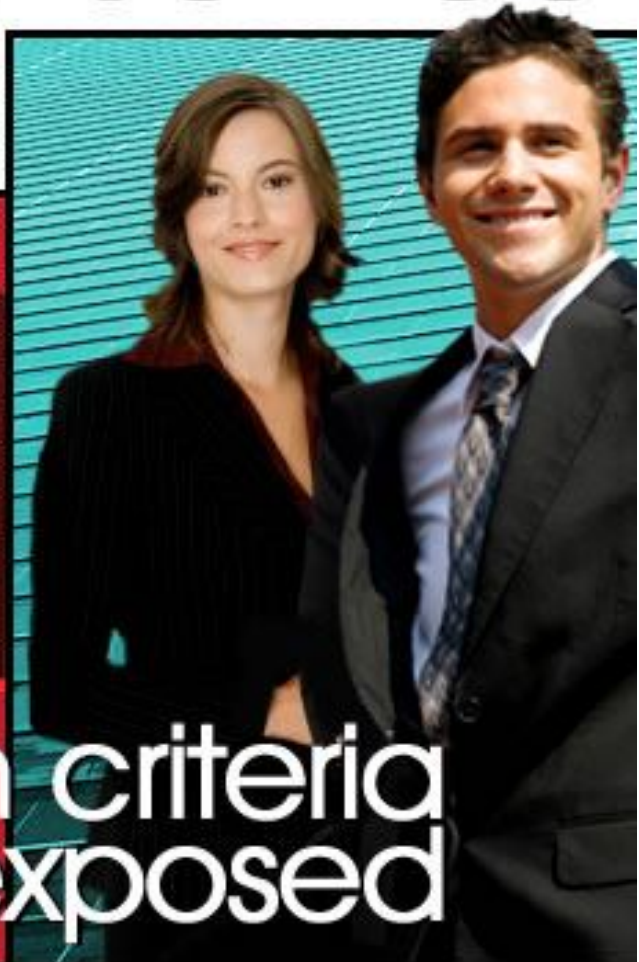


How to **GET IN** and **GET PROMOTED** In The Public Service Sector



Selection criteria
secrets exposed

by Carolyn Smith



“How to GET IN and GET PROMOTED in the Public Service Sector”

Selection Criteria Secrets Exposed

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The Legal Stuff

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Every effort has been made to ensure that this manual is free from error or problems. Though I've worked hard and long to provide accurate information, I can't take any responsibility for loss or action to any individual or corporation acting, or not acting, as a result of the material presented here.

Examples and advice in this manual are not to be interpreted as a promise or guarantee of your success. Getting in and getting promoted in the public service sector is entirely dependent on you the reader and in the way you use this manual, ideas and techniques. We do not purport this to be a resource that guarantees your success.

Some links and information presented in this manual may change.

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About the Author

Nicknamed the '**Master of Selection Criteria**' by her close clients and friends, Carolyn Smith helps countless job-seekers like you, around Australia get in and get promoted in the public service sector.

She offers:

- ~ **E-books**
- ~ **Reports**
- ~ **Free articles**
- ~ **E-zine – 'Boost Your Career'**
- ~ **One on one consultations, via telephone and email**

Since 2003, Carolyn has successfully addressed thousands of applications, from entry level to senior executive, which have resulted in her clients getting interviews.

Although specialising in developing reports, articles and information products, Carolyn still assists job seekers focussing on team leaders, professionals, managers and executives.

From the Global Corporate World to Career Specialist

Carolyn's original background was in law as a corporate solicitor in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. From there she moved into marketing and business development. In early 2003, after a three year stint working for one of London's largest law firms with clients such as the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Citibank and ABN AMRO, Carolyn started her online business.

Move forward to today, and Carolyn has read every single book on the market place on selection criteria, attended seminars, read online resources, talked to countless HR professionals and contact officers and she has fine-tuned and perfected the art of addressing selection criteria through the completion of thousands of successful applications for clients around Australia.

Meeting the stringent international requirements of Career Directors International, Carolyn is also a **Certified Advanced Résumé Writer, Certified Expert Résumé Writer** and **Certified Employment Interview Consultant**. Carolyn is only one of a handful of international career professionals to gain these elite résumé and interview coaching qualifications globally.

Originally from New Zealand, Carolyn met her Australian husband Neville, while roaming through the Middle East and Africa, and moved to Australia with her husband in 1996. Carolyn has a young son called Samuel, a psychotic cat named Max and a budgie called Whiskers (who was saved from the psychotic cat - hence the name 'Whiskers').

In her spare time Carolyn is a jazz lover, an avid reader and proud owner of an Amazon Kindle, a news addict, and a reluctant 'get fit' participant (weight training, bike riding and bush walking), so she can keep up with her husband and young son.

Introduction

Why this manual?

Wouldn't it be great if you knew how to address selection criteria that resulted in you consistently being invited for interviews, or perhaps more importantly, generating more interviews that are focused in the area of interest you wish to land a job!

Unfortunately for the overwhelming majority of candidates, addressing selection criteria can be a frustrating and tedious process and the majority of candidates fail to be selected for interview due to a poorly written responses or a lack of understanding as to how the public sector process works.

Having worked with candidates at all levels from both the public and private sector, I see countless qualified job seekers disheartened by the process. Surprisingly, many are unaware of the basic principles of the selection process and what is involved in correctly addressing selection criteria. What's more, those that understand the process, still fail to produce quality applications by not addressing the criteria in full, not providing sufficient evidence and failing to talk about their accomplishments and achievements.

When I started writing responses to selection criteria many years ago, I discovered a couple of books on the market place and countless free online resources relating to addressing selection criteria. However, none of them provided a step by step guide on how to put an application together and the examples provided were of a poor quality. Years later, after much trial and error and reviewing and writing thousands of applications, I can guarantee that the majority of my clients will not only secure an interview, but be ranked in the top five percent of candidates.

In this manual, I share with you all my trade secrets, so you can stop wasting countless hours on applications that won't result in your selection for interview. I have also included a podcast of how to avoid the common errors that the majority of people make when addressing selection criteria.

As a bonus, I have also provided a complimentary supplement on how to perform at an interview. After all, you will probably need this resource since it is highly likely that if you follow this manual closely, you will be invited for an interview.

This manual is UNIQUE, in that while other books outline the process, this manual goes further. It arms you with knowledge relating to the inherent flaws in the selection process, as well as you giving you insider tips on how to construct high quality statements, even down to providing you with the tools of the trade to creating sizzling responses, even if you are weak on one or more criteria.

If you are new to the process, I am afraid there are no short cuts to ensuring your success. It takes countless hours of research, careful thought and preparation, and writing and re-writing to ensure that you construct high quality statements against the selection criteria.

If you are already from the public service sector, then this manual will help you gain your well deserved promotion, by providing you with the tools and tips from a professional, so you can significantly improve your application.

By mastering the art of addressing selection criteria you will triple, or quadruple your success and will turn rejection letters into telephone calls inviting you to interview!

Get the most out of the manual

The manual is written like a course. In fact it outlines exactly how I work as a professional, from the initial steps of ascertaining whether my client is sufficiently qualified for the position, understanding the requirements of the agency, obtaining detailed information relating to my client's skills, knowledge, experience and achievements, through to writing and editing responses to selection criteria.

Work on one chapter at a time. Each chapter of the manual is designed to be read in order and even if you are from the public service sector, don't skip chapters, as each chapter provides you with the relevant information necessary to attract all the interviews you'll ever need for a successful career.

Remember, there is nothing theoretical in this manual. There's not one single thing here that I haven't done for my clients. If you follow this manual and start addressing selection criteria like a professional, you will get invited to interviews!

If you read this manual like you read most books you won't get much out of it.

Don't

- ~ Quickly skim through the material.
- ~ Fail to come to grips with the fundamentals.

Do

- ~ Work on one chapter at a time.
- ~ Take time (lots of time) to understand the process.
- ~ Write down your thoughts and ideas.
- ~ Constantly refine and 'tweak' your answers to selection criteria

Feedback welcome

If any information contained in this manual could be improved, clarified or included, please let me know. My goal is to make this manual the most useful resource you've ever used in relation to addressing selection criteria for public sector applications. My direct email address is: carolyn.smith@impactwriting.com.au

Remember - The magic ingredient in this manual is YOU. The information won't do anything just sitting on your computer. It is vital that you not only understand the information, but apply it, so you can start securing interviews.

Thank you for purchasing How to GET IN and GET PROMOTED in the public service sector. I hope it may serve to help you obtain your dream job or promotion in the public sector.

Take care and all the very best

Carolyn F Smith

PART ONE

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Chapter 1

Understanding the selection process - the boring BUT crucial stuff!

Before you get started it is vital you have a basic understanding of the selection criteria process, so you can understand what is required of you, and more importantly use this information to ensure you apply for relevant roles and address selection criteria in a way that ensures you get selected for interview.

Recruitment based on merit

Briefly, selection in the public service sector is based on **MERIT**, pursuant to *Public Service Act 1999 at Federal Level* (and various other Acts at state Level, e.g. *Public Services Act 1996 (QLD)*, *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 (NSW)*). That is - the process must be free from discrimination, should be carried out with impartiality and integrity and the selection criteria designed to match the skills, qualities and knowledge that the agency requires in order for the candidate to effectively carry out the role.

What this means to you as the candidate, is that **your application will be assessed against other candidates** and ranked in accordance as to how well you have demonstrated your relevant skills, qualities and knowledge against the selection criteria. During the assessment process your responses are marked and ranked against other candidates, to determine who will be invited to interview. (In the same way you were marked and ranked when submitting assignments, essays and sitting exams).

The process also means that if you don't meet the agency's requirement relating to skills, qualities and knowledge, experience and qualifications, then it does not matter whether you think you could do the job blind folded, you simply don't meet their requirements, so you won't be selected for interview.

The selection process

The key stages to the selection process are:

- ~ Requirements (knowledge, skills and attributes required of a candidate) determined for the role.
- ~ Application documentation prepared, including selection criteria (it is not unusual for these to have already been prepared, in particular if an agency is using generic criteria and occasionally the application documentation prepared are just a re-hash from another application).
- ~ Selection process designed (in most cases, the selection process is already pre-determined by the agency).
- ~ Selection panel members selected (usually made up of 3 members) and a contact officer is appointed (for quite a large number of roles, the contact officer is also a panel member).
- ~ Vacancy advertised in the Gazette for federal jobs, or other online sites (state government job search sites, local government council sites and commercial sites such as SEEK), along with major and local newspapers.
- ~ Application forms made available online or sent directly upon request to candidates.

- ~ Application closes and candidates applications forwarded by HR to each member of the selection panel.
- ~ Each selection panel member assesses each candidate separately and then meets to determine a short list for interview purposes.
- ~ Interviews held and other selection processes conducted - direct testing exercises and psychometric tests.
- ~ Referee reports obtained.
- ~ A selection report is prepared and submitted to a delegate, who reviews report and signs it off.
- ~ Candidates notified of outcome and outcome published.
- ~ Feedback provided and appeals made (if applicable).

In practice, recruitment and selection processes do vary, depending on the agency or organisation. Agencies have the flexibility to choose what selection method they use, so when applying for roles, it is essential to obtain the application information pack, so you can meet their requirements.

The Advertisement/Application Pack

When applying for a role within the public service sector **it is essential to obtain an application pack** (virtually all agencies allow you to download the application pack directly online, or alternatively, contact the designated contact officer who will forward the application pack to you).

While each agency varies slightly – the key information contained in the application pack is usually as follows:

- ~ Name of the Agency / Organisation
- ~ Sub unit
- ~ Location of the position
- ~ Job title
- ~ Classification
- ~ Details of salary
- ~ Vacancy reference number or position number
- ~ Background information on the responsibilities of the agency and responsibilities of the sub unit
- ~ Job description / duties statement
- ~ Closing date
- ~ Conditions of service
- ~ Assessment methods / selection process
- ~ Information relating to public sector values and code of conduct
- ~ Selection criteria / assessment criteria / work related requirements
- ~ Documentation required for submission, including cover sheet, cover letter, résumé / curriculum vitae and separate document addressing the claims against the selection criteria
- ~ Submission details
- ~ Contact officer
- ~ Eligibility

What you need to know about the application pack

Eligibility

Many jobs within the public service sector are restricted to candidates that are **Australian citizens, or Australian citizenship is pending. Other agencies limit applications to Australian citizens and Australian residents.**

Unfortunately some application packs I encounter don't specify these eligibility requirements relating to citizenship, so if this information is not contained on the agency's web site or in the application pack and you are not an Australian citizen, check with the relevant contact officer to ensure that you are eligible to apply for the role in question.

Other eligibility criteria include having the appropriate level of security clearance, health checks, or relevant qualifications, such as a Bachelor Degree.

If you don't meet the eligibility requirement relating to citizenship/residency, then an agency head is able to appoint an APS employee if it is considered appropriate to do so.

What this in reality means, is that unless you are an outstanding applicant and a suitable candidate could not be found amongst the band of Australian citizens (due to skills shortages) then you will not be eligible for appointment.

Closing Date

It is **imperative that you get your application in on time – both day and designated time e.g. 5pm Eastern Standard Time.**

Late applications are accepted entirely at the discretion of the selection panel and acceptance will depend on a number of factors, including the number of quality candidates that apply for the position, whether your application is outstanding or borderline, and whether there is a shortage of qualified candidates for the position you are applying for.

If time is a critical factor and there is no way you can meet the deadline, then touch base immediately with the contact officer to arrange an extension in writing, then submit your application cover sheet on the day the application is due, with a note attached detailing when your full response will be submitted.

While a late submission can knock you out of contention for career opportunities, including positions you are highly qualified for - on the positive side quite a few of my clients have successfully obtained extensions resulting in interviews, and in turn, jobs.

But please keep in mind **if the position has attracted a large number of applicants, it is HIGHLY UNLIKELY that your late application will be accepted.** In addition, late applicants lose their right to appeal against the outcomes of the recruitment and selection process.

Finally, if the job has 'ongoing' listed as the closing date, it is a continuous pool and you are able to submit your application at any time.

Contact Officer

The designated contact officer is a vital source of information to candidates and I strongly recommend that you touch base with the contact officer, to obtain further information about the role and confirm whether you meet the requirements of the agency in question. Often the designated contact officer (particularly at the senior

level) is a member of the selection panel that will be assessing your application, so it can also be an excellent opportunity to make a good first impression.

Even if you are from the same agency, it is still important to touch base, so you can get the information first hand, rather than obtaining hearsay evidence about the role (unless of course you are currently acting in the position).

Questions you should ask/obtain clarification on:

1. *Unless the vacancy is advertised as 'several positions', then you should ask whether someone is acting in the role and how long they have been acting in the role.*

In the public service sector, many vacancies are temporarily filled by a person from a lower classification. This allows them to gain valuable experience in a higher position. Unfortunately, some people are left to act in a role for long periods of time (months, sometimes years), so there is a sense that they have a legitimate claim to the role in question.

What this means to you as a candidate, is that you will be competing against another candidate, who already has experience in the position. This often results in that person being appointed to the position, as he or she can demonstrate experience, knowledge and success in the position.

While the merit-based process means that the contact officer won't tell you that it is a 'done deal', by asking these two questions, you can determine whether it is worth while competing against a candidate who already has valuable experience in the position. However, if **you believe you are a very strong candidate and you are interested in the role, then you should still apply.**

Remember, just because someone is acting in the position, does not mean they are effective in the role. Many managers, while not completely dissatisfied, are still open to 'new candidates', in order to improve the overall performance of the work area. I have lost count of the number of candidates acting in the position who have failed to gain a promotion, due to the poor quality of their application, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the selection panel, to justify a decision to appoint the person in question. (However, just don't be surprised, if the person acting in the role is appointed)

2. *Obtain clarification as to the suggested length of your response per selection criterion, (if a word or page limit is not supplied, or suggested)*

On the surface this does not appear to be an important question, but remember you could be competing with internal candidates, that might be writing a full page per selection criteria, against your ½ page or you could unintentionally irritate and annoy selection panel members, who see your 1 page response, when they only required ½ a page per selection criteria.

3. *Ask questions, so you can learn more about the position and the agency*

Use the contact officer as an opportunity to learn as much as you can about the position, so you can decide if you want to work for the agency, as well as gain invaluable insight in order to shape your application in a way that meets the agency's requirements, as well as ascertain whether you are suitably qualified for the role. It is not uncommon for job descriptions to be very broad and almost non-descript, so it is important to find out exactly what the day to day responsibilities of the role are.

Remember this is your career, so before you invest time in preparing an application, it pays to ensure this is the sort of position you are interested in and that it provides good career prospects)

Possible questions, depending on the classification level of the application, or whether the contact officer is a member of the selection panel or not, might involve:

1. *Why is the position open?*
2. *How often has it been filled in the past five years and what were the main reasons for prior employees leaving?*
3. *What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?*
4. *What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in the functional area and by the person that fills the position?*
5. *What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position?*
6. *What type of support does the position receive in terms of people, resources?*
7. *What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?*
8. *Is there any pending legislation that will affect the role?*
9. *Are there any mentoring programs or formal training programs?*
10. *What is the work area's management style?*
11. *If you are hired, what are the three most pressing issues that would need to be resolved?*
12. *What are the most important skills and attributes they are looking for in filling this position?*
13. *How would you describe the agency's culture?*
14. *What major challenges are currently facing the management team?*

WARNING:

Having contacted hundreds of contact officers over the years, not all designated contact officers are particularly helpful, easy to contact or forthcoming in information. Worse still, some are '**bloody useless**' and even provide misleading information or are simply un-contactable.

While the contact officer must appear to be objective and cannot discourage a candidate from applying, some take their obligations so seriously, that one of my clients was actually encouraged to apply, even though my client had absolutely NO qualifications or experience relating to the position and she was applying for role, several classifications higher than her present role.

What this means, is that the **onus is on you** to question the contact person and discover more about the role, and from this conversation, determine whether you are qualified or not for the role in question

Now this disparaging remark is not aimed at all contact officers. Over the years I have contacted some real gems and if you are lucky, you will contact one that will provide you with ample information and lots of valuable advice relating to the role and the agency's requirements.

It is important to **REMEMBER many contact officers are part of the selection panel and could be your future boss, so even if they turn out to be of little help, make sure you are polite and obliging at all times when talking with them.**

Likewise some of the contact officers provided are simply HR personnel, who won't necessarily be able to provide you with an in-depth overview of the role.

Documents that need to be submitted

The application pack will outline what documents you will need to submit: Depending on the agency's requirements and whether federal, state, territory or local, the following documents are usually required:

- ~ Application form / application cover sheet
- ~ Cover letter (not mandatory for many applications)
- ~ Résumé / curriculum vitae
- ~ **Separate document** addressing the selection criteria, OR a Statement of Claim, or 2 page cover letter addressing the selection criteria
- ~ Name and contact details of your referees
- ~ Any supporting documentation (if requested) e.g. copy of drivers licence

Make sure you are sufficiently qualified for the position

Although this has nothing to do with writing selection criteria, this is **one of the most important aspects to the process** – namely, ensuring that you are sufficiently qualified for the position in question, before dedicating endless hours in addressing the selection criteria.

To understand how essential this is, it is important to go back to the role of selection criteria, which is to assess and grade suitable candidates, based on **merit**, pursuant to *Public Service Act 1999 (and equivalent legislation at state level)*. This means, if you don't meet the agency's requirements' relating to knowledge, experience and qualifications you won't be invited to interview. Even if you end up being the only candidate applying for the position, which is unlikely, if you don't meet the agency's requirements, the job will simply be re-advertised.

The merit process is by its very nature competitive and your application will be assessed against other candidates, many of whom will be more suitably qualified than you. Depending on the role, panel members will assess anything from half a dozen candidates for complex technical roles, through to 2,400 candidates or more.

Now I have lost count of the number of borderline candidates I have got through to interview. However, even as a professional writer, with all the tricks of the trade, I still won't accept a commission, when I strongly believe that my client has not got a 'chance in hell' of getting through, as they are clearly not qualified for the role.

In order to ensure that you are sufficiently qualified for the role, you need to understand:

- ~ The classification of the position
- ~ Your suitability against the selection criteria

Classification

All agency positions are **hierarchically organised** from entry level all the way through to the agency head. As you progress up the levels of government you will take on more responsibility with roles becoming increasingly more complex, challenging and demanding the higher you go.

All positions advertised are provided with a classification level, which in turn will determine the salary or remuneration.

As a general summary, **lower level positions are operational roles** – that is, they deal with day to day operational matters of the agency, such as administration processes and providing front line services to clients. These roles also include managing more junior operational staff and managing operational processes, such as the delivery of client services.

High level positions deal with the 'big picture' and include overseeing managers and shaping the overall strategy of the agency. They can also involve direct contact with ministers and other senior stakeholders within government.

If you are already from the public sector, you would be aware of the hierarchical nature of recruitment. If you are applying for a position at a higher classification than your current position, it is vital to pitch your application at a higher level and use examples relevant to the role in question.

If you are coming from the private to the public sector, you need to understand the various classifications, so that you apply for a role that is suited to your level of experience and qualifications. To assist you in this process, I have provided you with an overview of the classification level for the APS (federal roles) below, which will help you to determine the appropriate level to apply for.

If the classification provided in the advertisement is not listed below, (state, territory and local government applications) another method to determine whether you are pitching at the right level is to review the salary. This method will give you a rough guideline of the level in question. But be warned:

- ~ What you receive by way of remuneration in the private sector, might be higher than what you will receive in the public sector for an equivalent role, so rather than focusing just on salary, take a close look at the level of responsibility of the position in question and obtain clarification from the contact officer.
- ~ To meet budget targets some organisations (in particular in the area of social work) will advertise a position at a lower classification level, even though the demands of the role are at a higher classification level.

