

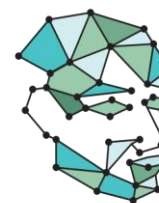


RIGHT
RIGHT SKILLS FOR
THE RIGHT FUTURE

RIGHT PILOT REPORT

Mind the Gap

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Introduction

Mind the Gap is a support for companies that want to develop their business and get a clearer picture of what skills are needed along the way. It is a digital tool, based on a simple and user-friendly method, to clarify and connect the company's business strategy and the need for the right skills in the short and long term with supervisor support. Mind the Gap can make it easier for small and medium-sized companies in the manufacturing industry to manage their long-term skills needs¹.

The project "Right skills for the right future" will investigate, test and offer solutions for how training and company support adapted to future challenges can be developed based on two identified challenges:

1. Lack of knowledge about long-term growth potential in the participating regions, need to develop innovation capacity in the region.
2. Current skills shortages are a barrier to innovation and growth.

Despite the fact that the manufacturing industry is facing a great shortage of skills, few companies can identify their future need for skills. Mind the Gap is a method available as a digital tool for companies to identify the skills needed in the future, based on their strategic business plan. Mind the Gap can make it easier for small and medium-sized companies in the manufacturing industry to manage their long-term skills needs.

The Mind the Gap method has been tested and the results should be able to be transferred to other regions, especially those that have been involved in the RIGHT project. The pilot project's primary target group of small and medium-sized industrial companies in Skåne would, with the support of the secondary target group of business support actors in Skåne, be helped to use the Mind the Gap method, with the digital tool, to work more strategically with business development and skills supply.

During the autumn of 2021, the Mind the Gap method was evaluated through in-depth interviews with around 10 participating companies, and all the companies were satisfied with the results. All companies see that the process has yielded results in their operations and all express that they would recommend this type of competence mapping process to other companies.

¹ The Mind the Gap method was developed by Region Skåne with the support of IUC Syd and Almi with funding from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and the Interreg North Sea program.

Regional/ Strategic Context

In 2019, Skåne has developed a new innovation strategy, Skåne's innovation strategy for sustainable growth, which clearly focuses on advanced materials and the manufacturing industry as a Skåne area of strength, but which also highlights the lack of competence as a major, future challenge.

Advanced materials and manufacturing industry is a Skåne area of strength that spans several different sub-industries, with specific strengths, specialization and concentration of companies in packaging, refrigeration and ventilation technology, chemistry, plastics and rubber. These are highly productive and drive innovation. Refrigeration technology and the packaging industry in particular are among Skåne's most prominent innovative sub-industries, and there are also strong links to Skåne's food industry. The chemical industry in Skåne has stronger employment and productivity growth than in other parts of Sweden.

The manufacturing industry is in an ongoing transition from unskilled to qualified jobs. The number of employees is decreasing, at the same time as companies in the industries are hiring. An important explanation is that companies purchase various services from external companies. At the same time, many companies are investing in various forms of robotisation, automation and digitization, and are hiring people with new types of skills. There are indications that companies have problems attracting and recruiting to the industry and the need for people with technical training will increase in these companies.

The work within the RIGHT project is based on a growing need for skills in Skåne manufacturing companies. When the lack of competence also risks hampering the innovative power in companies within an area of strength that is important to Skåne, there is every reason to try to identify ways to work more strategically with business development, innovations and the future supply of skills.

Through the project, IUC Syd and Region Skåne can learn from how in other regions they work strategically with skills supply within their smart areas of specialization, and how we can develop initiatives that lead to Skåne manufacturing companies finding the right competence.

At the same time, it is important to point out that the Mind the Gap method, and the available digital tool, works great to use regardless of company, industry, size of company or geographical location..

About the Pilot

Mind the Gap is a method for mapping skills needs. The digital tool that is available can make it easier for small and medium-sized companies in the manufacturing industry to manage their long-term skills needs.

Region Skåne and IUC Syd have developed and tested the method and created the digital tool. It has been tested in sharp mode at a number of Skåne manufacturing companies.

With an increased understanding and consensus on the company's long-term goals, participating companies can create a strategic competence plan that is in line with the needs to achieve the business goals, which sets a clear plan for what needs to be done regarding development of existing staff, recruitment and hiring or hiring external help.

STAKEHOLDERS

There are a number of different stakeholders in this project. Some stakeholders have some form of impact on the project and others may instead be affected by the project.

