while evidence that is more detailed is evaluated by a score of 4, 5 or 6. The scores 7 and 8 stand for clear proof in the form of supporting documentation and detailed or full proof are marked as 9 or 10.

In practice, management by numbers, data and facts (with documented evidence) shows great potential for improvement especially in small- and micro-enterprises of the crafts sector, where it is likely that there is only little documented proof to support activities during the first round of self-assessment. Thus, it is up to the facilitator to decide how traceable the evaluation actually is and to what extent of detail activities need to be substantiated by documents. At least brief explanations should support the selected evaluation scores.

An evaluation matrix is available for each business subject or task area as well as a separate sheet with space for text (see figure 4). Kindly edit the text boxes, by entering explanations for the different evaluation scores in the form of examples and by substantiating them (especially by providing figures, data and facts). Information provided here serves to clarify choices made, even at later date. Thus, it is important that this section is completed thoroughly. A reference to this effect should also be made in the text box if no explanation or supporting facts are available.

The final evaluation (evaluation leading to a consensus) should definitely be performed together with the team in order to ensure that all participants can identify themselves with the evaluation and the resulting consequences (measures).

Evaluation Form for Section 1) Clients, Products and Services (cont.)	
Kindly substantiate your evaluation (write down what you are already doing specifically)!	
1.1 Our company knows its clients' needs as well as their satisfaction with our products & services - also regarding their aspects of sustainability (e.g. environmentally friendly production, biological foods, fair trade, energy- and resource-conserving products / services).	
1.2 We consider our clients' requirements when we develop new products.	
1.3 We inform our clients about our products and/ or services regularly as well as providing them with information on their sustainability (e.g. ingredients, environmental soundness, fair trade, etc.).	
1.4 We continuously ensure that our products / services are well-known.	
1.5 We have a marketing concept that includes all our products and services.	
1.6 The quality of our products / services is very high also as far as social and ecological aspects are concerned (e.g. raw materials, design, production, durability).	
1.7 We are aware of the significance and benefits of recognised seals of quality and use the same for our products / services.	

Figure 4: Extract of assessment sheet (Page for explanations)

After the first workshop, individual evaluations are analysed either by external consultants or by members of the project team.

The analysis takes place in a multi-level process:

- (1) Forming of average scores for each of the three evaluation points of view per subject area (see evaluation form).
- (2) Forming of an overall average per subject area. The values for planning, implementation and evaluation form equally ranked parts when flowing into the overall score (see evaluation form).
- (3) Entry of each subject areas' four average scores in the radar charts (optional).

As a result of their analysis and evaluation, participants obtain four different radar diagrams. These images summarise the company's current position in striving for a sustainable management method in the areas:

- creation of plans and courses of action,
- implementation of these plans and courses of action,

- evaluation, review and, where appropriate, improvement of plans, processes and their implementation and
- the overall average score of all three of the above sections.

Kindly observe that the differentiated / separate look at the results for planning, implementation and review/evaluation have a higher significance compared to the overall total result.

Figure 5 shows an example of the radar chart.

While specific values are used here, we point out that company self-assessments serve to provide a structured overview of a particular company's internal performance (»to evaluate one-self«) and do not serve as a tool for comparing one company's performance with the evaluation results of another. Furthermore, there is no intention to obtain any form of »industry average« or to create a standard on the state of technology. Self-assessment is not a benchmarking process that is based on comparable results/indicators.

