Proficiency Testing:
If you Can't Stand the Heat, Get Out of the Kitchen!

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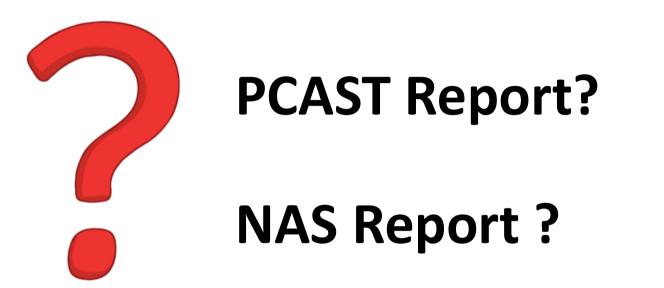
Ron Smith & Associates, Inc.

For years, ISO Accredited agencies have been required to participate in Proficiency Testing on an annual basis.

In recent years, many non-accredited agencies have joined in the PT process. (Most of the time due to external pressure)

Who, or What, has been the driving force behind Proficiency Testing?

ISO Accreditation Standards ?

PCAST Report?

NAS Report ?

AAAS Report ?

PROFICIENCY TESTING: IF YOU CAN T STAND THE HEAT, GET OUT OF THE KITCHEN!

What is Proficiency Testing?

What is Competency Testing?

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Proficiency Testing is a test of the process (recipe), not just the individuals (cooks). All results obtained by the first examiner should be reviewed by a second examiner (taste tested) prior to submission to the test provider (Head Chef). This is the way it is supposed to work, but..........

We know that some agencies don't use it that way and it can cause a variety of problems in the kitchen when errors are made on PT tests.

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Example 1:

Taking the initial examiner off casework, starting the corrective action process and doing a root cause analysis, but submitting the correct results to the PT provider.

(Perfectly fine)

We know that some agencies don't use it that way and it can cause a variety of problems in the kitchen.

Example 2:

Since the error was caught in the normal review process, as it should have been, record it internally, and submit the correct results to the PT provider.

(Same as casework?)

Example 3:

If an error is made, and not caught in review, and gets reported as an inconsistent response by the accrediting body, both of the examiners are taken off of casework. The corrective action process is started, including a root cause analysis for both examiners, requiring individual remedial training if dictated, and requiring competency testing prior to return to casework.

In other words,…
"The proverbial crap has hit the fan."

OR

Shut down the whole restaurant and then figure out how to proceed.

Competency Testing is designed to be a test of the individual cook and can be used at different stages of the examiner's training and all throughout their career to ensure that they have, and still have, what it takes to do their examinations correctly.

So…If agencies use Proficiency Testing in so many different ways, then why do we do it at all?

So…If agencies use Proficiency Testing in so many different ways, then why do we do it at all?

- **Because ISO Standards require it?**

- **Because external entities write public reports saying that we should all do it?**

- **Because we get asked in court if we undergo annual Proficiency Testing?**

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So…If agencies use Proficiency Testing in so many different ways, then why do we do it at all?

- **Because the Summary Reports can be used to show how accurate the industry actually is or how poorly we perform as a group?**

- **Or could it possibly be that…**

We actually want to get better at what we do and 'Good" Proficiency Testing can help us achieve a higher level of quality.

IF...???

IF...???

**We externally test EACH examiner
2 times a year?**

IF...???

We blind proficiency test each examiner internally once a month?

IF...???

C. We decide as an agency (industry) that we really want to get fairly tested in a manner as consistent with actual casework as possible?

BUT...

The reality is most everyone wants an easy proficiency test that doesn't mimic real casework!

Proficiency Testing is described by working Latent Print Examiners (cooks) as:

- A nuisance.
- A waste of my time in the kitchen.
- A "Hoop" to jump through.
- A way for our Quality Manager (Guest Chef) to hound me into getting it done according to their schedule.
- Pure Evil.
- Doesn't provide any real value to our agency.

So, you ask yourself this question…

Why don't proficiency testing companies provide their clients with tests that really do mimic actual casework?

SUCH AS:

Twelve latent prints, four subjects, and zero identifications.

