



Business - Setting the Vision and Tone in the Solo Professional's Practice - What is Competency?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Most professional organizations are concerned that their members have ongoing competency in their field. This means that they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to do their work with expertise and confidence. Private practitioners therefore need to have a professional development plan that will allow them to continually learn and grow.

Competency is usually established before a professional is licenced to open private practice. In order to ensure that competency is maintained, however, it is the responsibility of the professional to establish a learning plan for themselves. There are five things that need to be considered:

1. Identify areas to improve, enhance or adopt - First of all, decide what things in which you would like to be proficient. There might be an area of practice in which you have an interest or a new service that you would like to add to your business. Perhaps there are specific techniques or even technologies that would improve your practice. You might wish to research new theories or methods. Maybe you think that your professionalism would be enhanced by learning about another business.

2. Consider the ways that you might learn about the topic you have chosen - Is there a course or workshop in which you could participate? Would a convention of your professional organization offer opportunities for you to gain the information you are seeking? The internet has provided many opportunities to network, research and study. Maybe you could talk with others in your field to gain suggestions about how you could pursue your goals for professional development.

3. Arrange internships, practicums or supervised practice - Many times expertise is best developed through hands-on experience. A know a psychologist who took a whole year to work in a law office in order to prepare himself for being recognized as an Expert Witness in the Justice system. Watching an expert work and then having that expert watch you duplicate the procedure is a wonderful way to not only gain knowledge but also develop your own skill level.

4. Prepare a written learning plan - When you put your professional development plan in writing, there is a much higher possibility that you will complete all of your goals. Be very clear in defining the outcomes and expected completion dates.

5. Begin - Nothing happens until there is action. Even a small step forward will put you closer to achieving your goals.

6. Schedule a regular evaluation - It is important that you review your Learning Plan throughout the year, make necessary adjustments and celebrate your accomplishments.

Competency is not only a professional requirement, but also a way to boost your self-esteem. When you are learning and growing, you feel better about yourself and it is easier to view each day as a wonderful adventure.