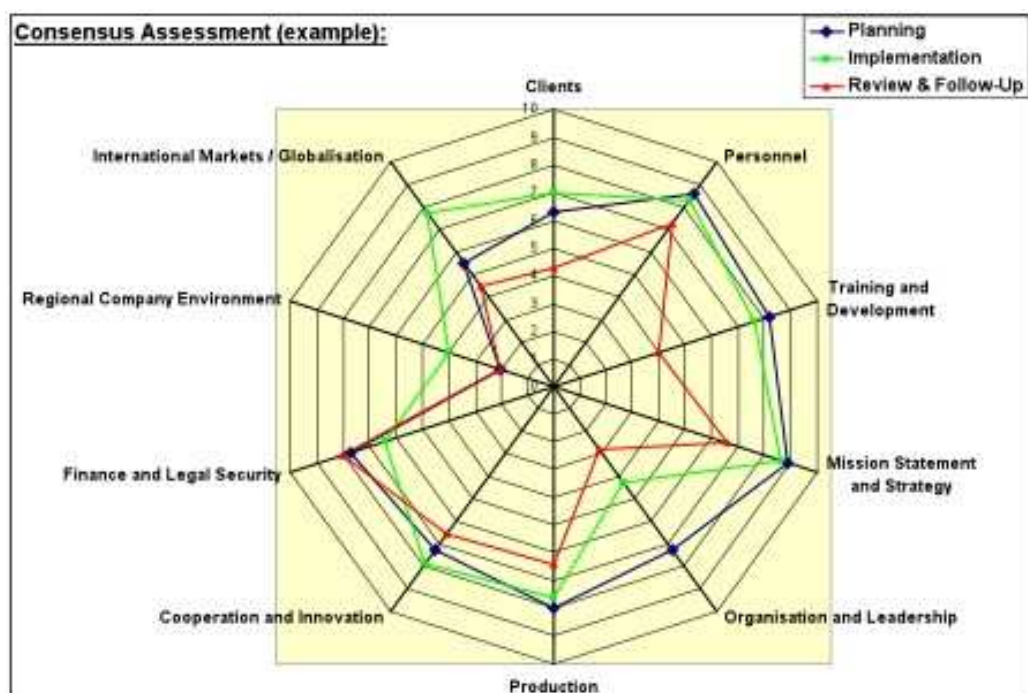


Figure 5: Example of analysis by "radar chart"

→ B2-C4: Visualisation of the assessment

5. Component D: Strengths / Potentials

Relevant key terms in this section: Strengths and potentials for improvement, strengths & potentials profile, focussing

In this component you learn about...

- How the company's strengths and potential areas for improvement are identified
- How the company's strengths and potential areas for improvement are transferred to form a profile
- How focal points/key areas are determined in terms planning courses of action

→ B2-D1: The self assessment: strengths and potentials.

During the second workshop participants identify the company's strengths and potential areas for improvement and then determine key areas for action. Based on the four radar charts, topics are selected and structured according to priority and relevance (alternatively, the evaluation forms can be used as a basis).

A seven-step process serves to profile a plan of action:

- (1) Areas with values lower than 5 or 50% or with scores that are lower than the specific average are marked in the radar chart. This is done for all four diagrams.
- (2) Questionnaires are consulted in order to identify the individual statements that were marked »good« or »poor«.
- (3) These statements (see step 2) and the corresponding negatively evaluated appraisal category (e.g. internal communication: good planning; less good in implementation and review/follow-up) are written on cards that are subsequently pinned to the charts. The same procedure is carried out for statements with positive scores. Different colours of cards ensure transparency (e.g. red cards for areas with potential for improvement, green cards for strengths – see figure 6).
- (4) Discussion of interim findings if the situation required.
- (5) Focussing of main points within the interim results if necessary. The aim is to identify four to eight areas for potential improvement (depending on specific preconditions, efforts, costs etc.) for which action plans conceived. Example for defining lead points: all participants stick dots on cards they consider most important (see figure 6).

(6) Identified areas for improvement are discussed in plenum or in small groups to work out possible measures thus fully using all resources.

(7) Compilation of a complete action plan with budget, schedule, responsibilities etc. (see component E)

→ B2-D2: Profiling: strengths and potentials for improvement.