Classification Levels for the Australian Public Sector (Entry level to Agency Head for federal applications and agencies such as Customs, Australian Federal Police, DIAC)

- ~ APS 1 – 2 (General entry level positions, cadetships and traineeships)
- ~ APS 3 – 4 (General administrative, technical, project & service positions / graduate positions)
- ~ APS 5 – 6 (Senior Administrators, technical, project and service positions)
- ~ Executive Level 1 – 2 (Senior management positions)
- ~ Senior Executive Level (Executive positions)
- ~ Agency Head

Suitability against the selection criteria

If you don't meet the **mandatory requirements** of the agency, such as possessing a relevant qualification, **you will not be selected for interview.**

You also need to gauge your suitability against the selection criteria.

Ways to gauge your suitability include:

- ~ Have you got demonstrable experience and knowledge relating to the majority of duties and responsibilities listed in the position description?
- ~ If the selection criteria are specific, are you confident that you can meet all them?
- ~ If you don't meet all the selection criteria, then do you have transferable skills at an equal or more senior level to the role in question?
- ~ If the selection criteria are generic, are you confident you can answer these within the context of the role in question?
- ~ Are you applying for a position far more senior than your present role?
- ~ Are you weak in more than one criterion?

If you answered NO to the first four points and YES to the last two points, then before you spend countless hours preparing your application, make sure you get more clarification from the agency, to determine your suitability.

I would also recommend not applying for a position, if you are weak in more than one selection criteria, as this will more than likely knock you out of contention. **Remember, the whole process is based on competitive merit based assessment, and it is probable that candidates that meet all the selection criteria will be applying for the position.**

If in doubt, as outlined previously, refer to the contact officer.

Moving from the private sector to the public sector

When determining your suitability for a position, it is important to remember that when coming from the private sector and moving into the public sector, you will be competing against candidates already *'in the system'*. What this means, in reality, is that it is important to:

- ~ Determine that it is a **genuine position** by ascertaining whether anyone is currently acting in the position. Refer to my notes on touching base with the contact officer.
- ~ Understand that if the job requires **government specific** skills and knowledge, it can be difficult to secure an interview, even if you have comparative skills from the private sector.

For example, you might be a contract administrator working in the private sector, but when applying for a contract administrator or procurement position within government, you will lack specific skills and knowledge on government policy, procedures and legislation. If this knowledge is **deemed to be important** during the recruitment process and is listed as an essential requirement or criterion, then it can sometimes be difficult to compete on an equal footing with internal candidates who already have this knowledge. Again, refer to my notes on touching base with the contact officer.

What you need to know about submitting your Application

Agency requirements vary enormously, **but the number one rule, is to strictly adhere to the requirements of the agency in question.**

- ~ If you email your application to the designated email address, it is not necessary to provide a hard copy of your application via post or courier, unless requested in the application pack.
- ~ If submitting via email, it is not necessary to write an email cover note, unless specified in the application pack. Simply state the job/reference number, and attach and send all the required documents.
- ~ Occasionally an agency requires submission of three hard copies of your application. This is to save the agency time and money in photocopying copies for distribution to the designated selection panel members.
- ~ If no email address is provided and you need to use a courier to deliver your application, check with the agency that they accept courier deliveries and if they need prior notification of your delivery. Increasingly agencies are not accepting hand delivered applications, so check with them prior to submission.
- ~ The majority of agencies accept applications by email and it is acceptable to submit your application on the closing date, prior to the closing time. If applying for a role in another state, keep in mind the various time zones, so you don't miss the deadline.
- ~ If submitting hard copies, it is unnecessary to send bound copies, or copies of your application in a folder. These will simply be discarded by HR. Straight A4 white office paper is sufficient, with each copy stapled together in the corner. When sending by surface mail, resist the temptation to fold your application to squeeze into a smaller envelope, instead use an A4 full-page envelope.
- ~ An agency won't necessarily acknowledge receipt of your application.
- ~ The majority of agencies now process all applications online and require candidates to complete applications via online application forms.

Chapter 2

What happens in Practice (the stuff they prefer not to talk about!)

I have just outlined the public service process and in theory how it is all 'supposed to work'. But what happens in theory and in practice are two different things – so I am going to outline key things that you should be aware of, before applying for a position in the public service sector.

Positions advertised with a person acting in the role

As I have already noted, many positions are temporarily filled with a person acting in the role and in many cases (not always), this person acting in the role will be appointed to the position, as it is a 'done deal'.

Residual Nepotism

While the old days of appointments made within the circles of influence, and the stereotypical public servant with a job for life in spite of gross incompetency are long gone, the reality is that what I refer to as '**residual nepotism**' is well and truly alive in the public service sector. That is, an appointment is made through favouritism, not the values of a competitive merit based assessment.

A few selected examples I have encountered in the last few years are:

- ~ Selection panel members reading and critiquing applications prior to the submission date, to ensure their favoured candidate has developed an airtight application. (I know this for a fact, as I have done this for clients on quite a few occasions)
- ~ Managers talking directly with the person acting in the position to create selection criteria directly suited to the person in question, rather than the position in question
- ~ The favoured candidate being appointed to the position, regardless of the quality of the application. (Throughout the process there was no intention to appoint an external applicant, but Managers needed to follow protocol and advertise the position).
- ~ I even know of a case where a Manager appointed his lover to the role!

Does this mean you should give up on ever gaining a position on the public service sector, or conversely being complacent about your application, if already acting in the position?

In short the answer is an **emphatic NO!** The majority of positions are nevertheless, still **genuine positions** and the process is conducted in a way that reflects the values of a competitive merit based assessment.

For those acting in the position, be warned - I have lost count of the number of candidates who have failed to gain a promotion due to the poor quality of their application or the manager is open to 'new options'. So make sure your application is airtight by developing strong claims against the selection criteria.

In my experience, not all agencies have residual nepotism and it tends to be more prevalent at the local level (especially local councils), or where cronyism still appears to exist within some agencies, for example, the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service, and the Australian Federal Police. (These comments are based on my personal experience and feedback received from clients since 2003 and should not be construed as fact.)

Poor Quality Application Packs

It is a mistake to assume that the selection process articulated in various Acts and Regulations, results in the design of a perfect application pack that provides applicants with relevant and appropriate information, makes the process transparent and results in relevant selection criteria that match the requirements of the position.

Inadequate Job Descriptions

Not all job descriptions are completely accurate and sometimes there is little or no information on the day to day responsibilities of the position. This can make it difficult to understand the role, which in turn can raise problems when developing selection criteria responses that will meet the needs of the agency. As noted previously, always refer to the contact officer.

Poorly Developed Selection Criteria

I have lost count of the number of poorly developed selection criteria I have addressed, which simply indicates that the selection panel is not clear about what they are looking for, or they actually don't understand what the various qualifiers or criteria mean. Examples you will encounter include, repetition of skills, personal qualities and knowledge, selection criteria that are difficult to understand, and requirements for a candidate to address a long list of criteria.

I cover how to address poorly developed selection criteria in Chapters 3 and 15.

Poorly Assessed Applications

Unless applications are assessed externally, they will not necessarily be assessed objectively. While it is the selection panel's job to objectively assess candidates and rate each applicant; in reality, there is poor consistency in rating candidates at both the written application level and at interview.

People judge people; **subjectivity, prejudices, and assumptions are rife in the public service sector**, particularly if panel members know candidates.

The reality is that politics is prevalent within government organisations and there are unwritten rules in terms of who 'should', or 'should not', be promoted.

I've known clients who have received feedback from panel members and the same application has been judged completely differently from each panel member, ranging from Very Satisfactory to Poor, for EXACTLY the same response.

Other clients have failed to get through to interview because they did not demonstrate a specific element of a job. For example, a client came to me with feedback that he had failed to demonstrate the ability to perform on selection panels. He did not get through to interview, even though the job had nothing to do with recruitment and this requirement was NOT even listed in the job description. This happens when job requirements are poorly worded, assessment standards are not explicit, and panel members are simply biased.

In my experience, the fairest process is when assessment of candidates is conducted externally.

The System is too Complex

Anyone who has waded through an application form already knows that the system is way too complex. For example, over the years I've viewed the internal marking criteria used by selection panels. These marking criteria are so complex, that one marking sheet ran into two pages of requirements, even though the candidates only had half a page to address all of these requirements (go figure!).

The current system also favours internal applicants, because of its complexity and assessment standards that favour those 'already with experience in government'. Some agencies even provide internal training on selection criteria, so staff can understand exactly what is required of them. If this is the case, how the heck is an external applicant supposed to understand a system that fundamentally favours 'those in the know'. This is hardly a transparent or fair system is it?

Utilising selection criteria is NOT always the most effective way to recruit the right staff

After writing numerous applications for government positions and after talking to selection panel members and human resource officers within the public sector, the general view is that requiring candidates to address selection criteria, is not necessarily the most effective or fair way to recruit staff.

Not only is the process time consuming, (both for YOU as the candidate, as well as the selection panel, who might have to read up to 1,000 applications), BUT the process needlessly penalises external candidates who don't have insight into the intricacies of the process and what is required of them.

I also believe that **long and complex selection criteria are totally unnecessary** and there should never be more than five selection criteria that a candidate needs to address.

For a good proportion of applications, a comprehensive résumé and cover letter, along with a short cover sheet, would be more than sufficient to assess the suitability of a candidate and still effectively meet the requirements of selection based on the principles of merit.

But until some agencies change their recruiting practices, I'm afraid you will need to learn how to master addressing selection criteria, including long and unnecessarily complex applications.

Finally, to reinforce why I believe that the use of selection criteria is not the most effective way to recruit the right staff, the University of Queensland Social Research Centre (UGSRC), conducted a wide ranging survey of members of the Queensland Public Service, including 66 percent of members at the AO (Administration Officers) stream.

The survey highlighted that:

"Respondents were discontent with the processes governing career advancement. Concerns centred on the process of adjudicating promotions. A significant majority of respondents deemed the process to be less than transparent, unfair, and incapable of selecting the best candidates".

While there is an element of subjectivity in the respondents polled on the process, after working within the industry for several years, I can understand why the **process is incapable of selecting the best candidate, since initial selection is always based on how well the candidate responds to selection criteria, not on how they perform on the job.**

Before you proceed to Part Two

- 1. Are you eligible for the position in question, e.g. are you an Australian Citizen or Australian Resident?**
 - a. Do you meet the mandatory requirements of the advertised position?**
 - b. If uncertain about eligibility requirements, have you obtained clarification from the agency?**
- 2. Can you meet the application deadline?**
 - a. If not, have you obtained an extension in writing from the agency?**
- 3. Have you made contact with the designated contact officer to clarify information, obtain an understanding of the position and ascertain whether it is worth applying for?**
- 4. Are you confident you are sufficiently qualified for the position?**
 - a. Is it an appropriate classification level for your level of experience and knowledge?**
 - b. Do you meet the agency's selection criteria?**

PART TWO

DOCUMENTATION YOU NEED TO PREPARE

Chapter 3

Selection criteria

Selection criteria are also known as **key selection criteria, work related requirements, statements of claim, claim for position** and **assessment criteria**.

They are the list of statements that outline the job specific skills, knowledge and experience that an agency requires you to address in order to be selected for an interview. Depending on the agency, they vary from four through to twenty criteria or more, and are used by both the public and private sector to assess a candidate's suitability for the position. **Selection criteria are determined by each agency and can include the following:**

Skills

- ~ Organisational Awareness
- ~ Client Service Orientation
- ~ Problem Solving
- ~ Project Management
- ~ Decision Making
- ~ Persuasion and Influencing skills
- ~ Presentation Skills
- ~ Leadership Skills
- ~ Strategic Thinking
- ~ Written Communication Skills
- ~ Business Focus

Personal Qualities

- ~ Cross Cultural Awareness
- ~ Building Productive Networks
- ~ Flexibility
- ~ Teamwork
- ~ Drive & Commitment
- ~ Initiative
- ~ Coaching and developing others
- ~ Ethics and values
- ~ Resilience

Specific Knowledge

- ~ Detailed knowledge and experience in relation to the role in question
- ~ Technical expertise
- ~ Relevant training and up to date in specialist area

*Source "Get it Right – Recruitment Kit for Managers – Capability Cards" – Australian Public Service Commission

A few selected examples of selection criteria are:

- ~ *High level interpersonal, negotiation, consultation and communication skills appropriate to an environment of change and evolution.*
- ~ *Demonstrated ability to manage staff in line with contemporary human resource management policies, procedures and practices including anti-discrimination, ethical behaviour and occupational health and safety.*
- ~ *Demonstrated ability to work independently, as well as working as a member of a team.*
- ~ *Keyboard skills of a minimum of 40 words per minute with 98% accuracy.*
- ~ *Proven ability to lead a work unit, manage projects, set deadlines, organise resources, supervise assigned staff and meet objectives.*
- ~ *Proven knowledge, understanding and application, or a capacity to rapidly acquire knowledge, understanding and application of the following legislation:*
 - a. *Native Title Act 1993*
 - b. *Native Title (Qld) Act 1993*
 - c. *Land Act 1962*
 - d. *Land Act 1994*
 - e. *Water Act 2000*
 - f. *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*
 - g. *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*

What you need to know about selection criteria

The distinction between essential and desirable criteria

Some agencies make a distinction between **essential** and **desirable criteria**. To meet the agency's requirements, you will need to demonstrate that you can meet the essential criteria, and desirable criteria are just 'bonus' skills and knowledge that an agency is seeking from a candidate. **However in my experience the distinction between essential and desirable criteria is always 'blurred'** when competition is fierce and the majority of selection panels will favour candidates with both essential and desirable criteria, over those candidates who can only meet the essential criteria.

When addressing the desirable criteria, address them in the same way as you would address the essential criteria, although occasionally, short succinct responses are sufficient. Check with the contact officer as to required length against the desirable criteria, unless this is already stated in the application pack.

Example:

Essential

1. *Knowledge of established work practices and procedures relevant to the work area or the ability to quickly achieve this level of knowledge*
2. *Demonstrated knowledge of office administration and organisational regulations and policies with experience in a busy office work environment in clerical and administration functions*
3. *Demonstrated skills in oral and written communications with clients and other members of the public*
4. *High standards of word processing, spreadsheets, desk top publishing and other appropriate computer applications (preferably the Microsoft Suite)*

Desirable

1. *Experience in an executive office environment where confidentiality, dealing with difficult people and meeting deadlines has been a requirement.*
2. *Shorthand skills*

The document addressing selection criteria, is usually the primary document in the process

The most **important document in the selection process is the document addressing the selection criteria.** If you are coming from the private sector and want to move into the public sector, then your résumé, which was once your key to interview success, is now relegated to the position of the poor cousin in the process. You will more than likely be invited for the interview if your responses to the selection criteria meet the agency's requirements, even if your résumé would under normal circumstances be considered a liability. But conversely, if you have a brilliant résumé, without adequate responses to the selection criteria, your application will not be selected by panel members. (There are a few exceptions to this general rule, as a panel does have the discretion to accept an application, but it happens so infrequently, that it is vital for you to correctly address the selection criteria).

However, if you need to address selection criteria or assessment criteria within a 2 page cover letter, then your resume will become more important, so it will be vital to focus on BOTH documents. (Refer to Chapter 18).

Addressing selection criteria in a separate document

Most agencies require you to address the selection criteria in a **separate document.** However, there is a universal movement away from addressing long complex selection criteria. Instead, you are required to address selection criteria within a 2 page cover letter and within your résumé (this is quite a common approach in Queensland for example). I cover how to approach these applications in Chapter 18.

Common Selection Criteria

I refer to Common Selection Criteria, as those relating to occupational health and safety, equal employment opportunity, anti-discrimination and workplace diversity. I have provided a detailed overview of these criteria, along with examples on how to address them in Chapter 9 and 11.

Weighting of selection criteria

Some agencies rank the level of importance to the selection criteria by their level of important and assign a **weighting** against each one. If weighting against the selection criteria is **not provided**, then you must assume each has been given equal weighting when addressing the criteria.

Example:

Criteria	Description	Weighting
1	Demonstrated knowledge and experience with or the ability to rapidly acquire knowledge of enforcement/compliance systems/databases associated with public health legislation	10
2	Demonstrated experience in the ongoing development, enhancement application, maintenance and administration of information management systems that support operational practices.	10
3	Well developed organisational and problem-solving skills relevant to supporting a regulatory environment.	8
4	Ability to project manage various activities and meet deadlines.	8
5	Demonstrated high level written and oral communication and interpersonal skills and ability to work effectively as a team member.	8
6	Demonstrated ability to actively participate in a working environment in line with quality human resource management practices including employment equity, anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety and ethical behaviour	6

Behavioural Questions

Many of the large agencies are using behavioural questions, which need to be addressed against a list of selection criteria.

Example:

Describe a situation where you were required to make a complex or difficult decision which impacted on service delivery or affected a staff member/colleague. What processes did you use? How did you deliver the message?

I cover how to address these behavioural questions in Chapter 17.

Use of Selection Criteria in ranking candidates

Depending on the selection process of the agency, selection criteria will even play a role in your overall ranking during the interview stage, so they could even determine your ultimate success.

The use of Generic Selection Criteria or Public Sector Capability Frameworks

Quite a few agencies use **generic selection criteria**, which apply to all roles, with the only variation relating to technical / specific knowledge required for the role in question.

A large proportion of these generic selection criteria are based on the **leadership capability framework**, known as **Senior Executive Leadership Capability (SELC) Framework**, which is covered in Chapter 19 of this Manual.

While the Senior Executive leadership Capability Framework is based on the requirements of the Australian Public Service at the executive level, you will find this framework used at all classification levels, including entry level, and I have even seen them utilised in private sector applications.

Public sector Capability frameworks, are used at both the Federal level and State level and simply outlines for each classification level, the skills, knowledge and abilities expected from staff, in order to deliver government priorities and high quality and responsive services to the community.

At the Federal level, for APS 1 – APS 6, these are similar or identical to the SELC framework, as outlined below, but each classification level standard differs and there are variations to the capability framework, across different agencies.

The SELC framework is as follows:*

Shapes Strategic Thinking

- ~ Inspires a sense of purpose and direction
- ~ Focuses Strategically
- ~ Harnesses Information and Opportunities
- ~ Shows Judgement, Intelligence and Commonsense

Achieves Results

- ~ Builds Organisational Capability and Responsiveness
- ~ Marshals Professional Expertise
- ~ Steers and Implements Change and Deals with Uncertainty
- ~ Ensures Closure and Delivers on Intended Results

Communicates with Influence

- ~ Communicates Clearly
- ~ Listens, Understands and Adapts to Audience
- ~ Negotiates Persuasively

Cultivates Productive Working Relationships

- ~ Nurtures internal and external relationships
- ~ Facilitates Cooperation and partnerships
- ~ Values individual differences and diversity
- ~ Guides, mentors and develops people

Exemplifies personal drive and integrity

- ~ Demonstrates Public Service Professionalism and Probity
- ~ Engages with Risk and Shows Personal Courage
- ~ Commits to Action
- ~ Displays Resilience
- ~ Demonstrates Self Awareness and a Commitment to Personal Development

(*Source – Australian Public Service Commission 2006 – www.apsc.gov.au/selc/index.html)

At the state level, you will also encounter capability frameworks. For example, for NSW, each capability is made up of the following components:

Capability:

Communication

Description:

Listens, interprets and conveys information in a clear and accurate manner. Provides timely delivery of information and selects the most appropriate method of communication.

Elements

Utilises written communication effectively

Communicates verbally

Presents and facilitates

Influences and negotiates

Behavioural Criteria Levels

Generally, each capability has 6 levels (4 for Leadership and Management Capabilities), which describe levels of behaviour that are to be demonstrated at a particular level.

Example: Communicates Verbally

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Speaks clearly and concisely when explaining information, and actively listens to responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gains required skills and knowledge of own work to give and receive basic information • Uses a polite and considerate manner when dealing with others • Reviews own verbal communication efforts • Clearly conveys decisions affecting clients and team members and demonstrates empathy 	Confidently explains rules, procedures and operational policies to team members, individual clients, and small groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes onboard feedback and summarises comments to check for understanding • Accurately shares work-related information with team members to contribute to achieving work goals and seeks clarification where necessary • Firmly, but politely addresses people during difficult or stressful events • Uses questioning to uncover facts and understand other's point of view • Constructs and delivers logical chains of facts, opinions and arguments 	Confidently conveys ideas and information in a clear and interesting manner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively develops persuasion and bargaining tactics in a variety of situations to achieve an end • Modifies verbal delivery depending on the audience and the setting • Constructs and delivers persuasive, fact based arguments in a variety of forums, listens to counter arguments, and provides effective responses • Questions and listens in order to understand underlying motivations and construct effective arguments • Conveys difficult or sensitive information in a tactful, respectful yet firm manner 	Able to explain complex concepts in such a way as to be understood by the target audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilfully develops scripts and presentations to a range of audiences on specific projects and initiatives • Models good verbal communication techniques to the team • Builds appropriate rapport through verbal interaction • Provides clear instructions to team members and seeks honest feedback • Diffuses tense situations comfortably 	Uses diplomacy and tact to negotiate in difficult decisions and situations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to effectively discuss complex concepts with other expert stakeholders • Creates long lasting relationships built on effective communication and trust, with internal and external stakeholders and clients • Has a clear understanding about the appropriate stakeholders to communicate sensitive information to 	Constructs conclusive arguments in a dynamic and unplanned environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiates firmly and tactically in sensitive or difficult situations with senior internal and external stakeholders • Facilitates and encourages collaboration across different levels of the organisation and sector

(* Source: NSW Public Sector Capability Framework - <http://jobs.nsw.gov.au/Working-for-NSW-govt/NSW-Public-Sector-Capability-Framework.aspx#2>)

These capability frameworks are designed for selection, recruitment and managing performance.

I cover how to address these capability frameworks in Chapter 19 of this Manual.

Address ALL the selection criteria

You must address ALL the selection criteria! This might seem like stating the 'bleeding obvious', but a significant number of candidates fail to address one or more selection criteria. By failing to address all the selection criteria, including desirables, it will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the selection panel to assess your suitability against the criteria. The result will be that it is unlikely you will be selected for interview.

Remember, the **onus is on you** as a candidate to demonstrate your suitability against the selection criteria. It is not the responsibility of the panel members to second guess your suitability, or to refer to your other documents such as your résumé to check that your qualifications and experience meet their requirements.