First and foremost, the users of the tool, small and medium-sized industrial companies, both in Sweden and in other countries, are important stakeholders. The method and tool are developed for these companies and with the help of good examples it is possible to inform them about the possibilities with Mind the Gap.

There are a number of different business support organizations, both locally / regionally and nationally, but also internationally, and as potential providers of process support, are important stakeholders. In Sweden, it is companies and associations such as Almi or Tillväxt Syd, or cluster initiatives such as Mobile Heights and Media Evolution, which after training in the Mind the Gap method, can use the digital tool to provide good support to interested companies.

Trade unions, such as Swedish IF Metall, are also an interested party that can communicate the possibilities with Mind the Gap. Trade unions can influence a development that can contribute to increased competence among their members.

Education providers at different levels are naturally affected by the project and are generally served by the fact that companies can more clearly describe their competence needs.

Government agencies such as the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, which in Sweden have provided support for the development of Mind the Gap at an early stage, play an important role in the continued development and dissemination of methods and tools.

Region Skåne, as initiator, and IUC Syd as project manager and trainer of the tool, are of course an obvious stakeholder. Both Region Skåne and IUC Syd see great potential in Mind the Gap and will continue to support the development and dissemination of methods and tools.

TARGET GROUPS

The primary target group in the project is small and medium-sized companies that receive help using the Mind and Gap method and tool. In smaller companies (10-100 employees), in both industry and other industries, the focus is on giving the management team support and structure in the use of methods and tools. In medium-sized and large companies (101+ employees), the focus is on giving them general support in structuring their strategic competence supply work.

The primary target group in the project is small and medium-sized companies that, with the support of the digital tool, receive help using the Mind the Gap method. In smaller companies (10-100 employees), in both industry and other industries, the focus is on giving the management team support and structure in the use of methods and tools. In medium-sized and large companies (101+ employees), Mind the Gap can contribute to creating a structured process that clarifies their long-term competence needs and provides consensus internally.

The secondary target group in the project is business support organizations and consultants who are interested in using the tool. There is a need to train process leaders / facilitators and IUC Syd has a dual role as both performer and trainer.

METHODOLOGY

The method and the tool help small and medium-sized companies to define where they stand, where they are going, what the future situation means and how they will get there.

The method of the digital tool consists of two parts; the first with a focus on the company's business plan, the second with a focus on current and future skills needs. Together, the two parts form the basis of a strategic competence plan. In connection with this, simpler tips and tricks for competence development and recruitment are also offered.

In the first part, the company receives support in mapping its company's current situation regarding what they offer, to whom and where and how the organization looks to cope with the work. What do they offer today / tomorrow, who are their customers, what does the company's organization look like? What does the business model look like and what values are delivered today. In the next part, we map out what a future situation means and what it looks like based on what the company sees changing or developing in X years' time. What can you offer in relation to the current situation, other customers and geographies and does it matter in terms of the organization? The basis in step one is to be able to better determine what transfer the company must make within a period of two to five years, in order to meet the future with the right competence in relation to the company's goals and vision.

The second part defines what skills are required to get where they want to go. The company receives support in identifying current and future skills needs, based on the transfer that the company wants to make. What abilities are required to achieve set business goals and what skills are required to meet these abilities. What available skills are available today and what does the future need look like. The basis in step two is to be able to highlight the lack of skills and identify ways to fill the skills gap.

Mind the Gap is a structured method that helps companies to create a common view of the current situation, get a common goal picture and prioritize efforts that lead to covering the skills needs required to be competitive in the future. The two parts, the two workshops together, give companies a context to work with business development and strategic competence supply.

It is entirely possible for companies to use the Mind and Gap method and tool themselves, but it can be an advantage to use an external process manager. As part of the tool, we have produced a manual, a

step by step instruction in how to use the method and the tool. We have also chosen to offer business support organizations training in the use of the tool Mind the Gap and how to work with the methodology.

RESULTS/OUTPUT

The goal has been to develop a method and a digital tool to support the primary target group of small and medium-sized industrial companies to work more strategically with business development and skills supply. The tool would be tested on small and medium-sized industrial companies in Skåne, and the results could be transferred to other regions, not least those that have been involved in the RIGHT project.

