

ACADEMY

# E-Competence Framework (e-CF) Implementation strategy



**EXPERIENCE THE EXPERIENCE**

## The potential of e-CF

The E-Competence Framework (e-CF) offers a tremendous number of options for motivating an IT population and making it professional. However, this demands a clear vision, a well-defined objective and a practical, viable strategy. Without these criteria, the e-CF is merely a competence model that will end up unused in a drawer like so many other models and reports.

Over the years, organizations have gained the necessary experience in implementing e-CF. Companies that have taken a serious approach to this have seen positive effects such as:

- increased mobility thanks to transparency in career possibilities;
- clarity about the capabilities present in the organization;
- insight into the gaps in terms of IT competencies, information about interchangeability between employees;
- more meaningful and objective content in assessments and personal development plans;
- increased employee satisfaction, often in combination with an increase in employees' pride about their own skills or the profession in general.

## Pitfalls in implementation

The common element in all successful applications of e-CF is a feasible implementation strategy. Implementing new competencies, regardless of their type, is a sensitive matter. Making changes to competencies essentially means changing the foundation of HR. IT and HR must be able to work together in this regard. Other useful tips:

- Avoid reward systems; they will only add unnecessary complexity to the implementation process.
- It will only appeal to employees if it offers them an advantage. Mandatory completion of a list of competency scores is not an advantage.
- If it is merely an exercise on paper, for example filling in job descriptions using e-CF competencies, then there will be zero positive effects.



## Blueprint for a successful implementation

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a tried and tested implementation strategy. This naturally does not mean that it is the only possible method. An explanation of each component follows below.

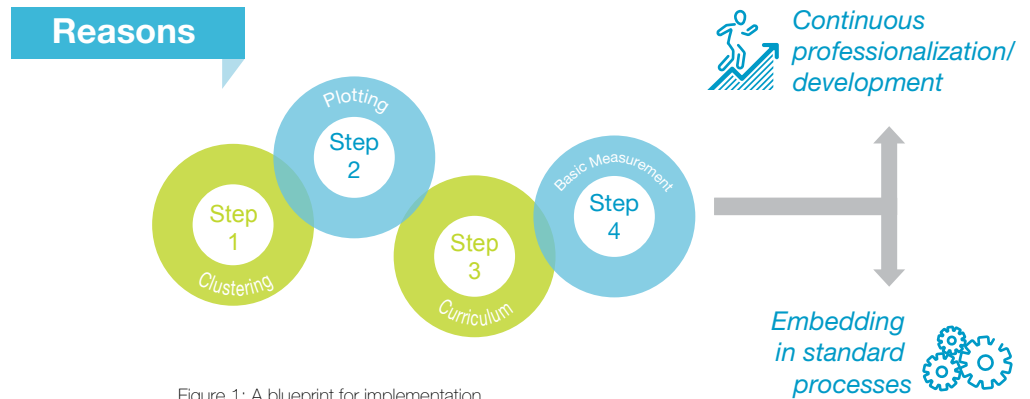


Figure 1: A blueprint for implementation

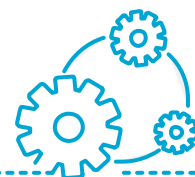
### The reasons

Implementing e-CF is usually not a goal in and of itself. The reasons for starting a project are more likely to be:

- a lack of insight into the capabilities present in an organization, often after the merging of several organizational divisions, each with their own typical terminology;
- the need to professionalize because higher demands are being placed on the IT department in terms of flexibility, speed and cost management;
- the desire to increase internal mobility.

### Step 1: clustering

Use the existing job descriptions as a basis, and make as few changes to these as possible. Cluster the job descriptions based on their professional similarities, not in terms of knowledge but in terms of competencies. The result may be a scatter plot chart like the professional profiles.