They are asking what? (Unravelling selection criteria)

Understanding what evidence you need to provide against selection criteria is CRUCIAL, so it is essential to understand exactly what level of skill, ability or knowledge is required by the agency.

One of the largest complaints I receive from clients is feedback on how complex, convoluting and incomprehensible selection criteria are. While this is true on some occasions, most of the time it is just a case of understanding exactly what the agency requires before addressing the selection criteria.

Below is a list of common requirements when addressing selection criteria.

'Demonstrated'

You will need to provide tangible evidence and examples that demonstrate your skills, knowledge or ability.

Under no circumstances just state that you have the required skill or knowledge. You must provide concrete examples, which put your experience into context for panel members and focuses on your achievements and accomplishments.

'High level'

You will need to provide tangible evidence and examples to demonstrate that you have a high level of the particular knowledge or skill required.

'General knowledge'

You have a general, broad or basic knowledge of the area. Provide specific examples in which you utilised this general knowledge, or provide a very brief outline of your knowledge and understanding and in what context you obtained this knowledge.

'Ability / Potential / Capacity'

Although you might not already possess the actual skills or knowledge, you need to demonstrate your ability to be able to them.

- ~ Briefly outline your understanding of the skills or knowledge required and then provide concrete examples or evidence in which you have rapidly acquired new knowledge and skills in your existing or previous workplace.
- ~ Provide examples or evidence of transferable skills
- ~ If you already have relevant demonstrable experience or knowledge, then provide tangible evidence and examples that demonstrate your suitability under this criterion.

'Mandatory'

You must have this mandatory qualification, experience, admission, licence, professional membership etc. before applying for the position in question. Usually all that is required is a brief sentence stating that you meet the mandatory requirement.

For example:

(Mandatory) Possession of a degree in social work or the behavioural sciences from a recognised tertiary institution

Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)

The University of Queensland (Australia) - UQ

Graduated 2002

Included completion of a year long thesis, in which I achieved a distinction

'Proven record'

You will need to substantiate any claim with evidence of your record relating to experience, or skill.

'Demonstrated and or ability'

You will frequently run across questions, which require either demonstrated knowledge or skill, or alternatively if you don't have the demonstrated knowledge and skill that you have the ability to rapidly acquire them.

Examples include:

SC 1

Sound knowledge of, or the ability to rapidly acquire a sound knowledge of, legislation and Queensland Police Service policies and procedures applicable to the control, handling and security of exhibits and unclaimed property, and of associated police prosecution and court processes

SC1. Sound knowledge or ability to rapidly acquire sound knowledge of: -

- ~ Public Service Act 1996 and Relevant Determination;
- ~ Public Service Award
- ~ Award for Employees in the Intellectual Handicap Services
- ~ Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977
- ~ Public Finance Standards; and
- ~ State Purchasing Policy

If you find yourself in the second category, that is you have the ability to readily acquire the knowledge or skill in question, then before you decide to proceed with the application, keep in mind that the process is based on merit and your application will be assessed against other candidates, including internal candidates. If those candidates already have demonstrable knowledge or skills, they will have an advantage over you, which could in turn be detrimental to your application.

Addressing multiple requirements

Many selection criteria are made up of several parts, so you need to ensure that you understand each part of the question and address it with relevant evidence.

When addressing selection criteria, I find it useful to underline the key elements and write a list of the multiple requirements that need to be addressed. I then use this list to check if relevant evidence has been provided against all elements of the selection criteria.

Remember, it is important to understand exactly what all the various parts of the selection criteria are, as it can be detrimental to your overall application, if you don't address all parts with relevant evidence.

Examples:

Well-developed interpersonal skills, including ability to communicate effectively across a range of people, and situations and to work effectively as a member of a team in a human service environment

- ~ You need to demonstrate good interpersonal skills
- ~ You need to demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively to a diverse range of individuals
- ~ You need to demonstrate your ability to work effectively as a member of a team in a human service environment

Demonstrated interpersonal communication skills, including the ability to liaise, network and negotiate with a variety of staff, clients and representatives from other organisations and visitors, in a professional and client-focused manner to generate increased visitation and sales.

- ~ You need to demonstrate communication skills (including negotiation skills)
- ~ You need to demonstrate interpersonal skills (liaising, networking and communicating effectively with a diverse range of individuals)
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to provide a professional and client focussed service to organisations and visitors
- ~ You need to demonstrate how your communication / interpersonal skills in the points above resulted in increased visitation and sales

Still not clear what they require?

If you are still not clear, then **read the selection criteria in the context of the job description, duties and responsibilities.** It is not uncommon for panel members to create selection criteria that are not clear on the initial read, but once you read what the position entails it often becomes apparent what they are looking for.

Example:

Demonstrated excellence in the delivery of efficient and effective client services, including the ability to manage multiple tasks, research and define facts, display logic, manage conflict, solve problems, make decisions and communicate clearly

There are multiple requirements to this selection criteria including:

- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to deliver an efficient and effective client service
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to manage multiple tasks
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to research and define facts and display logic
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to make decisions
- ~ You need to demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly

The selection criterion in question was for an application for a Customer Service Officer and duties included *managing customers' service requests, complaints, enrolments, product information, including general information and professional advice through effective questioning, negotiation and conflict management to ensure customer satisfaction.*

While the selection criterion initially appears quite complex, in fact it simply mirrored the requirements of the position, so it would be a case of simply providing evidence of your ability to work in a similar, if not identical role, in which you provided a high level of customer service, dealt with complaints, researched issues, made decisions and communicated to a diverse range of customers.

Finally, if all else fails and you, or your friends, family and colleagues are unable to decipher the agency's requirements - then obtain clarification from the contact officer.

I cover in detail how to prepare and address selection criteria in Part 3, Chapter 12.

Chapter 4

What you need to know about your résumé

As previously noted, if **selection criteria need to be addressed, then the document addressing these becomes the primary document in the selection process.**

This means that your résumé effectively becomes a supporting document in the process.

To further emphasise what a secondary role this document usually plays in the process – many of my clients over the years have submitted inadequate résumés that screams under-par, lack of intelligence, lack of experience and yet have obtained an interview and in turn been selected for positions, due to the responses to selection criteria I have professionally prepared for them. In fact, unless:

1. The client's résumé in question is appalling
2. Budget is not an issue for a top flying executive / manager and I can improve upon his or her current document
3. The client is transitioning from one sector to another
4. The client is grossly underselling their skills and attributes
5. Competition is going to be fierce for the particular position
6. The selection criteria don't need to be directly addressed in a separate document
7. The client is applying for a role two or more classifications higher than their current role

Then I often discourage clients from spending their hard earned money on getting their résumé professionally completed. Instead I encourage them to concentrate on the key document in the process, which is the document addressing the selection criteria, since I know I can still get clients through to interview on résumés that are just average.

Does this mean that the résumé is a redundant document in the process?

In short **ABSOLUTELY NOT.**

While the résumé may play a secondary role in the selection process, it is still an important document. As with résumés within the private sector, an effective résumé can get the panel's attention and generate interest. This is particularly true if competition is fierce, with **popular positions receiving more than 1,600 candidates at a time.** A résumé can also become an important document when panel members meet to discuss various candidates and the list needs to be culled to the top few candidates for interview purposes. At this stage in the process, your résumé can sometimes play a VITAL role in the decision making process.

My advice is; **if time is short - focus your efforts entirely on the document addressing the selection criteria.** However, if you only need to submit an expression of interest; a cover letter and the selection criteria don't need to be directly addressed in a separate document. If you really want to outshine the competition and ensure you secure an interview, then invest your time or money into creating a 'knock out' résumé or curriculum vitae.

My top 10 Résumé Tips

Tip 1 - Say good riddance to the career objective

In the past, career objectives were the 'hot item' in résumés and were incorporated in almost every career document around town. This tradition is still evidenced in countless résumés I continue to receive with career objectives, along with the continuing use of career objectives within résumé templates that you can find online at job search sites such as Career One, My Career and Seek.

While a good career objective provides YOU with a fantastic focus, **it does absolutely nothing to sell you to a potential employer.** Why? The simple fact is that a career objective is usually bland, broad and uninspiring and the focus is on YOU, not the employer's needs. Take this career objective for example:

Objective

"To have a successful career within a strong and stable corporate organisation, where my skills and knowledge contribute to the company's overall performance, ensuring my own personal success and development. To be engaged in a new and challenging role that offers job satisfaction, whilst allowing me to advance and become an effective and valued team member"

When you read this, do you actually know what industry or sector this candidate is from, or more importantly, why is the focus of the statement on the need of the candidate, rather than the employer?

If you get nothing else in this entire section on writing resumes, make sure you understand the following:

Résumés are marketing documents and to market yourself effectively you need to focus on the agency's needs!

Quite frankly most employers don't give a toss about your career aspirations, unless they happen to marry up perfectly with their requirements. **The reality is that they are after a recruiting solution** and employers are not there to satisfy your wonton career ambitions. And let's face it everyone wants to work for a 'dynamic employer, with a great atmosphere, plenty of perks, challenges galore and a stack load of cash, after a few cold beers on a Friday arvo'. But your wants and the wants of almost every job seeker out there have nothing to do with what the employer requires.

So instead of inserting a career objective - put the space to better use, by inserting a strong profile that provides an overview of what VALUE you can provide any future employer.

Tip 2 - Use the first person narrative

Avoid using the third person narrative and use the first person narrative, omitting the 'I'. (However don't continuously omit the 'I' when addressing selection criteria in a separate document).

Before:

- ~ *I managed the office and workshop, including six staff comprising of four technicians and two office administrators.*
- ~ *I was instrumental in increasing sales by twenty percent*

After:

- ~ *Managed the office and workshop, including six staff comprising of four technicians and two office administrators.*
- ~ *Instrumental in increasing sales by twenty percent*

Tip 3 - Incorporate key words

Keywords are those words that signal to panel members that you have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to match the job requirements. By incorporating those words, most relevant to the position, when panel members scan your résumé, they will make an appropriate connection between your keywords and requirements of the position, which in turn will identify you as an appropriate candidate.

Key words are also imperative in relation to **computerised job searches**. If you are going online and using your résumé in the private sector, make sure you incorporate key words into your résumé, so databases and other electronic selection methods will identify you as a relevant candidate.

The most common types of keywords that signal to employers that you have the relevant background are:

- ~ Job titles
- ~ Legislation / policy connected with the role
- ~ Skills related to the position
- ~ Relevant government "buzz" words e.g. whole-of-government,

For example:

Job Description:

The Operations Manager is accountable to the Director of Engineering and Environmental Services for the progression of the asset management strategies of the Mater Health services. Maintenance of infrastructure including maintenance planning, condition assessment, asset register, statutory compliance, budgets are key components.

Key words that should be incorporated into the résumé

- ~ Operations manager
- ~ Asset management
- ~ Strategy
- ~ Maintenance
- ~ Infrastructure
- ~ Planning
- ~ Condition assessment
- ~ Asset register

- ~ Statutory compliance
- ~ Budgets

Tip 4 - Choose the best presentation format

There are quite a few options available when choosing a résumé format, the most common being the chronological, functional and combination.

Chronological Résumé

This format presents your employment history in reverse chronological order, with the most recent position first, followed by previous positions. This format is the most common one utilised and is usually preferred by employers, including selection panels.

The advantage of this formatting is it enables you to show steady progression in your career.

The disadvantages of this formatting is it highlights unstable careers, job hopping, employment gaps and over and under qualified candidates. Hence its popularity with recruiters and employers.

Functional Résumé

A functional résumé categorises experience under skill-based sections in order to highlight your relevant skills.

Brief example:

Organisation / Time Management

- ~ Complimented by clients and management alike for ability to meet the challenges of a busy and complex work environment.
- ~ Juggled multi-faceted tasks, simultaneously responding to client enquiries, managing an office environment and meeting statutory requirements and deadlines.

Customer Relations / Communications

- ~ Developed outstanding client relationships, through a commitment to client service and ensuring ongoing improvement in service delivery.
- ~ High level skills in negotiating agreements, resulting in the communication of information relevant to an area in an effective and timely manner.

Problem Solving

- ~ Re-organised inefficient work practices relating to timesheets and billing.
- ~ Kept abreast with new and emerging trends to increase efficiencies, along with making decisions that reflected a balance between resource requirements and customer needs.

The advantage of a functional résumé is that all the disadvantages of the chronological résumé are removed. It disguises unstable careers, job hopping, employment gaps and over and under qualified candidates. Hence its unpopularity with recruiters and employers.

This is an obvious disadvantage, plus, when panel members use your résumé as a chronological guide to your work history when reading through your selection criteria, it becomes impossible for them to use your résumé for this purpose.

My recommendation is to **only use this format if you are a really chronic job hopper.**

Combination Résumé

A combination résumé, as its name suggests, is a combination of the chronological and functional résumé. Usually the opening page is in the functional format, followed by your chronological work history.

The obvious advantage of this formatting is that it highlights your core skills in the opening page, followed by the chronological work history that agencies, recruitment consultants and HR personnel favour.

When choosing a format, bear in mind that many agencies specifically request certain information that must be included in a résumé. This usually requires candidates to submit a chronological work history. If you fall into the chronic job hopper, or returning to work mum category, then the combination résumé format is the perfect solution for you.

Tip 5 - Develop a dazzling profile

Instead of inserting a career objective, use this space to incorporate a dazzling profile, or qualifications summary. Within the profile, highlight how you meet the needs of the agency. Information that you should consider including are:

- ~ Your core competencies relating to the position
- ~ Number of years experience in the sector
- ~ Soft skills relevant to the role
- ~ Highlights of your achievements and accomplishments
- ~ Management style
- ~ Any affiliations and professional organisations
- ~ Relevant language skills

Note the emphasis is on competencies that are relevant to the position. This is really important, as the most effective profiles are the ones that provide a summary of all the skills and attributes that you possess that meets the needs of the employer.

Tip 6 – Avoid long lists of soft skills

When I talk about soft skills, I am talking about your **personal skills**, such as communication and interpersonal skills, team work, attention to detail, analytical skills and so on.

While these are attributes that employers are looking for, they get so overused by job seekers, that they don't actually mean anything and there is usually nothing else in the document to back up your claim to your various soft skills.

The reality is, if you asked ten people what their most valuable personal skills were, I bet you would find that nine out of ten, would state that they have good communication and interpersonal skills and they are reliable and honest. (Does this sound like YOU?). So, when it comes to a recruiting agent, or panel member viewing such a claim in your document, (and **this claim is made by pretty much everyone else submitting an application**), those long lists of soft skills don't actually mean much and are not taken at face value, even if they are true.

That is not to say soft skills are not important – they are. What I am saying is, if you use them in your résumé make sure you back up the claim by providing evidence of the relevant soft skill.

Example:

***Team player** that contributed to bringing about significant changes to the work area, by interacting effectively with management and other client service officers in regards to new policies and client service procedures.*

***Reliable employer**, evidenced by exceptional record of attendance -100%*

Tip 7 - Focus on achievements, not long lists of duties and responsibilities

One of the biggest mistakes candidates make is providing long lists of duties and responsibilities without providing any tangible evidence of achievements. I address the need to emphasise achievements and contributions when addressing selection criteria comprehensively in Chapter 10 and again in Chapter 12. It is equally important to do so when compiling your résumé.

Achievements should always be included and should be the major factor highlighted in your résumé.

While a brief list of your responsibilities should be included, don't include everything; otherwise you risk having your résumé sound like a boring list of duties, without providing any tangible evidence of the VALUE you can provide to an employer.

Finally, if you have had several roles that involve exactly the same duties, don't reiterate the same duties. Instead, distinguish each role, by emphasising different elements and focus on the contributions you made to each and every employer.

Tip 8 – Forget the advice on very short résumés

If you undertake a search on how to prepare a résumé, so often you end up on career sites that make a strong suggestion as to the length of your resume. **Please IGNORE those sites that advise you to limit your résumé to one or two pages**, as usually these are American sites where the recruiting practices are different from Australia.

Instead, focus on a résumé that truly reflects your skills and experience and even if this takes five pages, so be it (unless a page limit is imposed by the agency). HOWEVER, make sure you don't waffle, and don't include information that is not required, repetitive, or irrelevant.

Note: The average length of résumés I professionally prepare for clients is usually anything between three and four pages. This length is usually more than adequate, even at the very senior level, and I can include all the relevant details required by selection panel members. So, if your résumé runs into six or more pages, it is time to refine your current document.

Ways to prune:

- ~ Make sure you address the needs of your audience, by asking yourself if your information is relevant to the position, and if it is something the selection panel would be interested in. For example, a long list of hobbies is probably irrelevant, unless they relate to the position. When addressing the needs of your audience, ask yourself: Is this information critical, and whether if it was left out, will this jeopardize your application?

- ~ Delete concepts that repeat themselves. For example, don't repeat the same duties over and over again for each employer you worked for.
- ~ It is not necessary to include all your work history, going back to the 'year dot'. Not only will this age you unnecessarily, but much of your older work history, will not add value. Remember, your résumé isn't your biography and employers are more interested in your more recent work history.

Tip 9 – What not to include

While discriminatory practices are forbidden in the public sector and there is a raft of legislation protecting candidates, I still don't include personal information that could unnecessarily place my client in a position of being 'pigeon holed' by selection panel members, or indirectly discriminated against. **So please leave the following details out of your résumé:**

- ~ Date of birth (unless applying for a traineeship within government, in which certain age groups are targeted, e.g. under 21, or over 45 years of age)
- ~ Martial status and number of children
- ~ Photographs, no matter how photogenic you are
- ~ Personal data, such as health status, height and weight
- ~ Photocopied written references attached at the end of your résumé. Save these for the interview, unless specifically requested in the application form.

Tip 10 – Little but vital bits in relation to your résumé

Contact Details

- ~ Don't include your work email address, unless applying for an internal position. Instead use your home email address and ensure this is a nice conservative one, i.e. leave the "starstud1@primus.com.au", or "bigkaren@hotmail.com" for family and friends!
- ~ Only insert your work telephone number, if your job search is not confidential, you have a private voice-mail system that cannot be accessed by others and your calls won't be screened by a receptionist before they get to you.

Education

Don't include your secondary schooling education, unless you are a recent school leaver, or the application requires candidates with at least Year 12 qualifications and you don't have tertiary or TAFE qualifications.

The difference between a curriculum vitae and résumé

Some applications request the submission of a curriculum vitae rather than a résumé. The literal Latin translation of curriculum vitae, means 'the course of one's life', and is used by candidates within the areas of science, education/academia or medical communities. CV's within these professions, incorporate detailed information relating to professional activities, including journal articles, research, scholarships and publications.

However in Australia the term CV is used interchangeably with résumé and you will be requested to forward a CV, rather than a résumé. If this is the case, simply change the heading of your current résumé, or alternatively, do what I do, and that is not provide the document with a title. After all, it is pretty obvious to the reader, what the document is about, even without a title.

Résumés specifically crafted for the Public Sector

If you are limiting your applications to specific positions within the public service sector, then you should include the following information in your résumé:

1. Your résumé should address the requirements of the position, which are easily obtainable from the application pack, outlining duties and responsibilities, as well as required skills and knowledge (both essential and desirable) contained in the selection criteria.
2. Utilise keywords frequently used within the public sector in your document. This exercise is not for online databases, as each application will be read and assessed by two or three panel members, or a government recruitment agency, but to ensure that your skills and experience match the Departments/Councils job requirements. For example key words for a policy maker would include whole-of-government approaches, public framework, APS Values, public administration and accountability.
3. Ensure you include any statutory frameworks you have worked within.

For example:

Implemented policy, legislation and regulations relating to the Taxpayer's Charter, the Compliance Model, Income Tax Acts, GST Acts, Excise Act (Energy Grants Act/Fuel Tax Credit Acts), successfully translating legislation to inform decisions and support organisational objectives.

4. Utilise selection criteria techniques such as CAR (Circumstances, Actions, Results), or STAR (Situation, Task, Actions, Results) within the résumé. As with private sector documents - using the model CAR, is a good way to highlight your accomplishments and achievements. (These techniques are outlined in Chapter 12)
5. If you are already from the public sector:
 - a. Outline any relevant training received in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Anti-Discrimination, Occupational Health & Safety (OH & S), Workplace Diversity, APS Values, Codes of Conduct and Ethical Standards.
 - b. Outline any involvement on previous job selection panels, or membership of committees including those relating to EEO and OH & S.
 - c. List your public service number and security clearance status if applicable.
6. If you are at the senior or professional level, integrate your understanding of the agency's objectives and strategies within the résumé. For example, the Department of Education and Arts Resources, Queensland, has key strategy papers, such as Destination 2010. I ensure that I incorporate this framework into the template résumé, by outlining how my client has worked towards implementing Destination 2010.

For example:

Spearheaded development of an integrated framework for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that significantly improved approaches towards literacy, in line with the New Basics and Destination 2010.

At senior management/executive level, the integration of these objectives and strategies becomes increasingly important, as you will either be shaping or implementing these strategies.

7. I have previously stated that personal details within a résumé should be excluded, but ignore this rule, if these personal attributes will enhance your application. For example, if you are an Indigenous Australian, it would be beneficial to include this personal detail, if the agency is running an Aboriginal employment plan.

For example:

Aboriginal person from the Murri Community – the Jagera Tribe

In addition, where entry level training positions target disadvantaged groups, include all your personal details that address their selection priorities, in particular age, ethnic background, right through to highlighting 'rather than disguising' periods of unemployment.

8. Include citizenship status if it is not clear from your experience or education that you were born in Australia and where Australian Citizenship is an eligibility requirement. (If selected for the position you will need proof of your citizenship or residency status, prior to appointment).

If you need to develop your résumé from scratch, then write a career profile, before writing this document. You will find an outline of a career profile in Chapter 10.