The goal has also been developed to focus on the secondary target group, business support actors, who can provide support to small and medium-sized companies to work with the tool Mind the Gap. The Mind and Gap method and tool have been developed and tested with good results:

- About 40 companies have used Mind the Gap
- IUC Syd can train other business support actors in Mind the Gap
- Various industry and cluster organizations have shown interest in Mind the Gap
- 4 language choices are developed for Mind the Gap
- 3 partner regions have shown interest in testing Mind the Gap

Discussion of findings

The Mind the Gap method has been developed throughout the project; from being a competence development tool, it has become a business development tool and connects business development and skills supply. The original idea with the method Mind the Gap, was to focus on what is today a workshop on identifying skills needs. With, among other things, IUC Syd's expertise in business development, Mind the Gap was developed early on to also include a workshop on formulating business goals. The two workshops together give the companies a context to work with business development and strategic skills supply.

The project has always been based on the link between innovation and competence, and the tool Mind the Gap can really contribute to the company's understanding of what competence the company needs to be innovative and competitive.

The tool is also useful regardless of industry and geography.

What was initially a workshop material in paper form, is also today - owing to Covid19 - a fully developed digital tool. It is still possible to print the material in pdf format, and work analogously, but it is likely that this function will be used very rarely.

An important lesson from the initial work with the project is that an external process leader / facilitator is needed to run workshops effectively, as it is too difficult for the individual company to run the discussion themselves, see the context and get enough depth in the results of Mind the Gap the process. This in turn has created a new target group for the method and tool Mind the Gap, namely intermediaries, consulting firms, coaches and similar actors. As part of the tool, we have therefore produced a manual, a step by step

instruction in how to use the tool and workers with the method. We have also chosen to offer business support organizations training in the use of Mind the Gap. A number of organizations have shown interest in learning more about Mind the Gap.

We have come a long way in the development of the tool, but the tool must continue to be developed to further support companies, both in terms of competence mapping at the individual level and the development of innovative ability in companies and individuals.

About 40 companies have used Mind the Gap to develop an action plan for their strategic competence supply work. It is clear that the management teams at the companies we have worked with, through the method have gained new knowledge and insight into how to work with strategic business development and competence supply and increased the companies' understanding of how this is connected. Concrete action plans in both the business development stage and the competence mapping stage also provide precision in delivery to the next step, to develop competence staff, recruit new or hire staff or hire consultants.

The second pilot project on skills inventory has also given us a good context. The purpose of that pilot project was to offer companies a competence survey and to train / develop existing staff via TeknikCollage test center or a local learning center. It is important to be able to clarify the current level of competence, to ensure the gap for the relevant group of employees, in order to be able to provide the right initiatives regarding competence development, so that the relevant group of employees can thereby contribute to the company's relocation. Although we have continued to run the two pilot projects separately, there are natural connections that mean that we have started talking in terms of a new business model at the regional level. The approach of helping a company to identify its competence needs based on its business goals, combined with support in the continued work of finding the right competence, through competence development, recruitment or consulting support, we believe is a winning concept that will influence policy at regional - and hopefully at national level.

One goal of the project was to spread the results to other regions, not least those participating in the Right project. As proof of success, the Mind and Gap method and tool have been requested by several different parties. Information about Mind the Gap has been disseminated within the Swedish IUC network, to other industry and cluster organizations, within the Almi Group, to the government agency Tillväxtverket and to partner regions such as Antwerp (Belgium), Bergen (Norway), and FIFE (Scotland). Mind the Gap is translated into English, Norwegian and Danish. New projects such as CoSkill, financed by the European Social Fund, also use Mind the Gap as a starting point for identifying skills needs in participating companies, which further drives the development of both the method and the tool.

Case studies

Mind the Gap gives companies a good structure and a foundation to stand on when they work with their strategic competence supply plan. This applies regardless of whether they are to develop skills for staff, hire new employees, buy in consultants or hire staff. If it is also possible to offer the company some form of training that corresponds to their needs, it can be a real eye-opener for what it means to work strategically with business development and competence supply, or above all to link the business strategy with the competence plan.

SMALL AND MEDIUMSIZED ENTERPRISES

Several companies that have used Mind the Gap have expressed that through the structure and systematics of the method, they gain security through a value-creating and structured conversation and that they get a clearer picture of their competence needs and what they should prioritize. Many also point out that they get a dilated vision that things emerge that they have not always thought of before. One lesson from the project is that Mind the Gap is with great advantage led by an external process leader or facilitator. IUC Syd, which is a partner in the Right project, has been able to offer the Mind the Gap service to members and partners, and thus given companies a good tool to work more strategically with their business development and skills supply, put everything in context and do it through a structured conversation.