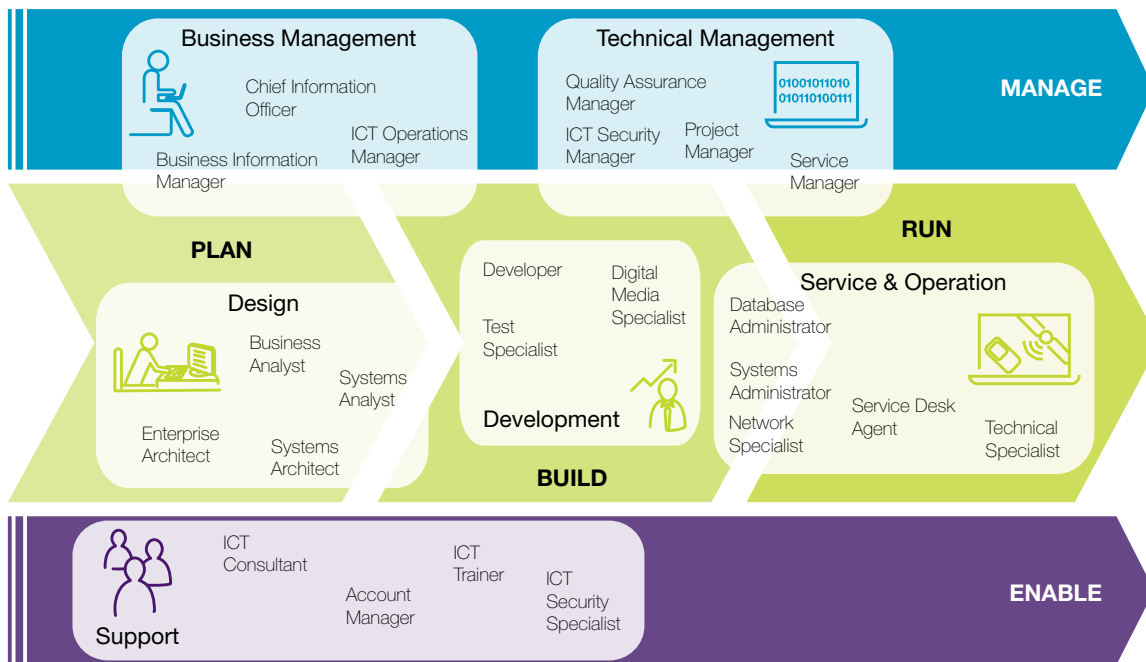


Figure 2: The professional profiles from e-CF shown within the context of the ICT business process

A cluster is sometimes referred to as a field of expertise, such as Business Analysis. Sometimes reference is made to a role, the Business Analyst, sometimes to a profile, such as professional profiles. In this article, a cluster is also designated as a field of expertise.

### Step 2: plotting

Preparation: Choose the e-CF competencies for each field of expertise that seem to be the most relevant. Remember that the value of an ICT professional is determined by the combination of competencies. There are only a few people who can afford to excel in just one competency.

You can use various tools for this step, such as, the Open Group profiles, and of course the e-CF professional profiles.

A workshop with participants from various departments/teams is a suitable method for clearly defining the relevant e-CF competencies and the corresponding levels.



A workshop increases the support base for the results. In addition, this method will foster mutual understanding across departments in cases in which a field of expertise is supra-departmental.

### Step 3: curriculum

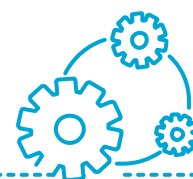
Choose suitable development options for each field of expertise. These will often be training programs, but may also involve participation in a community, attending seminars, etc. The best scenario is when a training program can be linked to a competency. This is often the case, but not always. Sometimes a training program may cover various competencies, while more than just a training program can be required to develop a competency. Be sure to also review relevant certifications. The certifications standard to the market can be an important part of the field of expertise particularly if the objective of the project is to increase the employability of personnel.

### Step 4: Baseline measurement

Now that the relevant competencies, levels, development possibilities and certifications have all been identified for each field of expertise, a baseline measurement may be taken. This is a step that must be approached very carefully. A measurement can easily give the impression of being an evaluation or assessment. Communication and full transparency are essential.

Since the measurement must offer value to the employee, the following points are important:

- Make sure the report takes a positive approach. Show which competencies the employee possesses.
- Do not present it as an evaluation. You can do this by making the procedure voluntary, or by allowing the employee to choose which field of expertise/level he or she would like to measure.
- Provide development possibilities for the competencies for which the employee has not yet achieved the desired level.
- Make sure that the employee always has the opportunity to pursue at least some of the development suggestions. If an employee becomes pro-active and interested in development, yet immediately runs into budgetary constraints, this will be fatal to the success of the project.



## Continuous professionalization/development

At this point, the steps to be taken depend heavily on the objective of the project. Now there is a foundation, which provides insight into:

- the IT competencies present in the organization, expressed in a language that is the same for all departments;
- competency gaps in the IT population;
- the individual development needs as they relate to the field of expertise.

This insight combined with the objectives will determine the next step. A few practical examples:

- drawing up and implementing a total training plan;
- setting up job rotation;
- encouraging certification by offering support during exam preparation, and by starting learning groups;
- starting an incentive project for a select group of employees who don't appear to be motivated, even though there is a need for this;
- taking a performance measurement after some time has passed.

Many of these activities are performed more than once. A successful project will lead to permanent change.

## Embedding in standard processes

In order to guarantee that the effects are not just one-time phenomena, anchoring in standard processes is necessary. Examples include:

- Integration in the evaluation cycle
- Integration in the learning portal/LMS
- Coordination with the strategic personnel planning activities
- Adaptation of the certification policy
- Setting up management and investment in ownership



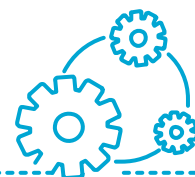
## Conclusion

Although implementation is no easy task, it is quite feasible and is definitely worth the effort. There are plenty of examples within and outside of government institutions that prove this. It also means that you don't have to reinvent the wheel; expertise is already available in the market. There are colleagues in the field who are willing to share their experiences. There are best practices available; use them.

## About the authors

**Yvonne Kampmeier** is Portfolio Manager at Capgemini Academy, and in this role, she is responsible for the development and implementation of competency development and training portfolios for Capgemini customers.

**Co Siebes** is Workforce Transformation Consultant and e-CF expert at Capgemini Academy.



## ACADEMY

For more information:

**Capgemini Academy**

Papendorpseweg 100  
3528 BJ Utrecht  
Tel. +31 30 689 66 00  
academy@capgemini.com  
academy.capgemini.nl



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