Résumé transformation

RÉSUMÉ

Private & Confidential

Anne McMillan

29 Boundary Street
Basin Pocket, QLD 4305
H: (07) 3202 4578
M: 0432 089 609
E: annemcmillan23@hotmail.com

An Introduction

Customer Service: Child Care: Customer Relations

Calm, highly articulate and motivated individual, liberated from the demands of family and poised to enter the next round of professional and life opportunities. Excels in communications – listening to the customer, resolving problems and recommending a course of action. Expertly restore order from chaos, manage multiple tasks simultaneously and rise to the challenge of new experiences and deadlines. Never shirking from less-than-glamorous tasks, have demonstrated capacity to 'pitch in' to ensure a task is completed on time, to high professional standards. Cited by employers and clients alike, for good-natured, cooperative outlook, willingness to work hard and team contributions.

Strengths include:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ~ Diplomatic & Expeditious Problem Solving | ~ Retail Sales |
| ~ Customer Relationship Management | ~ Time Management |
| ~ Telephone Communications | ~ Behaviour Management |
| ~ Quality Control | ~ Provision of Quality Child Day Care |
| ~ Workplace Health & Safety | ~ Continuous Improvement |

Communication Skills: Negotiation, Conflict Resolution, Advising, Briefing, Instructing, Multi-directional Communication, Internal and External Liaison

Computer Competencies: MS Office – MS Word, Email and Internet

Licences/Certifications: Current "C" Drivers Licence / Own reliable transport
Blue Card Registration No: 208889/2 Senior First Aid Certificate/CPR

Qualifications

Certificate III in Centre Based Care 2000 – North Point Institute of TAFE

Professional Development:

Fire and Safety Training – North East & District Fire Equipment Services

Health Promotion in Early Childhood – West Moreton Public Health Unit

Quality Assurance Training – Kooran Family Day Care

Business Matters – Kooran Family Day Care

Professionalism in Family Day Care – Kooran Family Day Care

Work Summary

Retail Assistant
Millers Fashion Club

10th April 2007 - Present

Care Provider
Kooran Family Day Care

1997 – April 2007

Self Employed
Stained Glass Windows

1984 - 1997

Experience Chronicle

Retail Assistant (10th April 2007 – Present)
Milton Fashion Club

Successfully secured a small part time traineeship in retail and currently rapidly learning the fundamentals relating to retail and sales. Gaining exposure to the following:

- Retail administration – including rapid progression in regards to the reconciliation of till and responsibility for opening and closing of store
- Credit/ eftpos / retail office skills
- Workplace relations and customer service
- Selling techniques
- Merchandising
- Security and loss prevention
- Pricing and ticketing

Have received positive feedback, through ability to individualise each communication/recognising clients, and remembering pertinent facts from previous communications.

Care Provider (1997 – April 2007)
Kooran Family Day Care

Provided outstanding child care services for a diverse range of clients. Complimented for ability to nurture and provide appropriate care for both babies and toddlers.

- Successfully implemented learning and play programs for a diverse range of age groups
- Implemented behaviour management strategies to meet the needs of parents and children
- Assessment of daily activities, including observation of play and interaction
- Extensive contact with parents, including providing support, advice and feedback on daily activities
- Relationship building and involvement with the activities of the Ipswich Family Day Care
- General administration, including compliance with record keeping standards
- Ensured strict adherence to operating guideline relating to food handling, nutrition, nappy changing and toileting, child safety, programmed activities and excursions.

Received award for **Excellence in Family Day Care – 2006** for outstanding care and professionalism.

“Without Anne’s outstanding reliability, support and care of my young son, I simply would not have been able to successfully grow my online business by over 400% over a 2 year period. Her patience, communication skills and professionalism, will be sorely missed, but I understand that it is time to spread her wings and learn new skills. I believe that Anne will be a fantastic employee and a real asset, to any organisation. I have absolutely no hesitation in recommending her for any new role, which will utilise her quiet intelligence, integrity and superior interpersonal skills” - Leigh Jesse Parent and Author/Online Entrepreneur – Telephone (07) 3202 7097

Experience Chronicle

Self Employed

Stained Glass Windows

Successfully juggled family life, with a part time business creating stained glass windows for a diverse range of clients. Built reputation for outstanding quality work and ability to deliver on time.

Volunteer Experience

Customer Service Officer (March 2007 – Present)

Moore's Art Gallery

Currently a volunteer at the Ipswich Art Gallery, in order to widen skills within a workplace. Quickly integrated into a more structured workplace, providing support to team members, ensuring adherence to workplace procedures, providing security, answering enquiries from the public and taking a lead in implementing and guiding children's activities within the gallery.

Referees

Sarah McCarroll

Senior Co-ordinator
Kooran Family Day Care
T: (07) 3202 6758

Sarah can comment on my reliability and outstanding performance, whilst employed as a Care Provider at Kooran Family Day Care.

Rosemary Ward

Business Analyst
Commonwealth Bank
T: (07) 3288 0769

A client through Kooran Family Day Care, Rosemary can confirm my high levels of integrity, interpersonal skills and ability to exceed expectations and provide a high level of service.

Overview

Client Service Management: Supervision: Account Management

Highly successful recruitment consultant, refocusing drive and optimism into obtaining employment in the pharmaceutical sector. Distinguished from others for outstanding ability to think broadly, show judgement and common sense and provide solutions to complex issues, including evaluating information quickly, critically and accurately and working with ambiguity. A 'can do' attitude, with an outstanding ability in providing an exceptional level of client service, combined with a demonstrable ability to manage multiple tasks and supervise and train a diverse range of staff members.

Key credentials:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ~ Account Management | ~ Supervision | ~ Leadership |
| ~ Critical Problem Solving | ~ Budget Management | ~ Training & Mentoring |
| ~ Client Service Management | ~ Clients Needs Analysis | ~ Recruitment |
| ~ Office Management | ~ Solutions Selling | ~ Process Improvements |
| ~ Business Development | ~ Distribution Coordination | ~ Quality Control |
| ~ Analysis & Research | ~ Strategic Planning | ~ Cold-calling |
| ~ Workflow Management | ~ Analysis / Research | ~ Policy/Procedures Development |

High Level Communication Skills: Business Communications: Negotiation, Conflict Resolution, Advising, Briefing, Instructing, Multi-directional Communication, Internal and External Liaison

Computer Competencies: Microsoft Office, (MS Word, MS Excel), Internet, Email, FastTrack (Recruitment Database, Master User)

Licences: Drivers Licence – Full, Class 1

Career Summary

Consultant – Industrial, Temporary

Corporate Services Limited

(2003 – Present)

Area Supervisor

Letterbox Channel

(1999 – 2003)

Joint Proprietor /Office Manager

Total Trim Canvas & Upholstery

(1997 – 1999)

Secretary to Sales Manager

Hanimex (NZ) Ltd

(1985 – 1987)

Sole Charge Office Manager

FC Mathews & Sons Limited

(1980 – 1985)

Career History

Consultant – Industrial Temporary (2003 - Present) Corporate Services Limited

Initially employed to process candidate wages, was rapidly promoted to the role of Consultant – Industrial Temporary. In this highly competitive and cut throat industry, successfully managed a range of tasks, including sole responsibility for all aspects of the recruitment of temporary candidates, account management and business development.

Contributions & Achievements:

- ~ Instrumental in **growing temp hours by 150% to 300%** consistently exceeding consultant quotas by 150% or more.
- ~ **Architect of new benchmark assessment process within the industry**, which significantly improved candidate quality and significantly reduced the pool of unsuitable candidates.
- ~ Drove business development with key clients, including successfully securing preferred supplier agreements.
- ~ Capitalised on combination of personalised service, networking, cold calling, presentations, solutions sales and relationship management to **orchestrate the doubling of sales volumes for 3 consecutive years**.
- ~ **Top performing consultant for the whole of Australia** (consistently in 1st position for New South Wales, or 2nd overall for the whole of New Zealand).
- ~ Implemented new registration processes, which effectively streamlined the process and significantly shortened registration time periods.
- ~ Successfully secured competitor preferred supplier agreements, through effective relationship building and service delivery.
- ~ Sub-contracted printing, resulting in cost savings and more efficient work practices within the office.
- ~ Successfully placed 90% of temps in co-vendor arrangement with Kelly Services in regards to a preferred supplier agreement with a major stakeholder.
- ~ Nurtured client relationships and secured client loyalty, through the ability to deliver quality candidates and provide recruiting solutions to meet peak or seasonal client needs.
- ~ Reactivated old accounts, through warm sales calls and addressing client concerns on prior performance of Manpower Services Limited.
- ~ First point of contact for “troubleshooting”.
- ~ Successfully managed relationships with candidates, from initial contact through to managing and maintaining a temp labour pool of candidates.
- ~ Preferred consultant within the branch, with clients requesting direct dealings, due to ability to deliver results.
- ~ Secured temporary to permanent placements, improving KPI's for branch in relation to permanent candidates
- ~ Trained all new consultants and other staff members in the branch, simultaneously developing and implementing training in other branches on specific software, Fast Track.

Career History

Area Supervisor (1999 – 2003) Letterbox Channel

Initially employed in a casual role, was quickly promoted to a permanent role, and followed by rapid progression to the role of Area Supervisor. As Area Supervisor, managed the 2nd largest distribution area network in Auckland, including managing the entire SUN Network during manager's absence.

Contributions / Achievements:

- ~ Instrumental in training new staff members, including successfully training 6 new area supervisors
- ~ Managed and supervised 160 delivery staff and as Acting Manager, led 10 Area Supervisors
- ~ Recruited new delivery staff, managing the entire process including interviews and contracts
- ~ Coordinated the entire delivery of circulars throughout Auckland, consistently meeting performance and delivery guidelines
- ~ Significantly improved the audit system, through the development and implementation of new procedures.

Joint Proprietor / Business Owner (1997 – 1999) Total Trim Canvas & Upholstery

Collaboratively built from inception a profitable business, providing services relating to upholstery and refurbishment of luxury boats. Managed all aspects of the administration and operational side of the business.

- ~ All aspect of financial management, including reviewing and analysing financial statements, budgets, cash flows, operational data, taxation and statutory returns
- ~ Systems and procedures assessment, development and implementation
- ~ Office management covering:
 - o Invoicing/purchasing/accounts payable/receivable/banking/reconciliations
 - o Maintenance of records / data entry

PRIOR EMPLOYMENT:

Hanimex (NZ) Limited – Importing & Costings Clerk / Secretary to Sales Manager

Provided top level secretarial support and juggled multifaceted administrative tasks, including accurate costings and completion of weekly consignments, letters of credit, liaison with Customs Agents and general administration.

FC Mathews & Sons Limited – Sole Charge Office Manager

Efficiently carried out a range of tasks, from general bookkeeping, wages, reception, bank reconciliations, through to ensuring a superior level of customer service.

Referees

Available upon request

Mary O'Brien

1230 Fordham Road, Bronx. NW 10467
718-676-9988 (H): 646-677-2233 (M): mob303@hotmail.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

Patient: Courteous: Responsive: Friendly: Professional

Top performing customer service representative with a talent for building and retaining client loyalty and resolving a diverse range of problems. Acknowledged for the capacity to **exceed sales** and **service quotas**, combined with the ability to exploit office technology to manage workflow and increase efficiencies.

- ✓ Demonstrated ability to **share learning/training experience with others**, setting high standards for self and actively taking responsibility for own development and skills.
- ✓ Excel in **influential communications** – listening to the customer, keeping people up to date and informed, communicating clearly, respectfully and appropriately and calming even the most disgruntled customer.
- ✓ Acknowledged for the **ability to explore alternatives** and use judgement and common sense when assessing a range of solutions to solving problems.
- ✓ Ability to **monitor workflows**, ensuring that systems and technology which contribute to the organisation's efficiency are effectively utilised.

Value Provided:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| ~ Sales | ~ Cross Selling | ~ Workflow Management |
| ~ Problem Solving | ~ Staff Training | ~ Staff Supervision |
| ~ Multi-level Communications | ~ Relationship Building | ~ Quality Control |
| ~ Conflict Resolution | ~ Customer Relationships | ~ Record Management |

Technology

Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, FrontPage, Publisher, PowerPoint, Outlook)

Education & Training

Verizon Product Suite: Cross-Selling Strategies (Verizon): *Closing the Sale* (Venus Sportsware)
Telemonitoring Procedures (Venus Sportsware): Brandeis High School – New York

Professional Experience

Verizon, New York (1999 – Present)
Customer Service Representative

Busy and fast-paced business centre, fielding enquiries from business customers and cross-selling a range of services, combined with strict documentation and workflow control.

Contributions:

- ~ Surpass daily call quotas by 10 – 20% every day
- ~ Boast a 40% rate on cross-selling on additional services from national and international service plans, call waiting/call forward, and phone/internet packages
- ~ Acknowledged as *Employer of the Month* for outstanding ability to service over 60 customers daily, whilst call centre experienced chronic staff shortages
- ~ Instrumental in successfully resolving complaint and retaining key customer account worth in excess of \$1 million. Received unsolicited letter of thanks from business client for professionalism
- ~ Exceptional track record of attendance (100%)
- ~ Consistently exceed supervisor's expectations on random audits

Professional Experience

Venus Sportswear (1995 – 1999)
Customer Service Representative

Outstanding record of cross-selling and providing superior customer service, consistently building a strong and loyal customer base.

Contributions:

- ~ Surpassed productivity level of all other customer service representatives and recognised by employer as *Top Seller in 1998*
- ~ Successfully trained new customer service representatives (15 in total), using extensive professional knowledge and experience to guide, coach and mentor others
- ~ Spearheaded transfer of product information from hardcopy to intranet, significantly increasing efficiencies and reducing average call length by customer service representatives by 45 seconds
- ~ Invited to act in the role of supervisor, whilst supervisor on maternity leave. Successfully led the team, monitored staff performance and empowered customer service representatives to solve problems whilst providing full support and assistance
- ~ Piloted successful employee recognition programme, with incentive resulting in significant increase in sales over a 3-month period. Employee recognition programme still being used today

References

Available upon Request

Operations Finance Manager: Vice President: Domestic and Global Markets

18+ years experience in pioneering operations and improving processes, providing strategic direction and leadership

Commercially focused and astute financial services operations professional, with a demonstrable capacity to pioneer new products, significantly grow business and proactively upgrade services and product offerings. Robust attitude towards driving change to contain cost and facilitate improved staff performance and infrastructure, combined with a strong mix of both domestic and global experience. Acknowledged for the capacity to establish and retain key relationships with multinational clients, with outstanding expertise in operations and compliance.

Key Credentials include:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| ~ Client Service Management | ~ Domestic & Global Custody | ~ Strategic |
| ~ Business Development | ~ Securities Lending | ~ Assessment/Planning |
| ~ Risk Management | ~ Broker Dealer Services | ~ Emerging Technologies |
| ~ Business Planning | ~ Fund Services | ~ Project Management |
| ~ Workflow Management | ~ Compliance Services | ~ Change Management |
| ~ Research | ~ Trust Operations | ~ Human Resource |
| ~ Market Intelligence | ~ Commercial Negotiations | ~ Management |
| ~ Cost Containment | | ~ Operations Management |

Technology: MS Office; SWIFT; DTC

Education: Bachelor of Arts (Economics/Political Science) - Knox College, Galesburg, IL

Professional Experience

Vice President and Manager – Trust Operations (1997 - 2006)

Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ Ltd – New York

Strategically led bank's U.S domestic custody business, managing teams of up to 55 employees and 400 multinational accounts

Multifaceted role, which involved strategic direction, business development, workflow management, business processes, trust operations (compliance, securities, broker dealer services) and responding to client feedback. Scrutinised existing business processes, key client accounts and outdated trust operations, devising, recommending and implementing key changes to optimise performance, upgrade service and product offerings and stemmed flow of client defections to opposition.

- ~ Catalyst for significant change to contain costs and improve unwieldy and ineffectual team performance. Identified waste, duplication and inefficiencies and re-focussed and significantly trimmed existing team, simultaneously upgrading team skills and empowering staff. **Results:**
 - o Delivered annual savings of **\$1.4m**
 - o Significantly improved productivity and efficiency in operations processing
- ~ Instrumental in retaining and significantly growing the business from the bank's most prestigious and profitable clients, including leading initiatives resulting in the reversal of client defections, such as the award of new business for the Asian market and successful retention of business relating to Japanese securities. **Result:** Achieved new business totalling **US\$22B**

Professional Experience

Vice President and Manager – Trust Operations (1997 - 2006) Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ Ltd – New York

Continued -

- ~ Spearheaded complex large scale project to reduce a 10 year vault backlog of reconciliations of paid bonds and related cash accounts. Influenced executive to move the project forward as a top priority, personally shaping and managing all aspects of this potentially risky endeavour. **Results:**
 - o Successfully developed enhanced reporting procedures to track progress
 - o Effective clearance of vault backlog from 3 million bonds to 30,000
- ~ Architect of new internet module for trade initiation and client reporting, transforming an obsolete system into a state of the art browser based system. **Results:**
 - o Successful system conversion, eliminating disrupted communications between customers and major clearing houses and achieved significant reduction of risk associated with settlement of net cash position of the bank
 - o Retention of major client business

Vice President, Global Investor Services (1988 - 1996) Republic Bank – New York

Invited to lead all aspects of the business development of the launch of a global securities lending product in London and the merger of corporate trust operations

- ~ Planned and led all aspects of this pioneering global launch, strategically establishing functional area direction, business plans, determining and negotiating resource requirements, managing change strategies, and systemically tracking progress.

Complex role encompassed the design of new product profile, international review and approval, obtaining regulatory approval, effective management of substantial risk, compliance over 30 countries, management of system installation, policy and procedures, vendor selection and negotiation and obtaining security. **Results:**

- o Successful launch of global securities lending product with product revenue exceeding US \$4m per annum
 - o Delivered substantial growth in loans under management growing from less than US\$1B to over US\$20B
- ~ Led merger of corporate trust operations, personally developing and implementing a project plan, identifying operating system, allocating resources and directing the notification of issuers, investors, paying agents and depositories. **Result:**
 - o Eliminated duplication with merged operations reducing operating expenses by 20%

References

Available upon request

Chapter 5

What you need to know about your Cover Letter / Application Cover Sheet

A good cover letter compliments your selection criteria and résumé, so while not a critical component to the process, it will enhance your application.

Not all applications require a cover letter, with many agencies only requiring completion of an accompanying application cover sheet. If a cover letter is **not specifically requested, then it is not mandatory to submit one**. In fact many selection panel members disregard any cover letters that are submitted by candidates.

However, as a rule of thumb – unless an agency specifically states that a cover letter should NOT be submitted, I write an accompanying letter which I use as the opening to the document addressing the selection criteria. While this might be disregarded during the assessment process, many panel members still read cover letters and a good one, is the final piece in your job selling arsenal that speaks volumes about your professionalism, style and understanding of the role in question.

If a cover letter is a requirement, then use it to compliment your selection criteria and résumé. A good cover letter is perfect for getting the panel's attention when competition is formidable. It is also a great way to describe what you can offer by way of a recruiting solution as well as providing a good insight into you as a person. After all, they will be hiring a human being, not a machine.

Conversely, a poor cover letter that simply provides a perfunctory statement of the position number and invitation to review your résumé and selection criteria responses, suggests laziness and a candidate simply going through the motions of looking for work, rather than providing an outstanding first impression for selection panel members. While it might not be detrimental to gaining an interview, if you can 'woo' selection panel members into believing you are the consummate professional through-out the application - then I believe the additional effort is worth it.

However, like the résumé, if time is short, focus your efforts entirely on the document addressing the selection criteria.

If you are required to address selection criteria, or assessment criteria, within a 2 page cover letter, I outline this technique in Chapter 18.

If a one page cover letter is requested, **at bare minimum you must include the following information:**

Your contact details

- ~ Name
- ~ Street address
- ~ City, state, postal code
- ~ Residential telephone number
- ~ Business telephone number (include this if your job search is not confidential or your telephone line and voicemail won't be accessed by others)
- ~ Mobile number
- ~ Email address (your personal email address, unless your job search is not confidential or you are currently acting in the role)

Submission details

- ~ Details of Agency Contact Person (Recruitment Support Officer) Provided in Submission Details (if provided)
- ~ Name of Agency / Organisation
- ~ Street address
- ~ City, state, postal code (if provided)
- ~ Agency submission email Address (if sent via email)
- ~ Agency submission fax Number (if sent via facsimile)

Job details

- ~ Job Title
- ~ Job Reference Number / Vacancy Reference Number
- ~ Sub Unit
- ~ Classification
- ~ Closing Date

Submission note

- ~ Provide a short note, stating submission of your application.

My top 4 tips on cover letters that sizzle

If you have the time, I suggest you spend some time developing a sizzling cover letter.

Tip 1 – Get rid of all boring opening sentences

Almost every well meaning teacher within the classroom taught students to open their cover letter with phrases such as:

"Please find attached my application for Customer Service Officer, advertised in the Courier Mail on the 12th February 2007"

Does this sound familiar?

While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this approach, you do risk sending your reader to sleep before they even start reading your application, so replace this opening with something that will totally captivate the audience.

Example:

"With over 10 years experience in Customer Service related roles, I have the demonstrable ability to provide an outstanding, client centred service that meets the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders."

Tip 2 – Mention your top three or four achievements

The middle section of your cover letter should strengthen and provide supporting information for the role. Do not simply re-state information in your résumé and selection criteria. Use this as an opportunity to corroborate and support your application. Ways of doing so include providing relevant outline of positions and providing three or four of your top achievements. When doing this, be specific and use numbers whenever possible. It means more. It is relevant. It is definable. For example - "Increased productivity by 14%". This is a solid measurable difference that the audience can relate to.

Tip 3 – Keep it to one page

A **cover letter should be no longer than 1 page**, unless you are required to answer the selection criteria in it. If the later, then unless the agency provides you with the appropriate length (e.g. no more than 3 pages), generally you should limit your cover letter to no more than 2 pages. (If you need to address the selection criteria separately, then you should address these in a separate document, not the cover letter)

In Chapter 18 I cover how to answer selection criteria within a cover letter

Tip 4 – Close with a confident finish

Forget the weak statements, such as 'I hope my application will be viewed favourably'. Instead conclude with a finish that suggests that you are confident you will be selected by the interview panel.

But make sure your closing tone is confident, not pushy, as you don't want to sound conceited or arrogant.