Figure 6: Strengths / potentials profile after identification of priorities
(green cards = strengths; red cards = potentials; white cards = sections of the assessment sheets)

→ B2-D3: Determination of focus within the strengths-/potentials profile

6. Component E: Action planning

Relevant key terms in this section: Planning measures for action, implementation, systematic improvement process

In this component you learn about...

- How to create a plan of action
- How to create a cyclic implementation process of decided measures and further self-assessment.

→ B2-E1: Self-assessment – action plan

Measures for action have to be defined as precisely as possible. A table, as shown below serves this purpose well:

→ B2-E2: Formulating measures for improvement

Potential	Problem	Measure	Schedule	Budget	Responsibility	Control
Name potential (what potential for improvement are we speaking about)	Description of problem	One or more measures from the group discussion	Timetable/ deadlines/ milestones	Staff expenses and costs of material/ investments that may be necessary to achieve solutions	Name or responsible person or station	Name of responsible person

Table 1: Template for a plan of action

→ B2-E3: Action planning.

A table as shown above can be established together by all participants or in small groups of two to three people. In this case, plans of action, based on the joint identification of lead points, are compiled by each group and then presented in front of the whole group, which decides on a final plan of action.

With this method, measures for those potential areas are planned that were identified as important and of priority by the team. It is fundamental for all team members to reach a consensus on the measures that are to be considered a priority.

A precondition for the successful implementation of action plans in a company is that all people involved »go along« with the plan in the interest of the company, which makes it

necessary for all staff to be informed about the process as early as possible. Employees need an explanation to understand the process' necessity and gains – including those for each individual. The same applies to the assessment's results, especially the subsequent plan of action. Thus, it is part of the project team's responsibility to develop suitable means of communication and to implement the same. A brief announcement in a company newsletter or by email is probably not sufficient, especially in the case of more profound changes.

The palette of communication measures may range from staff meetings including question-and-answer sessions to workshops and training programmes for the affected staff. Media means and methods of communication should always be analysed and determined according to company-specifics.

The implementation of measures lies in the hands of those parties identified as responsible during the process (of course the company can call on external support if wanted/required) and will vary depending on the company and the plan of action. For this reason, we refrain from giving corresponding advice or instructions in this manual.

Whatever the method, it is crucial that a new cycle of measuring, review and follow-up is introduced after the completion of an agreed deadline (e.g. one year) in order to monitor the development of the company in general and specifically of those areas identified to have potential for improvement.

This way, the self-evaluation tool can make a valuable contribution to a systematic and continuous improvement process within a business.

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Further Reading

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Media

Produzieren, optimieren, profitieren. Zukunftsfähige Unternehmensentwicklung mit dem Instrument SAFE – das Beispiel Privatbrauerei Moritz Fiege. Film with accompanying booklet, VHS, 13 minute, Immendingen, focus-film. With the collaboration of Petra Heuer and Holger Rohn.

Links

www.nachhaltigkeit.de

www.sustainable-excellence.de

www.efqm.de

8. Materials

Component A: Introduction to self assessment and basics

B2-A1: Introduction and basics about sustainability self assessment

B2-A2: Brainstorming about “external- vs. self assessment”

B2-A3: Assessment instruments in companies

B2-A4: RADAR-Cycle

B2-A5: Initial Sustainability Check (INC)

Component B: Process of self assessment

B2-B1: Self assessment – process within the company

B2-B2: Movie about the self assessment instrument SAFE

B2-B3 "Self-Check Crafts" - planning of the implementation

Component C: Assessment sheet

B2-C1: Self assessment – the assessment sheet

B2-C2: Relevance of statements

B2-C3: Assessment of sections and statements

B2-C4: Visualisation of the assessment

Component D: Strengths / Potentials

B2-D1: The self assessment: strengths and potentials

B2-D2: Profiling: strengths and potentials for improvement

B2-D3: Determination of focus within the strengths-/potentials profile

Component E: Action planning

B2-E1: Self assessment – action plan

B2-E2: Formulating measures for improvement

B2-E3: Action planning