BUSINESS ADVISORS AND CONSULTANTS

Various business support actors have shown interest in Mind the Gap. It is above all the structure and systematics that are perceived as new and exciting. Several have expressed that the working method is new, as they are already more used to asking questions based on an interview form. There is a fairly widespread habit, and thus sometimes a resistance, to conduct coaching conversations and workshops, but the interest still takes over.

There is also great interest from several consultants. Most have methods, often based on power points and the like. There is no direct tool in the class of Mind the Gap with the well-thought-out structure. That is why many are interested. Owning the data and providing editing capabilities is seen as a challenge with the tool.

RIGHT PARTNER REGIONS

Various partners in the Right project have also shown interest in testing Mind the Gap. It is the structure and structure that captures the interest. The same challenges in other countries as in Sweden. Few if any tools link business strategy with skills needs in such a structured way as MtG. Here it fills a gap, not only in Sweden but also in other countries and thus easy to export. FIFE in Scotland wants to let companies in the so-called Blue Consortium test the tool. Nordfjordskompaniet in Vestland in Norway also wants to test Mind the Gap with local companies. Mind the Gap is therefore available today in Swedish, English, Norwegian and Danish (and in an early version also in Dutch).

The method does not change when exporting, and both tools and instructions are translated, which makes it easy to test the tool locally. As it has not yet been tested on any company in either Scotland or Norway, it is difficult to draw any further conclusions, but just the fact that business support actors in these countries wanted to test Mind the Gap we feel is a success.

The connection to the other Skåne pilot project can also be a good example of how...

Conclusions

POSSIBILITIES

The digital tool Mind the Gap and its methodology is simple and clear in its form. With a good process leader to support, it provides a good structure for creating an action plan. The tool is simultaneously divided into two workshops, which makes it flexible in use. For example, if a company feels that they have a good grasp of their future business development, it is possible to start with workshop 2.

Mind the Gap is already used as a basis for needs assessment in various projects where small and medium-sized companies need to develop an action plan for their business development and strategic competence supply - and there are great opportunities to use the method and tool in several other, similar projects.

Mind the Gap has now been translated into several different languages, which provides great opportunities for dissemination. Many players in different countries will be able to use it.

CHALLENGES

Mind the Gap is simple and clear in its form, and individual companies can use the tool themselves. We believe that larger companies can use Mind the Gap themselves, but that smaller companies need some form of process support. It can be a challenge to train process leaders.

Another challenge is to market the method and tool, partly to individual companies and partly to company-supporting actors, who could be trained as process leaders.

An additional challenge is to get Mind the Gap used by companies in Skåne - as well as in Sweden and the rest of Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Region Skåne's Smart Specialization work takes place on two levels, partly by strengthening excellence in each area of specialization and also with support for cross-industry initiatives that increase productivity and strengthen competitiveness in Skåne's business.

The pilot projects Mind the Gap and Competence Inventory have together strengthened and accelerated the development process of a new partnership in Scanian industry. It has also contributed to a new regional approach when it comes to small Scanian industrial companies' needs assessment and strategic competence supply. New partnerships, new ways of working and initiatives that strengthen employers' ability to adapt lead to important conclusions that will have a significant impact when the Smart Specialization Strategy is revised.

We recommend that the new partnership in Scanian industry continues to use Mind the Gap and actively work with skills inventory.

We also recommend that other industry and cluster organizations add support in the use of Mind the Gap as a new offer to their members and that they in various ways continuously try to work with skills inventory.

Finally, we recommend that other regions in Sweden and Europe test the digital tool Mind the Gap.

NEXT STEP

There are several different "next steps" when it comes to Mind the gap. There is a need to continue testing and developing the tool, in more regions and preferably in different countries. Marketing and further training of process leaders will be required for more SMEs to be able to use the method and tool.

We already have contact with various actors in other regions regarding the development and use of Mind the Gap. The tool is simple and user-friendly, and there are clear instructions in several languages, which is a good starting point for collaboration with other regions. We also plan to make a trailer that complements the training material, and which can be used in the marketing of Mind the Gap.



We are planning some form of educational investment, preferably together with the government agency Tillväxtverket. It is primarily a matter of producing educational material for education in Sweden and abroad.

A next, larger step in the development of Mind the Gap would be to try to systematize the competence needs that emerge in the companies' action plans. It could lay the foundation for a new business model, where a regional authority through Mind the Gap gathers in the companies' overall competence needs and conveys the overall need to training providers in the local area.

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