Example:

"I look forward to meeting with the selection panel to discuss this application further".

Cover letter transformation

Sirirat Arunruea (Rose)

68 Nellie Street
East Ipswich, QLD 4035
M: 0404 563 978
E: siriratrose@iprimus.com.au

4th July 2007

Glenda Brown Recruitment
E: Glenda@glendabrown.com

RE: Advertising Account Coordinator

Through out my professional career I have been instrumental in providing support in relation to Accounts Management and supporting processes relating to operational management and meeting tight deadlines. Regardless of the sector, I have achieved results and contributed to a high performance culture, closely aligned to organisational goals and strategies.

From your description of the role in the advertisement, I believe my background may be the perfect fit for your opening. The enclosed résumé will help you make that decision. From it you will note extensive work and success within the advertising sector, and I'm currently looking for an opportunity to enter the next round of professional and life opportunities. Selected achievements and experience relevant to this role include:

- ~ As Account Supervisor, for the global advertising agency Three Trees, I provided support for various stakeholder requirements, including prioritising work and undertaking detailed research and analysis in regards to marketing and advertising. This also included taking client briefs, gathering materials, as well as trafficking jobs to meet deadlines. I was also very proactive during events and gained an intimate understanding of press and print.
- ~ As Account Director for Global Worldwide, I provided key input in this global advertising organisation, including supporting local clients such as Cerebos Thailand and All Season Shopping Complex, through to multi-nationals, such as New Zealand Milk, Kraft, SC Johnson and nestle Thailand. In this fiercely competitive environment I successfully juggled a portfolio of clients, including the management of advertising campaigns, such as the highly successful SC Johnson Campaign, which was adopted worldwide.

Finally I would describe myself as ethical, proactive and determined, with the ability to take personal responsibility for getting things done and for achieving success. Highly organised, with great attention to detail, I am able to multi-task to meet a range of deadlines.

I look forward to meeting up with you to discuss this position further.

Yours faithfully

Sirirat Arunruea (Rose)

Maria Ciancio

265 Oxley Avenue
Margate, QLD 4306
(07) 5467 9856 (H)
0431 978 543
Email: maria2@bigpond.com.au

31 March 2007

Bonnie Thomson

Workforce Development Coordinator
Mater Health Services Brisbane
Email: bonnie.thomson@mater.org.au

RE: Mater Adult Hospital Graduate Nurse Program

Please find attached my responses to the selection criteria for the Mater Adult Hospital Graduate Nurse program. I also attach a copy of my current curriculum vitae, outlining my relevant practical experience and education and work history. I am very interested in this program, as it provides a perfect opportunity to support my transition into clinical nursing, as well as allow me to further develop my skills and knowledge.

I will shortly complete my **Bachelor of Nursing** at the University of Queensland – Clinical Elective: General Medical/Surgical Nursing and to this end, I am currently at the Princess Alexandra Hospital Surgical Ward for completion of my portfolio pursuant to the Australian Nursing and Midwifery competency standards. I have also successfully completed practical clinical electives at Ipswich Hospital and St Andrews Private Hospital. During these clinical electives, I gained the core skills in the provision of optimal clinical care to a vast assortment of patients. This has involved everything from the appropriate response to emergencies, working collaboratively with team members, ensuring adherence to policies and procedures, quality control, patient advocacy, personal assistance and emotional support to patients, family and staff members, as well as the administration of drugs and other therapies.

These clinical skills have been enhanced with paid employment at the Meagher Dental Group, as a receptionist, including client service delivery, communicating to a diverse range of individuals, and problem solving.

I would describe myself as professional and highly motivated, including a commitment to ongoing professional development, an ability to take personal responsibility for getting things done, and for ensuring high quality care in a constantly changing environment. An adept communicator, I have the ability to work credibly and effectively with a diverse range of individuals, by being consistently genuine in my interactions with others.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this graduate opportunity with you in more detail.

Yours faithfully

Maria Ciancio

What you need to know about your Application Sheet

A large number of agencies require submission of a cover sheet, which includes both mandatory and voluntary information. A surprising number of candidates fail to include this document, and failure to do so could be detrimental to your application. So **make sure you include this application cover sheet, if requested by the agency.**

Mandatory information you will need to complete will include details such as:

Details of Advertised Position

- ~ Vacancy reference number
- ~ Closing date
- ~ Classification/Award code

Personal Particulars

- ~ Family and given names,
- ~ Title
- ~ Preferred name
- ~ Contact telephone numbers
- ~ Postal address
- ~ Citizenship status
- ~ Security status (some jobs involve handling highly sensitive information, which require the applicant to have the appropriate level of security clearance)
- ~ Whether any special requirements if invited to attend an interview (e.g. wheelchair access)

Public Sector Employment Details (If currently employed in the public sector)

- ~ Employee number
- ~ Position title
- ~ Department
- ~ Sector/branch
- ~ Location
- ~ Substantive classification
- ~ Whether you voluntarily accepted early retirement or accepted a severance payment from a government position (state / federal)

Survey data

- ~ How you became aware of this vacancy e.g. Government Gazette, The Australian, Jobs Online

Voluntary Information

This information remains confidential and is used by the agency to collect statistics on the recruitment process. **Unless specified, it will not be forwarded to the selection panel to be used during the selection process.** Voluntary information collected:

- ~ Date of Birth
- ~ Gender
- ~ Do you have a disability?
- ~ Are you an Aborigine?
- ~ Whether a Torres Strait Islander?
- ~ Are you a person from a non English speaking background

Chapter 6

What you need to know about your referees

The process requires details of referees to be included. That is name, job title, organisation, and full contact details. If requested, these must be provided in the résumé or application form submitted, **as without referees, your application could be excluded at the discretion of the panel.**

If these are not requested in the initial stages, just add 'Referees available upon request', within your résumé.

Since referees will always be contacted to ascertain your suitability for the position, it is imperative to **provide referees that are going to give an honest, constructive and positive account of your performance.**

Keep in mind referees can be part of the assessment process and are not just used to confirm your performance prior to appointment.

Selecting and using referees:

Ensure that your referees have supervised or managed you in a work capacity.

Although traditionally a personal referee would be included, such a practice is long gone, so only include work related referees. Remember, while your best friend, or family member may give you glowing reviews, a selection panel will not take these references seriously.

If you are unable to provide work related referees, then the alternatives are:

- ~ Someone who has supervised you in a volunteer role.
- ~ A former client who can comment on your capacity in the workplace (this is useful if you are transitioning from a business you owned to returning to paid employment).
- ~ If you are a graduate, then a lecturer or tutor who can comment on your academic performance or performance during a practical module.

Get prior permission from your referee. This one might seem obvious, but **countless** candidates fail to contact their referee and ask if it is OK to use them as a referee on an application. To get references, simply ask!

Ensure that your referees are aware of the positions that you are applying for.

That way they have advance notification that they will be contacted in regards to a role and avoids the 'surprise' value.

Try to ensure your referees are going to give you a positive recommendation.

Not all referees are created equal and not all referees will necessarily give you a glowing report. If you are in the position where you can choose your referees, then you should consider the following:

- ~ Are they articulate and have the gift of the gab. Or rather can they really sell you as the right person for the position?
- ~ Are they easily contactable and reliable in regards to returning telephone calls, or completing comprehensive written reports?
- ~ Will they be providing recommendations to other candidates applying for the same role? If so, how will this impact on your application?

- ~ Have you tested the waters and found out whether they will provide a favourable report?

The direct way to find out is to simply call your referee and ask him or her for advice regarding to your next career move, followed by a question relating to what they believe your strengths are in any future role. If the conversation doesn't go well and they can't think of anything positive in regards to your strengths, then you know early on in the piece, that they probably won't be giving you a glowing report.

Also keep in mind when selecting your referees that employers could be liable if they provide favourable report that is unwarranted and results in an economic loss suffered by another company, due to a failure to disclose negative information about a former employee. What this in reality means is that many large corporations instruct employees not to provide comprehensive references.

Remember that vague and noncommittal references and feedback are worse than none at all (e.g. did the job adequately)

Keep in mind that employing people is an expensive exercise, so for employers it is important to hire people that already have what people call **'social proof'**. That is evidence that you are good and can deliver results, before they hire you. This means it is extremely important that you have good testimonials and feedback from referees that can substantiate your claims made in your application.

Written Referee Reports

Some agencies require the submission of a written report, usually provided through a standard template. To assist your referee in writing these reports, provide your referee with detailed information, including your completed application (résumé and selection criteria) together with the application pack providing an overview of the position you are applying for.

Using a Referee List on your application (Trade Secret Revealed)

Usually a referee list is just an index of names, title and contact details. One way to transform your referee list (and this works equally well in the private sector), is to create a list that briefly outlines your relationship to the referee, as well as listing your verifiable accomplishments that your referee will be able to confirm.

Before:

Referees

Helen Brown

Assistant Branch Manager

Commonwealth Bank

Telephone: (02) 5647 3456

Mobile: 0425 657 456

Email: Helen.brown@commonwealth.com.au

Bernice Smith

Branch Manager

Commonwealth Bank

Telephone: (02) 5647 3455

Email: Bernice.smith@commonwealth.com.au

After:

Referees

Helen Brown

Assistant Branch Manager

Commonwealth Bank

Telephone: (02) 5647 3456

Mobile: 0425 657 456

Email: Helen.brown@commonwealth.com.au

Immediate supervisor at Commonwealth Bank, Helen Brown can speak of my ability to provide outstanding service in regards to advice on bank products, as well as providing on the job training to new staff members. In addition, Helen can elaborate on my ability to adhere to bank procedures, as well as high level administrative skills.

Bernice Smith

Branch Manager

Commonwealth Bank

Telephone: (02) 5647 3455

Email: Bernice.smith@commonwealth.com.au

Lead supervisor at Commonwealth Bank, Ms Smith can confirm my consistent number one ranking in regards to provision of client service, as well as ability to interface with a diverse range of clients, both domestic and commercial. Bernice Smith will also confirm certificate of appreciation received from senior management for outstanding service to the bank.

The advantage of the After formatting, is that it alerts the selection panel as to your strengths and provides another means of marketing yourself effectively to selection panel members.

Before you proceed to Part Three

- ~ **Do you understand exactly what level of evidence you need to provide against the selection criteria?**
 - **If not, have you obtained clarification from the contact officer?**
 - **Have you interpreted the fit between the selection criteria and the requirements of the position?**
- ~ **Do you need to write a résumé from scratch?**
- ~ **Do you need to revamp your current résumé?**
- ~ **Do you need to write a cover letter?**
- ~ **If referees are required, have you selected the most suitable referees and gained prior permission from them?**

PART THREE

BUILDING A COMPLETE CASE FOR THE SELECTION PANEL

Chapter 7

Meeting the agency's requirements

Before you start writing your application it is important to establish **exactly what the agency's requirements are within the application pack.**

Below is an agency check list for you to work through:

Agency checklist

Documentation Required

- Do you need to submit a cover letter?
- Do you need to submit a résumé?
- Do you need to submit an application cover sheet?
- Do you need to address selection criteria in a separate document?
- Do you need to address selection criteria, within a 2 page cover letter?
- Do you need to address behavioural questions?
- Is this an online application? If so, do you need to complete the application form online, or attach MS Word documents via email / online?
- Are there any word/ page / character restrictions for any or all of the documentation?
- Do you need to provide additional supporting documentation, such as certified copies of your qualifications / licences?
- Do you need to provide names and contact details for your referees?
- Do you need to obtain a written report from your referees?

Submission Requirements

- Courier delivery accepted or not?
- Application by email accepted or not?
- Application only accepted online?
- Hand delivery accepted or not?
- Postal delivery accepted or not?
- What is the date and time the application closes (allow additional time, if you need to post your application)?

Position and Agency Requirements

- Have you established exactly what the overall objectives of the position are?
- Do you understand the duty statement?
- Do you understand the selection criteria and what knowledge, skills, expertise and experience the agency requires?
- Have you undertaken a comprehensive research on the agency? (See my tips in Chapter 8)
- Have you spoken to the contact officer?

In Part 4, Chapter 12, I provide a detailed overview as to how to incorporate agency requirements within your selection criteria.

The unwritten rules

Now you have gone through and established exactly what the agency's requirements are as outlined in the application pack - **you need to establish what unwritten rules might apply in relation to your application.**

Unwritten rules are what I refer to as the established practices of the agency, which are not clarified or outlined in the application pack. These are practices that have evolved over a period of time and are more about the agency's in-house methods, than good recruiting practices.

Remember, if you are from one agency and applying for another agency, recruitment practices may be different, including practices relating to the unwritten rules that might apply in relation to your application.

Length of application

Although increasingly, agencies are providing word and page limits (welcome from an agency and candidate point of view), quite a few still don't provide clarification as to the exact length required. While some agencies expect and require comprehensive answers, others require only a few paragraphs per selection criteria, even if this requirement is not specifically stated on the application pack.

The solution to this dilemma is to simply clarify the length required with the contact officer before writing your application. It is also essential to never extend beyond two pages per selection criteria, as some agencies instruct panel members to disregard answers that run beyond two pages, (even if this is not stated on the application pack). This is particularly true for positions where the competition is fierce and numerous candidates are applying for the same role.

Note: Even at the executive level, the average length I write per criterion is one page. This length is ample to meet even the complex SELC framework.

Formatting rules

I know of some cases where selection panel members get quite upset if documents are not formatted in the tradition required by the agency, (right down to font size and whether or not bullet points are used).

Look, if you are a panel member reading this, please keep in mind that if you are going to have a transparent recruiting system in place, then so called discrepancies relating to layout, that are not even stated in the application pack, should be ignored. The focus should be on how effectively a candidate has addressed the selection criteria.

In the meantime, so YOU as the candidate can bypass some of the formatting hysteria:

- ~ Address each selection criteria on a separate page (I adhere to this rule rigorously, unless the length of each answer varies enormously, due to a client's weakness in one or more criteria and I want to disguise this).
- ~ Forget the hype about whether you should use bullet points or not, especially in senior applications – just use them. Used strategically and well, bullet points **always enhance readability.**
- ~ Use either Arial or Times New Roman font – that way you will satisfy the inherent conservatism within the public service sector.

Chapter 8

Research

Research is a CRITICAL part of preparing your application, as it will provide you with a good understanding of the agency in question, and a sound basis on which to write your application.

Researching the agency

The great thing about researching various public agencies is that the bulk of the information you need is published online. Simply log onto the agency website and gain access to a range of relevant information. Areas I usually review include:

- Overall responsibility of the agency (role, structure, mission, vision and values)
- Overall responsibility of the work area in which the position is located (I run a quick search if an agency has a search function on the website)
- Relevant publications, including annual reports and policy statements
- Legislation the agency administers (if the job entails administration/interpretation of legislation and/or selection criteria refers to legislation). I confess to only ever quickly scanning legislation, and a great short cut to understanding the regulatory framework is to either undertake a quick search under Google, or quickly scan the legislation by going straight to the Purpose and Index.

How much research you need to undertake will depend entirely on the position and classification level and your level of knowledge you have relating to the agency.

As a general rule of thumb, at the lower level you will simply need to understand the overall responsibility of the agency and work area, including mission, vision and values, any client service charters or codes of conduct, along with a general understanding of common selection criteria (Occupational Health & Safety, Workplace Diversity, EEO and Anti-Discrimination).

At a higher classification level and for professional roles, you should arm yourself with as much information as possible, particularly if you are not familiar with the agency. This would involve scanning through annual reports and understanding policy statements related to the position in question. Since senior management roles and professional roles contribute to or translate broad strategies, it is vital that you understand the position within the context of the organisational goals and strategies.

Once you are equipped with this knowledge, then you are in a position to use this information to help shape your answers to the selection criteria (covered in Part IV, Chapter 12), as well as providing yourself with a framework for your interview.

Contact officer

As outlined in Chapter One, the contact officer can be a good source of information and will hopefully have knowledge about the position and the competencies required, as well as being receptive to answering all your specific and general queries.

Researching skills and knowledge areas

When addressing selection criteria **I always research areas relating to certain skill and knowledge areas**, if I don't already have this knowledge. **This provides me with an incredibly powerful framework** to use on behalf of clients. This tool is equally applicable to those trying to get in, or get promoted within the public service sector.

As a candidate, you too will find this a useful way to obtain an overview of skills and knowledge areas, which will enable you to shape your responses to the selection criteria.

Example One:

Core Skill – Project Management

By undertaking some research relating to project management, I was able to incorporate project management methodology into my responses to the selection criteria, by first outlining my client's considerable experience, and then outlining the core skills relating to project management, which you see below. This effectively framed the answer, so my client was able to both demonstrate her experience, as well as the associated methods of effectively managing these projects.

Senior Manager – Information Communication Technology

SC 5

Demonstrated ability, and a record of achievement in successfully managing and coordinating significant projects within a large complex and changing organisation, and in a commercial environment

I have substantial experience relating to the coordination of significant projects within large complex organisations, including change management and associated methodologies. Through out my career, I have managed and implemented change and projects in general, including whole-of-government projects. My experience is vast, and includes managing project budgets of up to \$50m. A few selected examples include:

A list of relevant examples of project undertaken and achievements was inserted:

Whilst managing various projects, relevant associated project methods have included:

- ~ Analysis and development of organisational requirements, including the development of business and technical requirements scope and specifications, - the technical design, business case (including cost estimations, cost/benefit and EV analysis)*
- ~ Development of project plans, including review of project authorisation activities and project scope definition activities. This included the identification of tasks required for project completion and tools and forms which support a planning process*
- ~ Effective scheduling and identification of ongoing outputs and identification of the assessment of benefits and costs against each project lifecycle. This included the effective delegation of tasks required for project completion and the incorporation of risk management into all aspects of the project plan/proposal*
- ~ Development of timelines and managing costs within each project. I have detailed knowledge in regards to the various methods for estimated project budgets and issues in relation to cost estimating*
- ~ Ongoing review of projects, including effectiveness and cost benefit analysis, including information needs. Project auditing, including ensuring projects/programs deliver the benefits*

Example Two:

Core Skill – Negotiation

By undertaking research for the core skill of negotiation, I was able to incorporate methodology I had researched relating to negotiation, and I used this methodology to reinforce the client's ability to achieve a positive outcome. **The full response is not included** - I have just inserted the relevant excerpt in regards to addressing the agency's requirement relating to consultation and negotiation.

Senior Human Resource Manager

Selection Criteria 2

Interpersonal, communication, consultation, negotiation and client relationships skills including demonstrated ability to strategically influence and build business relationships with client and stakeholder groups to achieve work positive and collaborative working relationships

As Employee Service Consultant I was responsible for leading the negotiation on a complex Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) with five separate unions. The negotiation process took place during the Union strike, and in this role I worked collaboratively with all relevant internal and external stakeholders, involved in the EBA process. During this consultation and negotiation process:

- ~ I facilitated meetings and forums to discuss parameters of the EBA and to forge ways in which links between various stakeholders could be strengthened in order to obtain agreement on deliverables*
- ~ I persuaded unions to participate in this process, including the development of relationships with key union players, encouraged participants to consult and provided constructive feedback to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service and ensured that they recognised diverse ideas and contributions*
- ~ Was responsive to criticism, by listening to concerns and responding promptly to these concerns*
- ~ I kept relevant internal stakeholders in the "information loop" and liaised with internal management in order to obtain consensus in regards to authorisation activities, scope and framework*

In negotiating the EBA with the various unions, I employed the following methodology:

- ~ I ensured that I understood the underlying needs of the respective unions, including respecting their opinion, even if I did not agree with their view point*
- ~ Built rapport with the individual concerned, including understanding their position and clarifying issues involved*
- ~ Was assertive, and applied strategies to attack the problem, not the person*
- ~ Eliminated the attitude of 'power over' the representatives*
- ~ Managed all emotions, by focussing on changing perceptions and resolving problems*
- ~ Defined the real issues and addressed them with relevant information and feedback*

Example Three:

Core Skill – Communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In this example, I was able to merge my research on communication processes and principles with the client's direct experience in communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Through this research, I was able to cover all the major issues relating to communicating directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which my client was unable to express.

Youth Social Worker

Selection Criteria 3

An ability to communicate effectively and sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

I have well developed interpersonal and communication skills and have the ability to interact and communicate effectively and sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As Administration Officer at Victoria Police Service I was responsible for front desk duty. This involved providing advice to a range of clients on a broad range of topics, including communicating directly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community, including youths and adults on a daily basis. This experience is enhanced in my current role as Support Worker, at Centrecare, where I provide support to a wide range of clients, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

When communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, I recognise and respect their different culture and adhere to the following communication processes and principles, including:

- ~ Communicating in a relaxed and non-threatening way (understanding that direct eye contact will not be made);*
- ~ Being mindful that some clients have low literacy and numeracy skills hence the emphasis on oral discussions;*
- ~ Using open or indirect questions when seeking information or explanations;*
- ~ Allowing adequate time for responses;*
- ~ Re-phrasing of questions;*
- ~ Observance of verbal/non-verbal cues or gestures;*
- ~ Using verbal displays as opposed to technical language;*
- ~ Observing gender equity (male may prefer male);*
- ~ Accepting family member/representative for interpretation;*
- ~ Accepting Aboriginal English/Creole as a viable form of communication;*
- ~ Avoiding the use of the name of a recently deceased relative;*
- ~ Avoiding departmental jargon;*
- ~ Understanding that Aboriginal communities are divergent and no two communities are the same, and that certain core principles (or protocols) should be applied when communicating with the Aboriginal community.*

As you can see from the examples above, research will provide you with a POWERFUL framework, so you can really make yourself sound like the skilled expert you are. However:

- ~ **DON'T plagiarise material** – instead use the information to address specific requirements relating to a skill or knowledge area, without copying the information word for word.
- ~ Under no circumstances use your research to embellish your skills or knowledge **without substantiating these claims with specific evidence of YOUR experience.** (I cover how to write an evidence-based response in Part 4, Chapter 12)

Research material for your job descriptions

In developing claims you can also utilise material that you find relating to your current and past job descriptions. These can help frame your responses to the selection criteria. Sources for job descriptions include:

- ~ Your company's current job description of your position
- ~ Internet postings of job descriptions (job search sites, agency sites and company job boards)

Research tips

Below are a range of search tips for locating data and information, which will assist you in researching a skills/knowledge area.