SUCH AS:

Ten latent prints, four subjects, five identifications, five exclusions, including one close non-match from an AFIS search.

SUCH AS:

Twelve latent prints, six subjects, two identifications and ten exclusions with half the latent prints being small palm prints.

SUCH AS:

Twenty-three latent lifts, most of them trash, a small handful of partials to include tips and joints, with only one identification and four exclusions.

SUCH AS:

Ten latent prints, seven Exclusions, One Identification with Two Inconclusives as the correct answer.

So...how do you like me now?

"Because until our attitudes as an industry change, Proficiency Tests that are good, fair, representative examples of real casework…"

Won't Sell !!!!!

Time for a little restaurant history lesson:

- Once upon a time, I decided to have RS&A become an accredited ISO 17043 approved Test Provider Pizza Palace. I was so excited to finally be able to build a proficiency test that Latent Print Examiners would recognize as the best one available for purchase.

- This was not an easy process to become accredited as a PT provider. It took a couple of years and lots of dough ($$$$$).

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- **We started with the basic pizza, latent print comparisons.**

    We had to work with the ingredients provided by our accrediting body, which was "a Proficiency Test should only have two possible conclusions for each latent print comparison: ID or Exclusion."

I then purchased some super high quality pizza ovens (printers) which could render latent prints at 1000 ppi and would provide the test takers with printed images of a much higher quality than they had been used to seeing in other pizza parlors. I am talking about the Chicago, deep dish style of printers.

The first series of tests included twelve latent prints, with fingers and palms, and the known prints of four subjects. I had eight latent prints which should be identified and four exclusions. So far, so good.

After completing a few cycles of testing in this manner, I decided that it was time to get as "REAL" as I could to replicate actual casework.

So, I bit the bullet and built a test pizza with just three pepperonis (identifications) and nine slices of bland pizza (exclusions), which I knew more closely resembled actual casework.

When it went out to our customers you would think, based on most comments, that I had become the devil incarnate.

- **It was too hard!**
  - Poor baby

- **It made me check my answers twice!**
  - When do you **NOT** do that?

- **It took way too long!**
  - So, you got somewhere to go?

- It caused me and my verifier to have to seriously discuss some of the latent print comparisons before I could submit my answers!
  - It's about time you spoke to them.

- Whine, Whine, Whine!
  - You need some cheese with that whine?

They had become
"Hoop Jumpers"

Let's discuss how we REALLY feel by asking ourselves some questions.

1. Do you want to perform <u>your</u> casework accurately?

2. If you were making serious errors, would you want to know?
   - Erroneous identifications
   - Frequent "Misses"
   - Frequent Erroneous Exclusions

3. Do you want your <u>unit's</u> casework to be performed accurately?

4. If your unit was making serious errors, would you want to know?

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You say to yourself, "But Ron, you do not understand my situation!"

I do understand your dilemma. You don't have enough examiners, too many cases, and simply too much actual work to do to get all tied up doing Proficiency Testing.

IF…you really want you and your fellow unit members to do the casework correctly, then how do you achieve accuracy?

1. We train every cook to be very careful and not burn themselves or anyone else. (I hope so)

2. <u>Every</u> identification gets technically reviewed by another qualified examiner cook.

   Yes?   No?

Every conclusion
(sufficiency, identification, exclusion, inconclusive) gets technically reviewed by another equally, or more, qualified, examiner cook.

Yes?   No?

When conducting a technical review (verifications, etc.) of another examiner's **Proficiency Test results**, are you trying to prove the first examiner _____?

Right?   **Wrong?**

When conducting a technical review (verifications, etc.) of another examiner's casework results, are you trying to prove the first examiner _____?

Right?   **Wrong?**

What has all this got to do with the cost of pizza sauce or the future of Proficiency Testing?

Maybe?

JUST MAYBE

We can all learn from the mistakes
of our brothers and sisters in their kitchens.

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My hope is to live to see the day that we as an industry decide to truly embrace challenges to our profession as a very good thing for the people we serve.

As a part of that change, <u>quality proficiency testing programs</u> should become a standard in all latent print kitchens.

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Thank you for coming.

May God Bless!

Happy Cooking!