

TECHNICAL ANNEX

Skills Oracle 2009

**Prepared by Cogent
2009**

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cogent is grateful to the organisations that participated in the development of the Skills Oracle by supplying their data.

The contents of the Skills Oracle reports are the responsibility of Cogent SSC and should not be viewed as representing any other organisation's interest, nor does organisational participation indicate endorsement.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Technical Annex provides a description of the sources and methods used in the “Skills Oracle” industry reports.

Skills Oracle is an online project surveying a significant and consistent sample of employers to provide a barometer of skills, training and investment trends. The analysis forms the basis of Cogent’s future action on skills. The reports themselves are valuable to employers in measuring themselves against the sector, while the integrated analysis provides a measure of activity across the sector.

The data gathered provides a much greater level of detail than Standard Industrial Classification Codes (SIC). Skills Oracle works on a reciprocal principle : it provides Cogent with valuable labour market information, in return employers receive a bespoke benchmarked analysis for their company .

Research Considerations

Employers are predominately the larger employers of the sector, in line with the philosophy of the survey as a ‘FTSE’ for skills. The survey may therefore not be representative of smaller employers, but does provide qualitative evidence of skills needs of a significant proportion of employers.

2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The Skills Oracle sampled employers from the following industry sectors:

- Chemicals
- Pharmaceuticals
- Nuclear
- Petroleum (‘Downstream’ Oil and Gas)
- Polymers

The Skills Oracle has focused on the ‘downstream’ aspects of the Oil & Gas industry (i.e. production of manufactured fuels)

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was delivered via an online survey. The process consisted of inviting a representative sample of employers from across the science-based industries to complete the survey (a total of 165 employers were invited to take part). The main field work took place during September to November 2009. Following completion and analysis, each respondent received their own bespoke company benchmarked report.

Following the 2009 study, data will be gathered annually from employers to begin to build trend analysis on workforce, skills and demographics primary Labour Market Intelligence.

4. DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Collecting detailed and accurate data is important in making valid forecasts and assumptions about the forces that drive demand. Cogent's approach was to obtain broad input initially, then iteratively refine the data stream in future, more in-depth, Skills Oracle surveys.

Data was gathered in the same format for each respondent (online survey). And all employers were asked to answer the same questions, to enable comparisons to be made across the industry sectors. Feedback achieved a 40% response rate (n=69 respondents; or 40,000 employees when weighted for employment).

Data was analysed and emerging issues were identified following the main fieldwork period. Initially, confidential and bespoke company benchmarked reports were created and delivered to those that took part in the survey. Following this, the Cogent sector and industry reports were published.

5. EVALUATION

Following the dissemination of the online survey employers were asked to give feedback on how successful they thought the survey was and how it could be improved. Also, following the dissemination of their company report, employers were asked for constructive feedback on how useful they found the report.