For a question-and-answer engine try **Ask Jeeves** (<http://askjeeves.com>)

My favoured search engine is Google (<http://www.google.com>). Google rates a site based on content and how many other sites are linked to it, so only sites that are content rich and valuable end up listed in the first few pages of your key word search.

Utilise meta search engines when you want the results from several search engines / directories.

- ~ **Meta Crawler** <http://www.go2nt.com/search.html>
- ~ **InferenceFind** <http://www.infind.com/>
- ~ **DogPile** <http://www.dogpile.com/>

If you wanted **targeted information** try:

- ~ **The Angus Clearinghouse** – <http://www.clearinghouse.net/>
- ~ **About.com** – <http://www.about.com/>

If you are a Graduate, refer to your textbooks. These are valuable resources for providing information to develop a framework regarding selection criteria requiring knowledge, or ability to acquire knowledge. I have even used textbooks relating to human anatomy, when addressing selection criteria for a management position in Anatomy and Pathology.

Chapter 9

Understanding Public Service Values

If applying for public sector roles, you need to understand public service sector values and how to incorporate these values into your application. (I cover how to incorporate these values in detail in Chapter 11)

If you are already within the public sector, you would have an understanding of these values, but most candidates fail to effectively incorporate these into their application.

If you are new to the process, then it is imperative to understand that as an employee of federal, state, territory and local government, you are not just doing a job, but you will be representing the government. Hence, you will be expected to behave in a way that is appropriate and in line with public service values when carrying out duties and in dealing with the public and fellow employees.

APS Values

The APS Values outlines the values of the public service, from performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner, making employment decisions based on merit, acting with high levels of integrity, delivery of an impartial service, through to promoting employment equity.

The Australian Public Service:

- ~ is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner;
- ~ is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit;
- ~ provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves;
- ~ has the highest ethical standards;
- ~ is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the government, the parliament and the Australian public;
- ~ is responsive to the government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the government's policies and programs;
- ~ delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public;
- ~ has leadership of the highest quality;
- ~ establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace;
- ~ provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace;
- ~ focuses on achieving results and managing performance;
- ~ promotes equity in employment;
- ~ provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment;
- ~ is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government;
- ~ provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of employees.

Agency heads are bound by the Code of Conduct as are APS employees, and have an additional duty to promote the APS Values.

Source: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/values/>

Code of Conduct

Each agency has a Code of Conduct that must be adhered to. Although Codes of Conduct vary slightly depending on the agency, they all require employees to adhere to principles similar or identical to those outlined at the federal level in the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The **Code of Conduct** requires that an employee must:

- ~ behave honestly and with integrity in the course of APS employment;
- ~ act with care and diligence in the course of APS employment;
- ~ when acting in the course of APS employment, treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment;
- ~ when acting in the course of APS employment, comply with all applicable Australian laws;
- ~ comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the employee's agency who has authority to give the direction;
- ~ maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the employee has with any Minister or Minister's member of staff;
- ~ disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with APS employment;
- ~ use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner;
- ~ not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee's APS employment;
- ~ not make improper use of:
 - o inside information, or
 - o the employee's duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or for any other person;
- ~ at all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS;
- ~ while on duty overseas, at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia; and
- ~ comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the regulations

Source: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/conduct/>

Service Charter

Each agency has a Client Service Charter, outlining the agency and staff obligations towards the public.

If the position you are applying for will entail working directly or indirectly with the public, or managing an area that works directly with the public, then it is important to read and understand the agency's Client Service Charter.

The principles generally contained in most Client Service Charters at federal, state, territory and local level is as follows:

- ~ Dealing with clients in a friendly, courteous and professional way
- ~ Being fair, equitable and unbiased in service delivery
- ~ Responding to enquiries and complaints in an accurate and timely manner (some agencies outline their target response rates)
- ~ Treating information confidentially

- ~ Taking into account the special needs of clients such as clients in rural, remote and regional areas, the needs of people with disabilities, the needs of people who speak languages apart from English and those from different cultural backgrounds.
- ~ Keeping clients informed about matters that involve them
- ~ Providing staff that are fully informed and can advise the public
- ~ Being accountable and responsive

Common selection criteria

Common Selection Criteria is the term that I use to describe legislative requirements relating to **Workplace Diversity, Ethical Practices, Anti-Discrimination** and **Employment Equity** and **Occupational Health & Safety**.

For those not within the public service sector, the following information provides you with the basic information you will need to understand before applying for a government position. (I have also attached a list of relevant legislation at federal and state Level in Part V, Chapter 23).

Occupational Health & Safety / Workplace Health & Safety

Occupational Health & Safety legislation and regulation sets out the laws for workplace health and safety. The objective of various state and federal legislation is to prevent is to prevent anyone being killed, injured, or contracting an illness because of a workplace, workplace activities, or specified high risk plant. This is achieved by preventing or minimising exposure to risk.

Both state and federal legislation places an obligation on every person associated with a workplace to ensure their own workplace health and safety and the workplace health and safety of others. These obligations for staff and managers include:

- ~ providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment.
- ~ ensuring safe systems of work are implemented, notifying and reporting risks and other hazards.
- ~ assisting management in changes to work practices
- ~ providing information, instruction, training and supervision.

Workplace Diversity

Workplace diversity is recognition within government policy that acknowledges that diversity of people in the public sector is one of its greatest strengths.

Workplace diversity covers gender, age, language, ethnicity, marital status, cultural background, religious belief, education, family responsibilities and sexual orientation. Diversity also refers to the other ways in which people are different, such as life and work experience, socio-economic backgrounds, and personality.

Employment Equity and Anti- Discrimination

Employment equity is about making sure that workplaces are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment, as well as providing programs to assist members of various groups to overcome past or present disadvantages. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders, women, members from a racial, ethnic and religious minority group and people with a disability.

In the workplace, discrimination is defined as treating someone unfairly or harassing them because they belong to a particular group. Under legislation at both state and federal level, it is against the law for any employer, or employee, to discriminate against a candidate because of their sex, age, colour, race, religion, marital status, descent, political alliances or sexuality.

Sexual harassment is another form of discrimination and it is illegal in all of its form from implicit sexual jokes, inappropriate screen savers, through to innuendo and unwarranted and unwelcome physical and verbal approaches.

Employers and managers are responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from all unlawful discrimination and to provide equal opportunity for employment, including ensuring that all selection processes are based on MERIT.

Chapter 10

Identifying your skills and achievements

The following chapter is about identifying what YOU have to offer a potential employer. Before you sit down to write your application, it is essential to have a solid framework in place that outlines your skills, knowledge and achievements. This groundwork will allow you to identify exactly what your strengths are, and to identify possible relevant examples when addressing the selection criteria.

Hard and soft skills

Identifying your hard and soft skills will assist you in preparing your responses to the selection criteria, and enable you to identify exactly what you can offer an employer.

Hard skills are occupation skills and areas of expertise, such as project management, event management, office administration and specific technical skills.

Soft skills relate to your personal skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, team work, attentiveness to detail, analytical skills and so on.

For example as a **Marketing Manager** you might possess the following hard and soft skills:

- ~ Workflow management
- ~ Problem solving
- ~ Analytical skills
- ~ Record keeping
- ~ Budget management
- ~ Computer software – MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Outlook, MS Publisher
- ~ Relationship building
- ~ Market research
- ~ Client service management
- ~ Business profile creation and management
- ~ Promotions and sales
- ~ Report writing
- ~ Proposal development
- ~ Advising
- ~ Negotiation
- ~ Supervision of staff
- ~ Mentoring
- ~ Team building
- ~ Performance appraisals
- ~ Branding
- ~ Strategic planning
- ~ Advertising
- ~ Media relations
- ~ Territory management
- ~ Key account management

If you are struggling to identify your skills, I have listed for you a comprehensive list of both hard and soft skills. These will help pinpoint what relevant soft and hard skills you possess.

Hard and Soft Skills Identification Sheet

Use a pen to tick both hard and soft skills that you currently possess.

<p>Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting Internal Main Control Office Equipment Inventory Maintenance Co-ordination Purchasing / Stock Control Quality Control Problem Solving Record Keeping Travel Arrangements Time Management Workflow Management <p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Profile Creation / Management Network Management Relationship Building Market Research Opportunity Identification Product Research & Development Service Delivery <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advising Briefing Conflict Resolution Consulting Correspondence Delegation Instructing Interviewing Internal Liaison External Liaison Negotiation Skills Public Speaking Report Writing <p>Computer Competencies</p> <p><i>Software:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS Word CBA MS Excel Lotus 1-2-3 MYOB Page Maker Photoshop MS PowerPoint MS Outlook Frontpage MS Publisher Word Perfect 	<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounts to Trial Balance Trust Account Management Bookkeeping Budget Assessment Budget Planning Financial Planning Financial Reporting Loan Approvals Debtors / Creditors Control Taxation Auditing Computerised Accounting Invoicing Investigating Discrepancies Payroll Petty Cash Spread-sheeting Statistical Analysis <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash Handling Front Line Customer Service Hospitality Rostering Stock Control Research Processing Documentation Purchasing Despatch / Delivery <p>Health & Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with Legal Requirements Creation of Documentation Developing / Implementing Procedures Revising Procedures Risk Assessment Risk Management Workplace First Aid Work Cover Rehabilitation Claims Incident investigation / reporting <p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture & Values Development Learning & Development Performance Appraisals Goal Setting Recruitment / Termination Supervision Team Building Workplace Relations
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Hard and soft skills identification sheet continued: -

<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Planning Risk Analysis Change Management Financial Management Inventory Management Operations Control Multi Company Administration Performance Control Critical Problem Solving Project Management Quality Control Resource Management Strategic Assessment Strategic Planning <p>Marketing & Sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Account Management Advertising Brand Management Channel Management Cold Calling Prospecting Competitor Surveillance Cross Selling Direct Marketing Marketing Strategies Merchandising Party Plan Product Launching Promotions Proposal Preparation Prospecting Quotations / Tenders Research Retail Sales Client Development Target Marketing Territory Management Value Added Sales 	<p>Secretarial / Reception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answering Correspondence Data Entry Dictaphone Typing Fielding & Directing Telephone Calls Report Generation Minutes Sourcing suppliers Management of Diary Typing / Word-processing Shorthand Stationary Reconciliations Operation of Office Machinery <p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting Training Establishing Training Needs Preparing Written Material Writing Training Manuals Group or Individual Coaching Developing Training Programs Learning and Development <p>Personal Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to work under pressure Adaptable Analytical skills Astute Attention to Detail Composure under Pressure Conceptual Skills Creative Disciplined Approach Entrepreneurial Skills Flexibility Proactive Results Orientated Strong Business Acumen
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You can also use this sheet to identify relevant hard and soft skills, when undertaking **specific activities**, such as managing projects, or implementing organisational change. This will help you shape specific answers when addressing selection criteria.

Compile a career portfolio

A comprehensive career portfolio catalogues your professional history. This portfolio is a perfect way to chronicle your experience and knowledge, for both the résumé and the selection criteria.

Information to include:

- ~ **Education & Qualifications**
 - University / TAFE / Secondary School, (only include details as to your Secondary Schooling if you have recently left school)
- ~ **Seminars and conferences relevant to your career**
- ~ **Language Skills**
 - Fluent and business vocabulary
- ~ **Personal profile / management style**
- ~ **Expertise, strengths, specialisations**
- ~ **Technical skills / computer competencies**
- ~ **Professional experience**
 - Profile of company, including distinguishing characteristics, (e.g. largest manufacturer of steel in Australia)
 - Job title and scope of accountability (list ALL areas of responsibility)
 - Contributions and achievements (list all areas in where you helped the organisation solve problems, improve systems, save money, and so on)
- ~ **Community Involvement / Voluntary Roles**
 - Profile of organisation, including distinguishing characteristics
 - Role title and scope of accountability (list ALL areas of responsibility)
 - Contributions and achievements (list all areas in which you helped the organisation solve problems, improve systems and so on)
- ~ **Professional Memberships**
 - List all current professional memberships
- ~ **Evidence of High Performance**
 - Performance appraisals
 - Written reference reports
 - Any documentation received by a third party complimenting you on your performance – e.g. email or letter from client thanking you for the service performed
 - Awards
- ~ **Publications and Presentations**

Identify your achievements - your key to sizzling selection criteria

The majority of clients I work with fail when it comes to talking about their achievements, with the usual response being, 'but I just do the job'. While this response might suffice in social circles where you don't want to 'brag' or 'big note' yourself, it simply **won't cut it when developing your responses to selection criteria**.

When I talk about achievements, I am not talking about that promotion, or pay rise you negotiated, or even successfully completing a degree with first class honours, while you juggled both family and work commitments. While these are all worthy achievements and you should be proud of them - they are focused on YOU, not the employer.

When I talk about achievements, I am really talking about the contributions you have made and the results you have achieved for present and past employers. For example, you reduced operational costs by 34%, you implemented an occupational health and safety strategy that reduced workplace injuries by 40%, or you created a new filing system that eliminated wasted time in searching for misfiled documents.

Like all employers, selection panel members are interested in 'what's in it for me', also known as WIFM. That is, they **are after a 'recruiting solution'** – a staff member that can make a solid contribution to the work area or overall strategy of the agency, as well as a candidate who meets the selection criteria. They are not interested in YOUR career aspirations and are too preoccupied in assessing a bundle of applications, to worry about YOU as an individual - **in fact they're 'downright indifferent about you'**.

However as soon as you start talking about tangible achievements when addressing the selection criteria, you are setting the stage for showing them why you just may be the best candidate for the position. This will turn a previously indifferent selection panel member, into someone who is thinking that the work area and agency needs someone like you to fill the position.

To show you how important it is to talk about your accomplishments, I have attached two examples of a candidate applying for a senior logistics and warehousing role.

Candidate One

In this role, I managed the warehouse and distribution of a fast high-volume, made-to-order business. The operation delivered in excess of 35,000 pallets of product each month to over 1,500 customers. Whilst maintaining profitability, my objective was to rationalize the transport providers, increase the service levels and decrease the cost, whilst changing the culture within the dispatch department.

Candidate Two

In this key logistics role, I was involved in the management of the warehouse and distribution site, delivering in excess of 35,000 pallets of product each month to over 1,500 customers, with over 95% of product made-to-order. In this role, I was invited by management to spearhead changes required to rectify previous poor management of the site.

Key Contributions and Results:

~ *Met challenge of increasing service levels, decreasing costs and changing culture, within 3 months*

- ~ Rationalised warehouse layout in line with production profile, reducing the overtime required to complete output by 50%
- ~ Spearheaded variable cost control measures and ensured adherence to operating budgets
- ~ Remedied inaccurate inventory record entry, allowing for lower re-order points
- ~ Significantly reduced pallet losses, through introduction of procedures, documentation and control software, allowing for an auditable trail of all relevant pallet movements
- ~ Reduced local transportation costs by 10% per annum, through effective management of fleet contract tender.
- ~ Dramatically improved management of local sub contract delivery fleet, through new service level agreements and ongoing performance appraisals
- ~ Saved 15% in freight costs, through effective management of the tender of the regional delivery network
- ~ Reduced overtime of staff by 30% and provided a better loading service, through detailed analysis of transport cycle times and staff rosters

Now, put yourself in the shoes of the selection panel member and make up your mind as to which candidate convinces you of their knowledge and track record as an employee. Most likely, you chose Candidate Two, and if you haven't guessed it already, Candidate One and Candidate Two is the same person. Candidate One was a first draft written by the client, Candidate Two included a full list of achievements, as a result of asking the client targeted questions relating to their achievements, utilising the CAR technique, (which I have outlined for you below).

Hopefully I've convinced you how talking about your achievements can transform you from an average candidate to a 'knock out' candidate, I now want you to spend time and energy thinking about the various contributions you have made in all your relevant roles.

Yes, I know even as I say this, your eyes are glazing over and you might be struggling to think of even one tangible achievement. But believe me – everyone contributes, either directly or indirectly to an organisation. **To help you brainstorm your achievements,** I have listed some general questions below, outlining areas in which you as an employee may have contributed to an organisation. I have made the focus on achievements that reinforce qualities required for the public service sector.

- ~ Have you saved money for an organisation?
- ~ Did you build organisational capability?
- ~ How have you solved a specific or major problem?
- ~ Are you a key 'trouble-shooter'?
- ~ Have you delivered on an intended outcome?
- ~ Did you introduce new procedures that improved operational processes?
- ~ Did you improve the overall management of a functional area?
- ~ What did you accomplish for your clients?
- ~ Were you selected for any significant projects and what were the outcomes of these projects? Benefits / cost savings / improved processes
- ~ Did you manage the same or greater amount of work than your predecessor?
- ~ Are you more efficient than most?
- ~ Did you exceed expectations of clients?
- ~ Did you exceed expectations of management?
- ~ Have you improved customer relations?
- ~ Did you develop and implement long term planning initiatives?

- ~ *Did you develop partnerships with external stakeholders that were beneficial to the organisation?*
- ~ *Did you increase productivity or efficiency within an organisation?*
- ~ *Did you achieve a result within a tight budget and or time constraints?*
- ~ *Did you develop, manage, implement or contribute to any major changes within an organisation?*

Using the CAR technique to uncover your achievements

One method I employ to uncover achievements for clients is to get them to use the CAR technique.

CAR is the acronym for:

- ~ **Challenge you encountered**
- ~ **Action taken**
- ~ **Result from your action**

This is almost identical to the selection criteria model CAR, but the C is short for Challenge, rather than Circumstances, as outlined in the selection criteria CAR model in Part IV, Chapter 12.

Examples using the CAR technique

Example One:

Challenge

Poor or non existent quality procedures in place

Action

Empowered a small team to document the current practices, then the same team wrote procedures to what needed to be done. Each team member then validated the relevant procedure for their machine and implemented the quality procedures.

Results

The entire team embraced the procedures. The cost of complaints for that site reduced from an average of 12% per year to 2% for the first year and 1.2% for the balance of the next year. Moved the mind set from quality checking to quality assurance.

Example Two:

Challenge

The operational staffs were not clear as to areas of responsibility and accountability. No performance measures in place at any level

Action

Set clear role definitions, position descriptions and set clear expectations of results for each role. Implemented the framework for rewarding the achievers and managing the under achievers

Results

A framework was in place so all employees knew what was expected from the role and what the acceptable outcome was. Goals and targets were set and agreed upon, then reviewed formally on a regular basis. It allowed career development and success to be rewarded and poor performance to be managed. This in turn removed all subjectivity from the work place career development and bonus systems. It consolidated the site to common goals and delivered success.

You can see by using the CAR technique, you can start framing some very strong achievements that can be effectively utilised in both your résumé and responses to the selection criteria.

Overlay your accomplishments on the agency's needs

Now that you have a detailed overview of your achievements and hard and soft skills, the next step is to spend time thinking about how your experience and skills relates to the position you are applying for.

Draw a line down the middle of a page and one side, list the agency's needs, and on the other side of the line, list all your hard and soft skills and contributions that prove you can do the job. This exercise will help you to pin point your assets that the agency requires and will help shape your responses to the selection criteria.

The agency needs:	The experience and skills I have:

Chapter 11

Developing a case for core selection criteria

Core Selection Criteria

Core selection criteria are what I refer to **selection criteria that you will find in the overwhelming majority of applications**. After completing thousands of applications, I can count on one hand the number of applications that have **not** required a candidate to address their skills relating to communication or interpersonal skills.

To assist you in developing a case for addressing these selection criteria, I have listed some hard and soft skills as well as a range of questions to guide you when thinking about your various actions and accomplishments, relating to these core selection criteria. This list is not exhaustive, but provides a basic framework that can be applied to almost any role, from entry level to the senior executive level.

Please note - these leading questions are not industry or role specific, but general prompts about various activities when developing responses to core selection criteria. By activities, I mean specific projects, tasks, assignments, responsibilities and actions in a role.

When developing your responses to the selection criteria, ensure they are specific to the job in question.

