How can you know if you are competent to perform in your role? Many professional organisations produce competence frameworks which attempt to answer this question. Unfortunately most of these frameworks are limited to assessing what you know or what you can do. But knowledge and skills are only two of the elements which are required for a person to be competent in a role.

To provide a more complete description of competence, we have developed the PEAKS framework. This defines the factors that separate truly effective individuals from the rest.

PEAKS is a general competence framework that can be applied to a wide range of job roles, including risk management, executive leadership, project management, facilitation, software development etc. The PEAKS framework includes:

- Five essential elements that contribute to competence
- Specific attributes under each element, describing competence in a particular role
- Assessment mechanisms for each attribute

The five PEAKS elements are:

- Personal characteristics (“Who am I?”) – natural traits/preferences that are essential for the role
- Experience (“What have I done?”) – relevant personal time spent practising this role or a similar role
- Attitude (“How shall I respond?”) – chosen responses to situations encountered in the role
- Knowledge (“What do I know?”) – facts, principles, processes that are learned through formal training and education or on-the-job
- Skill (“How do I apply the other elements?”) – putting it into practice and learning through experience

To develop a PEAKS framework, a family of job roles are examined to define the set of attributes for each PEAKS element. These attributes outline the things that are most important for performing each role in the particular organisation.

Each of the attributes can exist at different levels of maturity, and each role in a job family will require a different mix of maturity levels. For example, a risk analyst will need a high degree of competence in performing detailed quantitative risk analysis, but it is less important for a risk manager, and a Chief Risk Officer (CRO) might not need to know how to perform a risk analysis at all. On the other hand, understanding business strategy might not be necessary for a risk analyst, a risk manager will require some strategic awareness, but this would be essential for a CRO. So developing a PEAKS framework needs first to define the required attributes under each of the five elements, then for each job role we must determine the level of maturity that is required for each attribute.

The PEAKS framework can be applied practically to identify and measure current individual competence as a baseline from which to manage personal development. It can also be used to support recruitment by detailing the attributes required for a particular job role. Finally, PEAKS can support team formation and development, by ensuring that each member has all the elements of competence needed in a high-performing team.

[This article represents Ruth Murray-Webster’s personal views and not those of KPMG and it is not intended to be interpreted as such.]