Developing a case for Management

Generic Skills:

- ~ Management of staff
 - o Culture development
 - o Performance appraisals
 - o Supervision
 - o Delegation
 - o Team building
 - o Training & development
- ~ Change management
- ~ Resource management
- ~ Effective communication skills
- ~ Establishing priorities and direction
- ~ Budget management / Financial management
- ~ Implementation of best practices
- ~ Quality control
- ~ Ensuring compliance with legislation, policy and organisational procedures
- ~ Supporting senior management / executive

Questions

- ~ *Did you manage a budget within a functional area?*
- ~ *Was the budget cut, and how did you meet that cut?*
- ~ *What were the biggest cost-savings you implemented?*
- ~ *How did you manage resources within a functional area?*
- ~ *Did you manage the implementation of change and if so, how?*
- ~ *Did you manage staff? If so:*

- *How did you delegate responsibility?*
- *How did you ensure staff compliance with relevant policy, work procedures, regulations and legislation requirements*
- *How did you develop a team culture?*
- *Did you conduct staff training?*
- *Did you restructure job descriptions?*
- *Did you improve staff morale?*
- *How did you keep staff informed?*
- ~ *Have you got any management qualifications?*
- ~ *What improvements did you make to a functional work area?*
- ~ *How did you manage key decisions, relating to staff, resources and the implementation of processes?*
- ~ *Did you develop and implement new management processes?*

Developing a case for Team Work

Generic Skills:

- ~ Effective communication skills (e.g. listening, consulting, communicating relevant information to team members)
- ~ Support and sharing of views, ideas and resources
- ~ Relationship building
- ~ Strong interpersonal skills
- ~ Nurturing relationships with team members
- ~ Understanding of your role within the team framework

Questions:

- ~ *How have you supported your work colleagues?*
- ~ *Do you readily participate in team meetings, if so what did to them?*
- ~ *Have you trained and supported new or current staff members?*
- ~ *How do you communicate with team members?*
- ~ *How have you contributed to a team's success, for example, meeting targets and key performance indicators?*
- ~ *What is your role within the team and are you aware of other team members' responsibilities and use this knowledge to enhance your work practices?*

Developing a case for Leadership

Generic Skills:

- ~ Strategy development
- ~ Strategy implementation
- ~ Identification of current key issues and trends
- ~ Development of plans and policy
- ~ Research
- ~ Political astuteness
- ~ Analytical skills
- ~ Conceptual skills
- ~ Communication skills (guiding, leading, communicating relevant information, persuasion, negotiation of resources).
- ~ Long term problem solving
- ~ Vision and direction

Questions:

- ~ *Have you contributed to the overall vision and goals of a work area or organisation?*
- ~ *Do you promote a work area and organisations visions and goals?*
- ~ *How do you strategically develop plans and strategies? What was the result of these plans and strategies for the work area and organisation?*
- ~ *Did you resolve an entrenched problem for the organisation?*
- ~ *How have you demonstrated your leadership skills?*
- ~ *Did you develop any long-range planning initiatives?*
- ~ *How have you ensured that your team contributes effectively to organisational / agency priorities / requirements / direction?*
- ~ *How did you communicate this vision to others?*
- ~ *How have you delivered a vision, or work goal?*

Developing a case for Interpersonal Skills

Generic Skills:

- ~ Inter-departmental communication
- ~ Internal and external liaison
- ~ Relationship building
- ~ Networking
- ~ Effective team player
- ~ Guiding and mentoring
- ~ Effective communication skills (consultation, listening, adapting communication methods to suit various audiences)

Questions:

- ~ *Did you develop relationships with external organisations? If so, what organisations and how did you nurture these relationships?*
- ~ *Did you participate in internal committees, if so what committees and how did you nurture these relationships?*
- ~ *Did you participate in external forums?*
- ~ *Did you supervise staff? If so:*
 - o *How did you motivate individual staff members?*
 - o *How did you confront challenging performance issues?*
 - o *How did you let colleagues know that they were valued?*
 - o *How did you guide and coach other staff members?*
- ~ *Did you provide front line client service? If so, how did you meet and exceed client needs and expectations?*
- ~ *Did you improve rapport with internal or external stakeholders?*
- ~ *Are you sensitive to the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders?*

Developing a case for Communication Skills

Generic Skills:

- ~ Active listening skills
- ~ Adapting communication to suit an audience
- ~ Advising
- ~ Briefing
- ~ Conflict resolution
- ~ Consulting
- ~ Correspondence

- ~ Counselling
- ~ Debriefing
- ~ Delegation
- ~ Instructing
- ~ Interviewing
- ~ Public speaking
- ~ Mediation
- ~ Negotiation
- ~ Report Writing

Questions:

- ~ *Have you negotiated effectively with individuals and or organisations?*
- ~ *What written documentation have you provided and how have these impacted on an organisational, client, or functional area? (Reports, memorandums, correspondence, briefs)*
- ~ *How have you established formal and information communication channels to keep external or internal stakeholders informed?*
- ~ *Have you made public speeches?*
- ~ *In what way have you influenced decision maker or colleagues through your communication skills?*
- ~ *How have you made a strong written or verbal case to resolve a problem, implement a new procedure or make changes to a work area or organisation?*
- ~ *How have you adapted your communication skills to meet the needs of different stakeholders? (junior staff, clients, senior management, individuals whose second language is English, socially diverse individuals)*

Developing a case for Organisational Skills

Generic Skills:

- ~ Workflow management
- ~ Use of IT to streamline processes
- ~ Monitoring progress
- ~ File management
- ~ Project management

Questions:

- ~ *Did you develop any new procedures to speed up repetitive tasks?*
- ~ *How did you handle an increase in work demand, without additional assistance?*
- ~ *Are you more efficient than most? If so, why and how are you more efficient?*
- ~ *Did any projects you worked on increase productivity, or efficiency of an organisation or work area?*
- ~ *How did you deal with difficult time constraints?*
- ~ *How did you use technology and software to enhance work practices?*
- ~ *How do you respond to changing priorities?*

Developing a case for Common Selection Criteria and APS Values

I have already outlined common selection criteria and APS values in Chapter 9.

When addressing common selection criteria and APS values within your application, **it is not sufficient to simply state that you adhere to them**, you must:

- ~ Outline your understanding **AND**
- ~ Provide concrete examples of how you have applied these in the workplace

When addressing common selection criteria and APS values, you need to either address them directly, or alternatively you can 'value add' to your application, by addressing them indirectly within your application, if you do not need to specifically address public value based principles within a selection criterion.

Addressing APS values directly

You will find a large proportion of advertised positions require you to address these values directly, from entry level, right through to the senior executive level. If so ensure that you provide ample evidence of both your understanding and how you have specifically applied the values in the workplace.

A few examples of Selection Criteria relating to these values:

- ~ *A standard of personal integrity as required by the Commissioner of the Queensland Police Service*
- ~ *Exemplifies personal drive and integrity (From the SELC Framework)*
 - o *Professionalism and probity*
 - o *Risk-taking and personal courage*
 - o *Action orientation*
 - o *Resilience*
 - o *Self awareness*
 - o *Commitment to personal development*

Addressing APS values indirectly

You will sometimes come across an advertised position that does not require you to address these values directly. If this is the case, you can incorporate supporting evidence of your ability to act to a high level and with high standards of personal behaviour, by addressing these values **indirectly**, throughout your application.

Examples:

- o If addressing a question about team work, briefly outline how you value the diversity of ideas and values of other team members and adhere to EEO and Anti-Discrimination principles.
- o If addressing a question relating to management, provide evidence on how you managed performance in line with public sector values, promoted equity and diversity and ensured a high service delivery in line with the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders.
- o If addressing a question about providing a high level of customer service, provide evidence of your ability to deliver the service in line with codes of conduct and service charters e.g. fair and impartial advice, being responsive, and maintaining confidentiality.

Questions for Common Selection criteria and APS Values

- ~ *When did you need to make tough business decisions that were in the best interests of the organisation?*
- ~ *Was there a conflict of interest and how did you resolve it?*

- ~ *In what way have you supported differences in work colleagues, management and clients?*
- ~ *Have you been a member of a selection panel committee and how did you apply the principles of merit?*
- ~ *How do you ensure that the work area/operations are conducted professionally and to a high standard?*
- ~ *How do you ensure adherence to legislation, and organisational policies and procedures?*
- ~ *How have you ensured staff members adhered to professional standards, codes of conducts and service charters?*
- ~ *Have you taken steps to ensure unacceptable behaviour was stopped within your work area? (e.g. inappropriate jokes, inappropriate screen savers, bullying behaviour)*
- ~ *How have you fostered a culture of accountability, rather than blame?*
- ~ *How have you set high expectations for yourself and others within a workplace?*
- ~ *Do you readily undertake professional development courses to enhance your performance?*
- ~ *How do you ensure adherence to client service charters?*

Addressing selection criteria specifically for Occupational Health & Safety (OH & S) / Workplace Health & Safety (WH & S)

As already outlined in Chapter 9, there is a requirement that every person associated with a workplace must ensure their own workplace health and safety, and the workplace health and safety of others.

Different legislation will apply depending on which state or territory you reside in, or whether you are applying for a state/territory or federal position (for example, in Queensland, the legislation is referred to as the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*;) in New South Wales, it is the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000*; and at the federal level it is the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 1991*). However, the overall basis for all of this legislation is that **as an employee, you have the obligation to:**

- Obey all instructions of an employer regarding your health and safety and the health and safety of others;
- You must use personal protective equipment if it is provided and you have been trained to use it;
- You must not interfere with, or misuse anything that has been provided for your safety and the safety of others;
- You must not deliberately injure yourself.

In return, the workplace must provide an environment that prevents or minimises exposure to risk, with the objective of preventing anyone being killed, injured, or contracting an illness as a result of workplace activities.

When applying for a government job, some agencies still require that you specifically address selection criteria in relation to occupational health & safety. Some examples of such selection criteria include:

- *'Knowledge, understanding and commitment to principles of Occupational Health & Safety'.*
- *Understanding of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) principles and Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation plus ability to contribute to this culture.*

Questions to ask when addressing criteria relating to OH&S

- *Are you an occupational health and safety officer? If so, how do you contribute to the overall safety of the work area and organisation?*
- *In what ways do you ensure that the workplace is safe? (Adhere to procedures, working in an ergonomic way, identify and report risks, follow management instructions)*

Use the following method when addressing specific selection criteria relating to Occupational Health & Safety.

Step One

- Briefly outline your understanding of Occupational Health & Safety (as above); and

Step Two

- Provide examples of how you applied Occupational Health and Safety principles within the workplace. Examples might include: how you followed instructions in relation to a fire evacuation, how you applied office ergonomics to your workplace (if an office jockey), utilisation of protective equipment, or identification and reporting of a safety risk.

Step Three

- Include any relevant training relating to Occupational Health & Safety / Workplace Health & Safety.

When addressing selection criteria requiring you to demonstrate your understanding in relation to Occupational Health & Safety, it is not sufficient to merely outline OH & S policy. You **MUST** include specific examples of how you applied these principles within the workplace.

If you are applying for a position in which Occupational Health & Safety is a major feature, e.g. emergency personnel, or Occupational Health & Safety Officer, it is important to provide relevant examples of risk assessment (identification) and management, as well as demonstrating your understanding of the relevant legislation applicable to the position (e.g. state or federal).

When providing examples, ensure the example is one that is relevant to the position (context), and highlight any outcome or result (that is, don't provide an example of workplace ergonomics, if the position you are applying for is for a Paramedic Officer). The easiest methodology is to use either STAR or CAR (refer to Chapter 12), and within this framework outline the context, the hazard you identified, the analysis of the risk, the evaluation of the risk, the management of the risk and the review and monitoring of the risk.

How to address selection criteria for equal employment opportunity (EEO)

Within the public service sector, there is a requirement to ensure that all workplaces are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment. Many government organisations also provide programs that assist members of an EEO group to overcome past or present disadvantage.

The key EEO groups within Australia are women, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, members of racial, ethnic, and ethno-religious minority groups, and people with a disability. These groups are targeted on the basis of their under-representation within the workplace.

Different legislation will apply depending on whether you are applying for a federal or state position, but the overall basis of this legislation is that **as an employee, you have the obligation to:**

- Recognise and respect the diversity, skills and talents of all other staff members.
- Act to prevent discrimination, harassment and bullying against others in your workplace.
- Respect the cultural and social differences among other staff members and clients.
- Treat ALL people fairly, that is, don't discriminate against, harass or bully other work colleagues.

In return, the workplace must provide an environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment, recruitment and promotion based on the principles of competitive merit, equal access to benefits and conditions, and equal access to training and development.

When applying for a government job, many agencies still require that you specifically address selection criteria in relation to EEO. Some examples of such selection criteria include:

- *Proven ability to work with staff from diverse backgrounds and to participate in a workplace that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment (Note: this covers EEO, Anti Discrimination and Occupational Health & Safety) – link to article addressing selection criteria covering Occupational Health & Safety.*
- *Knowledge of contemporary human resource management practices and demonstrated commitment to their implementation (Note: this covers EEO, Anti Discrimination, Workplace Diversity and Occupational Health & Safety).*
- *Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Equal Employment Opportunity principles and practices.*

Some less obvious examples in which you will still need to address the issue of EEO /Anti Discrimination include:

- *Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, customer service and equity in the workplace.*
- *Demonstrated capacity to develop and maintain an organisational culture based on ethical professional and personal behaviours and corporate values.*
- *A demonstrated commitment to the implementation of the principles of workplace diversity, participative work practices and occupational health and safety.*
- *Demonstrates professionalism and probity (from the Senior Executive Capability Framework, which includes performance indicators relating to EEO, such as modelling public sector values and ensuring that individuals within the functional area adhere to these standards at all times).*

When addressing selection criteria relating to EEO, use the following method:

Step One

- Briefly outline your understanding of EEO (as above); and

Step Two

- Provide examples of how you applied EEO within the workplace. Examples might include: how you supported and respected the individuality of others, maximised individual contributions by valuing cultural and individual differences, prevented harassment within the workplace (e.g. inappropriate screen savers, or office jokes), or an example of how you ensured you did not show favouritism or bias when dealing with staff or clients.

Step Three

- Include any relevant training relating to EEO.

When addressing selection criteria requiring you to demonstrate your understanding in relation to EEO, it is not sufficient to merely outline EEO policy. You **MUST** include specific examples of how you applied these principles within the workplace.

Before you proceed to Part Four

- ~ **Do you understand exactly what the requirements of the agency are?**
- ~ **Have you undertaken research of the agency relevant to the classification level and requirements of the position?**
 - ~ **What is the overall responsibility of the work area and position?**
 - ~ **What are the relevant publications and policy statements related to the work area and role? (Reports, policy, legislation, codes of conduct etc.)**
- ~ **What are your hard and soft skills relevant to this and other roles?**
- ~ **Have you compiled a comprehensive portfolio that catalogues your career?**
- ~ **Have you developed a case for the core selection criteria that you need to address?**
- ~ **What are your achievements? ***** (STOP! Do not proceed any further until you have a list of tangible achievements. If you need assistance with this task, go back immediately to Chapter 10).**

PART FOUR

ADDRESSING SELECTION CRITERIA

Chapter 12

The 7 Steps to Writing Sizzling Responses to Selection Criteria

If you have read Part one through to Part three carefully, you have now completed all the essential ground work relating to understanding the process and identifying your skills and achievements. In addition you have written supporting documentation, such as your résumé.

Now it is time to start working on the **MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT IN THE PROCESS**: the document providing your responses to the selection criteria.

In this section, I provide you with the 7 steps to creating sizzling responses to selection criteria. By following all 7 steps you will end up with high impact statements that will easily distinguish you from the rest of the candidates and will greatly enhance your chances of getting through to interview.

Step One – Stick to the basic rules (or face elimination)

Before you get started addressing selection criteria, **I have listed some basic rules you must adhere to**. Some of these have already been highlighted within this manual, but I have repeated them to reinforce their importance in the process.

Rule One

You must address ALL the selection criteria! This might seem like stating the 'bleeding obvious', but a significant number of candidates fail to address one or more selection criteria. By failing to address all the selection criteria, including desirables, it will make it difficult, for the selection panel to assess your suitability against the criterion or criteria. That will make it unlikely you will be selected for interview.

Remember, the **onus is on you** to demonstrate your suitability against the selection criteria. It is not the responsibility of the panel members to second guess your suitability, or to refer to your other documents such as your résumé to check that your qualifications and experience meet their requirements.

Rule Two

Do not EVER refer the selection panel to your résumé, or any other part of the document when addressing criteria. Instead, treat every criterion as a separate short essay and if necessary, repeat information. Remember, each criterion is scored and weighted and a selection panel member won't have the time, or the inclination to search through your documents trying to locate the paragraph, or information you were referring to.

For example:

- ~ Instead of 'refer to résumé for list of relevant courses', insert a heading under the criterion and list the courses.
- ~ Don't state, 'refer to selection criterion 3' – simply repeat the relevant information contained in selection criteria. Alternatively develop another evidence-based example that can be utilised specifically for the criterion.

Rule Three

Make sure you address all parts of the criterion. Too often candidates fail to address all parts of the criterion, hence significantly weakening their application.

For example:

SC 6

Ability to maintain effectiveness and motivation and the ability to respect and accept requests, directions and workforce change from supervisory staff with a positive team-oriented attitude

This criterion requires an evidence-based examples relating to:

- ~ Ability to maintain effectiveness and motivation on the job
- ~ Ability to support and respect management relating to directions and organisational change initiatives – combined with a shared enthusiasm and positive team attitude relating to these directions and organisational change initiatives.

Rule Four

Make sure you follow the agency's directions, relating to page limits, word counts, layout and presentation. Not all agencies list these requirements, but if they do, make sure you follow their directions **EXACTLY**.

Step Two – Develop a framework

Before you start diligently writing your application, it is important to plan an outline, of what you are going to write under each criterion. **By providing this framework at the very beginning, you will not only save time, but you will ensure that you provide the most relevant examples and information for each criterion.**

This framework is where you start incorporating the ground work you covered in Part III, relating to your hard and soft skills, achievements, career portfolio and outline relating to developing a specific case for core and common selection criteria.

Below I have provided you a working example, so you see how a relevant framework could be structured, before writing an application.

Example:

Name: Katrina Williams

Position: Customer Service Officer / APS3

Overall responsibility

To provide customer centred services that will enhance the quality, consistency and scope of information and enrolment services that will better meet the needs and expectation of existing and prospective students, staff and clients at TAFE.

To provide customer services, which are sales focused on the available program and course information.

Portfolio of experience, skills and achievements for Katrina Williams

Hard and soft skills

- ~ Email distribution
- ~ Internal mail control
- ~ Office equipment inventory
- ~ Record keeping
- ~ Travel and accommodation arrangements
- ~ Problem solving
- ~ Advising
- ~ Written correspondence
- ~ Instructing
- ~ Conflict resolution
- ~ Range of software skills, including MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Excel
- ~ Bookkeeping
- ~ Budget keeping
- ~ Investigating discrepancies
- ~ Cash handling
- ~ Supervision of Staff
- ~ Training of staff
- ~ Data entry
- ~ Dictaphone typing
- ~ Use of office equipment
- ~ Fielding and directing telephone calls
- ~ Shorthand
- ~ Filing
- ~ Gathering quotes
- ~ Maintenance of management diary

- ~ Functions coordination
- ~ Generating reports

Education and Qualifications

- ~ Advanced Course in MS Excel
- ~ Advanced Course in MS Word
- ~ Certificate II Office Administration

Professional Experience

Office Administrator – Department of Health

Scope of accountability

- ~ Reception duties
- ~ Correspondence
- ~ Reports
- ~ Rosters
- ~ Events management
- ~ Collection and distribution of mail
- ~ Banking
- ~ Reconciliations
- ~ Overtime returns
- ~ Maintenance of personnel files

Achievements

- ~ Developed new filing system
- ~ Developed new templates for standard correspondence
- ~ Successfully coordinated large event involving 1,000 participants

Retail Manager – K-Mart

Scope of accountability

- ~ Supervision of staff
- ~ Rostering
- ~ Reconciliation of tills
- ~ Customer complaints
- ~ Merchandising
- ~ Housekeeping
- ~ Sales
- ~ Inventory management

Achievements

- ~ Increased staff retention rates
- ~ Increase in profit recorded in section
- ~ Email letter complimenting me of service provided by customer

Administration Officer – Training Section at Customs

Scope of accountability

- ~ File management
- ~ Advanced data entry
- ~ Coordination of payments
- ~ Stationery reconciliations
- ~ Procurement of training equipment
- ~ Telephone enquiries
- ~ Correspondence
- ~ Secretary of lead trainer and four training units
- ~ Budget management

Achievements

- ~ Developed all the procedures and policy relating to the administration of the work area
- ~ Developed templates
- ~ Outstanding performance appraisal received by Team Leader

Selection Criteria Responses – Framework

Note: I have used the STAR model, when providing the framework. The STAR model is outlined in Step Three.

SC 1

Proven ability to work as a collaborative and effective team member and actively contribute to the team's success ensuring the service expectations of a diverse and dynamic organisation are met

- ~ STAR 1
Provide outline of role in working with team members at the Department of Health, including training of new Administration Officer, working with the Workplace Health and Safety Officer, offering help to staff in regards to information and rosters, resulting in an effective and timely service.
- ~ STAR 2
Provide example of the management of a major event at the Department of Health, including working other team members. Outcome of ability to work effectively with team resulted in a successful delivery of function for over 1,000 people.
- ~ Insert comment contained in performance appraisal regarding ability to support colleagues and management.

SC 2

Ability to identify and convert business opportunities (sales) including the ability to meet sales targets and build customer loyalty and confidence.

- ~ STAR 1
Provide comprehensive outline of role as Retail Manager at K-Mart including the provision of high standards of customer service and building customer loyalty. Highlight increased profit in section, while Retail Manager.
- ~ Incorporate email received from customer, relating to the high level of service received, while working at K-Mart.
- ~ STAR 2
Provide a short outline relating to transferable skills gained in the Department of Health, including managing customer service requirements, providing information and ensuring up-to-date and accurate information was provided.

SC 3

Demonstrated ability and high-level skills in the use of computer systems, software packages, and web-based technologies.

- ~ STAR
Outline software skills, utilised in both the Department of Health and Customs, including use of electronic computer systems, database entry, utilisation of MS Word for reports and memorandums and the successful development of MS Word templates, which streamlined office processes at Customs
- ~ Insert relevant qualifications

- Advanced Course in MS Excel
- Advanced Course in MS Word
- Certificate II Office Administration

SC 4

Demonstrated ability to prioritise and plan workflow to achieve outcomes with identified timeframes while displaying initiative within a team environment to ensure excellence in customer service.

STAR 1

Outline role as Administration Officer, including detailing administrative tasks undertaken in order to meet team members' requirements, and using initiative in regards to the successful development of all work procedures, which ensured all tasks were met within allocated time frames.

STAR 2

Provide example of working with team members at the Department of Health, including coordination of complex rosters, providing assistance and information, contributing in team meetings and providing a high level of customer service at the reception desk.

Step Three – Use a selection criteria model

The key to addressing selection criteria is to provide an **evidence-based response** to each of the selection criteria. Although it is evident to you that you possess these relevant skills and knowledge, you need to convince panel members that you actually possess them

It is vital you avoid writing statements that claim you meet the selection criteria, without providing any evidence.

Consider the following *Before* and *After* example. The *Before* example simply makes a statement, without any examples to demonstrate the soft skill relating to communication and interpersonal skills. The *After* example provides tangible evidence of communication and interpersonal skills and more importantly, how this soft skill contributed to the company.

Before

I have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, evidenced throughout my long career. At all times, I communicate appropriately, write clearly and ensure that I get on with people from all walks of life.

After

I have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including communicating effectively with people from all walks of life, through positive lines of communication.

In my role as Markets & Purchasing Manager, I was responsible for sales and business development for new markets at S.A. McKenzie. Within this role, I nurtured a wide range of contacts and strategic alliances with clients and publishers. This included responding to feedback from clients to improve service delivery, taking the time to talk and listen to others, and communicating information in an effective and timely manner. As a result of my ability to communicate and establish effective working relationships, I successfully recorded the largest sales growth within the company, with up to 45 new customers within a 12 month period, including domestic and international institutions.

As Assistant Manager/Saturday Manager at Mart Books P/L, I was responsible for the day to day operation of the bookstore, including dealing effectively with a wide range of people – from senior managers, customers, through to the supervision of casual staff members. Within this role, I exhibited strong interpersonal skills by being willing to consult and listen, I ensured that staff valued team work, including treating all people with respect and courtesy, and I provided constructive feedback to colleagues and also allocated sufficient time for training.

Within this role, I liaised extensively with a diverse range of people from all walks of life. This included resolving customer complaints, providing advice and recommendations and ensuring that colleagues, customers and other stakeholders received and understood the information communicated to them. This included considering the sophistication and information needs of others and matching the level and complexity of communications to the skills, knowledge and experience of the audience.

As a result of my effective interpersonal skills, I was able to engage with people from all levels, and I established a very strong team, reflected in an extremely low turnover of casual staff members.

The Before example simply states that the candidate has the relevant experience. The After example provides the panel with tangible examples.

A large number of agencies suggest using a particular selection criteria model when addressing selection criteria. The two major selection criteria models utilised across agencies at federal, state and local level are **STAR** and **CAR**.

You will also come across other selection criteria models, such as **PAR (Problem, Activity, Result)**, or **SAR (Situation, Activity and Results)**.

If an agency specifies a particular selection criteria model, then it is **IMPERATIVE** that you use that model when addressing the selection criteria.

If a particular selection criteria model is not specified in the application pack, then use one or more of the models, as they are all an excellent way of ensuring that you write an evidence-based response to selection criteria.

As a professional selection criteria writer, I always use a model as a general basis in which to build a complete case for the selection panel, as they provide a framework in regards to ensuring an **evidence-based response, with a focus on contributions and achievements** (as they all end with a 'R' for results).

STAR Methodology

STAR is the acronym standing for:

- ~ **Situation**
- ~ **Task**
- ~ **Actions/Activities**
- ~ **Results**

Example:

Selection Criteria

Demonstrated ability and high-level skills in the use of computer systems and software packages, in particular MS Word.

Situation (Outline of context - I usually briefly outline the job title and organisation)

As Workplace Health and Safety Inspector and Workplace Health and Safety Senior Inspector at the Department of Industrial Relations – Workplace Health and Safety, I was responsible for the investigation of workplace accidents.

Task (Outline of your overall responsibility, task/project)

In this role I conducted audits, including management audits, provided assistance in relation to the prosecution of breaches of the Act, along with general training and mentoring of staff members. In undertaking these responsibilities, I used word processing skills on a daily basis. I also streamlined operations, through the effective utilisation of IT to enhance working practices. This involved:

Actions/Activities (How you did it)

- ~ *The effective development of template documentation relating to investigations and prosecutions. This included the development of a wide range of documents in MS Word to ensure the accurate processing of investigations and to ensure all relevant information was recorded*
- ~ *The development of templates in MS Word for summary of facts and records of interview*
- ~ *The development and maintenance of a state-wide briefing notes system in MS Word*
- ~ *Development and implementation of a computer merge format program for breach reports*
- ~ *Extensive use of MS Word for drafting memorandums and other correspondence*
- ~ *Development of IT processes to ensure accurate recording for investigation prosecution records*
- ~ *Training of inspectors in relation to MS Word and the utilisation of new templates and briefing notes developed*
- ~ *The extensive utilisation of departmental specific software Genscope*

Results (What were the outcomes / achievements / contributions?)

As a result of my software and computer skills I developed an effective template structure for the organisation in investigations and prosecutions, which significantly streamlined operations and eliminated duplication in effort. I also successfully developed and implemented a computer merge format program for breach reports, which significantly enhanced operations/time management, with a reduction in the process from four days to half a day.

CAR Methodology

CAR is the acronym standing for:

- ~ **Circumstances**
- ~ **Actions/Activities**
- ~ **Results**

Example:

Selection Criteria

Capacity for effective management to optimise the achievement of agreed goals (Head of Department – Information Communication Technology)

Circumstances (Context and overall responsibility)

As Acting Head of Department (Technology), a key part of my role has been the management of the timely delivery of the stated goals and vision for the ETRF, including the ICT's for learning strategy, with view to integrate ICT's into the Education Queensland curriculum, teaching and learning. (Information and Communication Technologies for Learning – School Information Kit 2003 – 2004).

Actions/Activities (How you did it)

Key management responsibilities have included ensuring the integration of ICT's into subject and curriculum areas, ensuring teachers have the necessary capability to effectively engage with and use ICT's in productive pedagogy and ensuring teachers and students have access to ICT resources and support. This has involved:

- ~ *Collaboration with teaching and technical support staff in order to ascertain the strengths and weakness of ICT across all curriculum areas*
- ~ *Review and management of the physical, financial and human resources available for ICT*
- ~ *Collective assessment of the way forward and markers requiring actions and outcomes.*
- ~ *Coaching of staff in relation to taking a committed philosophical and physical ownership of ICT initiatives that utilise productive pedagogies with a united shared vision.*
- ~ *Collaborative review of how best to integrate ICT in the education Queensland curriculum, teaching and learning.*

Results (What were the outcomes / achievements / contributions?)

ICT Benchmarks that I have achieved through the effective management of resources, include:

- ~ **ICT Support** - *Development of an online maintenance register, which allowed for better utilisation of technical support, including the provision of guidelines for turn-around time for repairs and support and requests for assistance or advice*
- ~ **Learning, teaching and the curriculum** – *The successful development of ITC laboratories (1 new laboratory and 2 revamped laboratories) and the opening of laboratories at lunchtime, enabling students to source ICT tools and resources.*
- ~ **Connectivity** - *Development of an intranet, allowing for school wide access to relevant information and resources and providing a platform for self paced individual learning packages for students and in-service package for teachers*
- ~ **ICT Infrastructure** – *(a) Enhancement and upgrade of existing standard operating system, which streamlined the system and enabled the school to introduce new software and teaching packages (b) Established network infrastructure for Annex, including the delivery of an online network, which allowed for the development of innovative pedagogy.*

As you can see from the two examples, **there is very little difference between the two models, with the C from the CAR model**, being the combination of Situation and Task as outlined in the STAR model.

Please note: It is unnecessary to use the subheadings that I have inserted into these examples (although some agencies do suggest this, when laying out your document). The headings used in these examples are for your benefit, so you can see how in practice these selection criteria models can be utilised.

Emphasise the 'R' of the STAR and CAR

I know I am starting to sound like a broken record and the **achievements mantra** is becoming boring, but remember, the difference between an average application and an impressive application is your ability to provide tangible evidence of your achievements and contributions.

At a lower classification level, demonstrable achievements could propel your application to the top of the interview pile.

At higher classification levels or when going for a promotion, your demonstrable achievements are essential, as they are tangible proof of your ability to deliver at a more senior level.

As a professional selection criteria writer, achievements and contributions are so important that if a selection criteria model is not specified by the agency, I actually shift achievements to the opening paragraph, before outlining my client's actions in the role.

Likewise, if a word limit applies at the executive level, I try to use a 75/25 ratio, with 75 percent of the focus on achievements and outcomes and 25 percent on putting the experience into context for panel members.

Opening and Concluding Statements

Opening and concluding statements are not crucial, but if a word, page or character limit does not apply they can add the finishing touches to your application, reinforce your understanding of the role, as well as reiterate for selection panel members, why you are qualified for the position.

There are also certain agencies that recommend that candidates use opening and closing statements and if this is the case then you will need to include them when addressing selection criteria.

Opening Statements

The most common opening statement is a **belief statement** briefly outlining your understanding of the agency's requirements or your belief that you meet the agency's requirements. The belief statement is then followed with evidence.

As with all opening statements, keep it brief and succinct, make sure it is always followed by concrete evidence and ensure that they mirror the requirements of the selection criteria.

Example One:

An example of an opening statement that simply states that the candidate meets the agency's selection criteria.

SC 1

Demonstrated high level specialist knowledge of the structure, dynamics and key issues associated with elite level coaching and the development of elite and talented athletes for success in the national and international sporting arenas

I have extensive specialist knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues relating to the structure, dynamics and key issues for elite level coaching and have provided strategic high level advice relating to coaching and sports science.

Example Two:

An example of an opening statement that incorporates a belief statement in line with agency's strategic plan.

SC1

Capacity for leadership in education within the context of Education Queensland's strategic plan

I believe my role as a leader is to ensure that the objectives of Queensland State Education "QSE" – 2010 are clearly evident in my daily practice. This includes ensuring that I work with others to influence their personal and organisational values, to promote continuous learning and to improve outcomes for all stakeholders involved in the process of educating students for the future.

Concluding Statements

Concluding statements can be used to reaffirm your potential to perform successfully in the new role, by providing a quick summary as to how your skills match those required or stating how you plan to carry out the role. (If using the latter, ensure that you have a very clear understanding of what the agency requires from a candidate)

Example One:

I am confident that my detailed understanding of literacy, associated pedagogies and assessment and reporting will enable me to provide strategic advice to stakeholders in order to implement Literacy – the Key to Learning Framework for Action, including: increasing professional knowledge and skills of teachers, assessing and improving literacy learning outcomes for a diverse student population; and improving literacy capability in all areas of the curriculum together with enhancing literacy leadership within schools.

Example Two:

As Program Manager, I will lead staff in relation to ensuring they change their focus, when managing the implementation of ICT reforms, in line with organisational requirements and strategic direction.

Inserting written material to support your response to the selection criteria

You can strategically use written material from third parties that comment on your performance within your application. Such material can include:

- ~ Written references
- ~ Performance appraisals
- ~ Emails received from clients that comment on your high performance and ability to deliver services in a timely and competent fashion.

When using this kind of material, don't go overboard and incorporate the full report, email or reference. Use short, sharp and succinct extracts that back up the evidence you have already provided.

Example:

This selection criterion related to professionalism, integrity and drive. I simply inserted a section of a letter of thanks my client had received in relation to a voluntary activity that reflected well on these attributes.

I voluntarily assisted Internal Investigations Branch by performing covert duties during a targeted integrity test. In a letter of thanks, the Officer in Charge, Internal Investigations Branch stated: *'Mr Smith's professional approach, enthusiasm and adaptability contributed to the effectiveness of the operation. His efforts reflected creditably on himself'*.

Inserting qualifications to support your response to the selection criteria

To provide further evidence and to reinforce your suitability against various selection criteria, include qualifications, or professional development courses relevant to the criterion at the end of your statement, if you have not already incorporated the information within a STAR or CAR.

Example:

For this team leader role, I simply inserted relevant qualifications, after the STAR examples relating to management of staff.

KSC 2

Substantial skills in managing and motivating a production team by setting challenging targets and providing technical support to ensure results are achieved.

Evidence Provided

Further information to support application

First Line Supervisor (Qualification) Course - Training and Development Section
Modules included:

- ~ *Planning*
- ~ *Organising*
- ~ *Leadership I*
- ~ *Leadership II*
- ~ *Leadership III*
- ~ *Controlling*

Recruitment and Selection Accreditation Workbook Human Resources

How to juggle an example (STAR / CAR), so it meets a number of selection criteria. (Trade Secret Revealed)

One of the most difficult elements in addressing selection criteria is coming up with relevant examples to use within the application. However, it is not that difficult once you know the various generic elements of all the major selection criteria, such as management, team work, and interpersonal, communication, and organisational skills (Refer to my notes on these generic elements in Chapter 11).

Below is an example of how you can use ONE example of a project or achievement, and transform that example so it easily fits the requirements of a number of selection criteria, including, communication skills, team work etc. This is done by re-focussing the generic elements to meet the particular selection criteria in question.

Example:

As Marketing Officer, I managed the development of a global intranet site for the project finance group, to ensure all global offices had key information relating to the business development and marketing of the group. **Outcome:** Improved global bid processes and information across complex organisation.

3 Selection criteria examples using the above example:

1. Communication & Interpersonal Skills

At White & Case Limited Liability Partnership, I worked as Marketing Officer for a specialist group of partners involved in global project finance. One of my key responsibilities was to manage the development of a global intranet site for the project finance group to enhance communications within the group.

Pivotal to this position was the ability to communicate clearly, respectfully and appropriately. This involved:

- Successfully obtaining appropriate senior management approval for the site and feedback from key global partners as to content.
- Successfully facilitating full cooperation from central business development, members of business development around the network, and finance information, in order to avoid duplication; appoint editors and obtain relevant material for the site.
- I successfully negotiated with the director of IT for appropriate resources for the site, including SQL script, development of an appropriate database, security measures and global publication of the site.
- I persuaded a team of reluctant paralegals and law clerks to assist in the production of documents and in the proofreading of the site.
- I wrote all the content for the site (100 pages in total), ensuring unambiguous and clear content.

I received extremely favourable comments and feedback as to content, layout and useability of the site. The information on the site made a positive contribution to the business development and marketing of the group, including:

- Streamlining the global bid process, by ensuring improved brand consistency across all offices and the avoidance of duplication in effort, with a library of bid precedents previously unavailable to business development and partners.
- The provision of timely access to job leads, which resulted in White & Case winning new business.
- Global access to information bibles and templates, which significantly improved the international information service at White & Case, with 24 hour access to the vital material across all offices in the Americas, Latin America, Asia, Indian Sub-Continent, Middle East and Europe.

2. Team work

As Marketing Officer at White & Case Limited Partnership, I successfully worked with other team members in relation to providing support services to global partners. In this position, I worked as part of a wider business and marketing development team, including communicating information relevant to the area to other sections, contacting other team members in order to obtain information and clarification, and providing support to other team members, in particular sharing ideas, resources and information.

A specific example of my team work was during the development of a global intranet site. Here, I worked collaboratively with other team members within the firm, from partners, central business development, and director of IT, through to paralegals and law clerks. This involved:

- Providing feedback to team members on the development of the intranet, listening to feedback and taking the time to talk and listen to others, in order to resolve the more complex aspects of the development of the intranet.
- Participation in team meetings to discuss the project, including meetings with the director of IT to resolve the technical issues.
- Guiding and coaching the paralegals and law clerks, as well as supporting their work.
- Ensuring collaborative participation with the central business development team.
- Providing ongoing support to senior partners, including technical and information support.

My understanding of the wider team and ability to draw on the strengths of other team members ensured the successful completion of the site, which made a significant contribution to the business development and marketing of the group, including:

Same outcomes as used under selection criteria example 1 – Communication & Interpersonal skills.

3. Computer Competencies

At White & Case Limited Liability Partnership, I worked as Marketing Officer for a specialist group of partners involved in global project finance. One of my key responsibilities was to manage the development of a global intranet site for the project finance group to enhance communications within the group.

Within this position, I used my keyboard and software knowledge and experience to successfully develop the intranet. This included:

- The extensive use of Excel to manage online spreadsheets relating to various files managed by the firm. This included using my knowledge of entries formulae and functions, menu commands, the use of excel function keys and the use of keystroke shortcuts.
- I used email extensively for all correspondence relating to the development of the site.
- I used MS FrontPage to develop the pages for the intranet, including links, use of images, tables, validating forms, use of templates, integration of a database, webpage layout, character and paragraph formatting, through to learning basic HTML.
- I used the internet to research issues and provide information online for the partnership, with advanced skills in using research tools online.
- I extensively used MS Word, including management of files, graphics and diagrams, documentation security, creation of templates, through to the utilisation and use of keystroke shortcuts.

As a result of my computer competencies, I was able to successfully complete the site, which made a significant contribution to the business development and marketing of the group, including:

Same outcomes as used under selection criteria examples – Communication & Interpersonal Skills, and Team work.

As you can see from the above examples, you can simply change the actions while using a CAR or STAR example, so they match the specific requirements of the selection criteria.

****BEYOND the STAR or CAR MODEL

I have just outlined how to use the STAR or CAR model to successfully address selection criteria. These are great methodologies to use, but they do have their limitations:

- ~ When using the STAR or CAR model, it can be necessary to provide more than one example per criterion, so that panel members get a solid overview of your experience. This can be problematic, in particular with the increasing use of page and/or word limits.
- ~ Using a STAR or CAR example can make your application too narrow in focus. One solution is to provide macro STARS (rather than small micro examples). Again, this can be problematic if you have strict page and word counts, or you have loads of really good examples that can be utilised.

If the application does not specifically state that you need to address the selection criteria using STAR, CAR, PAR or SAR, there are other great methodologies that you can utilise to effectively address the selection criteria.

Portfolio Methodology

If the criterion relates to demonstrable experience or knowledge, then a great way to provide demonstrable evidence is to simply provide a comprehensive portfolio of your work. This works really well if you are a professional, such as a Project Manager, Road Engineer, Information Technology Professional or Contract Administrator etc.

By listing a portfolio of work, you provide ample evidence of your demonstrable knowledge and experience. See the example below:

SC 5

Demonstrated ability, and a record of achievement in successfully managing and coordinating significant projects within a large, complex and changing organisation, and in a commercial environment

I have **substantial** experience relating to the coordination of significant projects within large complex organisations, including change management and associated methodologies. Throughout my career, I have implemented change and managed projects in general, including whole-of-government projects. My experience is vast, and includes managing project budgets of up to \$20m. A few selected examples include:

- ~ As **Senior Project Manager, Strategic ICT Projects, Government Treasury**, Information & Communication Branch; I developed/implemented the project mandates for various strategic projects, including CITEC, in-sourcing, server virtualisation and printer consolidation. Successfully reduced TCO over five years by 50%, or \$600k.
- ~ As **Manager at ICT and ICT Infrastructure at Government Treasury**; I developed the project briefs for various strategic projects. Successfully identified cost savings in the vicinity of \$500,000 per annum in hardware and maintenance.
- ~ As **Senior Project/Programme Manager Strategic Projects for Government Treasury**; I successfully implemented an enterprise-class data centre, developed branch and organisational level IT strategies, and wrote Treasury's technology roadmap. Outcomes included saving the organisation \$250,000 through successful negotiations with the vendor providing desktop hardware.
- ~ As **Portfolio Manager, Corporate Projects within the Project Agency**; I evaluated a portfolio of 48 projects and made recommendations as to which projects to pursue.
- ~ As **Principle Project Manager at Mains Work**; I successfully implemented a 4.5 million dollar project/SOE and new desktop and server hardware (for DELL as the main contractor) throughout the business and across the state of Queensland, with minimum disruptive impact on the business.
- ~ As **Project Manager for Exxon Energy**; I led a project relating to the implementation of an end-to-end IT solution and a consolidated, new, Australia wide internet service infrastructure. Key outcomes included realising annual benefits of \$500,000 through improvements to productivity, operational efficiency, security and workflow, and savings of \$200,000 through the development and implementation of an automated server installation process.

Punchy STARS

One way to overcome the limitations of the STAR or CAR methodology is to provide a list of punchy STARS. This method can be particularly useful if you have a word or page limit. The advantage of such a method is that you can highlight everything you have achieved in a very succinct manner. See the example below:

Analytical Capability

Throughout my professional career, advanced analytical skills, problem solving and the ability to translate complex issues into coherent solutions have been paramount. Selected demonstrable examples from within FIU include:

- **I successfully worked on a project that identified asset replacement needs over a five year period.** During this project, I discovered inconsistencies with the data. I resolved this issue through advanced analytical skills, including the thorough analysis of data and identification of assets. I made written recommendations to management that resolved key issues relating to data cleansing and compliance.
- I have successfully **conducted audits** including FIU Asset Revaluation Reserve and treatment of FIU revalue disposal assets and treatment of FIU held for sale assets. This has involved identifying irregularities, research (evidentiary material, non-financial information, legislation/regulations), and interpretation, collating and analysis of a range of information. My advanced analytical skills have ensured the appropriate identification of, and resolution of, problems. For example, I am currently developing a new process for Held of Sale Assets.
- I successfully undertook a compliance review of FIU Fees & Charges as per the Tasmanian Auditor General Report No. 98 for 2008, tabled in parliament. The review encompassed identifying through communication and research, the current fee structure, undertaking an analysis of legislative requirements, and identifying management needs and expectations. After evaluating information, I was able to submit a comprehensive report outlining a full QPS fee overview, compliance issues and provide possible cost effective recommendations. In addition, I used the information to successfully update and revise the existing procedures manual.
- At a strategic level, I have provided advice to the Finance Director; outlining strategic direction of the unit, including analysis of, and reporting on, issues relating to resourcing and staff within the unit. This analysis and advice has ensured the effective use of resources within the unit.

Content, relevant job descriptions and accomplishments

The STAR and CAR methodology was developed to ensure that candidates focussed on putting their experience into context, highlighted tasks that were of interest to the selection panel and that achievements and benefits were successfully highlighted (namely the R = Results of the STAR or CAR).

If you end up writing an application, in which you successfully put your experience into **context, demonstrate tasks that are of interest to the prospective employer and focus on how the employer will benefit from hiring you**, then even though you have not used the CAR or STAR in the strict sense, you will still have written an effective application.

SO, use the check list below and make sure you have incorporated the following:

- ~ You have put your experience into context for selection panel members.
- ~ You have talked about your experience and tasks that are relevant to the position / employer.
- ~ You have talked about your achievements (how the employer will benefit from hiring you).

See the examples below:

CONTEXT

In my position as **Assistant Director** (Australian Tax Office), I provided high level input in regards to the development and delivery of a governance proficiency model, to strengthen organisational capability.

OUTCOME / RESULT

In this complex strategic role, I contributed directly to the **strategic direction of the whole of ATO** and injected a strategic perspective in the areas of learning & development and governance processes, which are clearly linked to significant changes taking place within the agency.

TASKS/EXPERIENCES

Core to this position was identifying and understanding the current key issues and trends, the development of a working model, evaluating the extent to which potential outputs would satisfy ATO requirements, and the incorporation of planning and direction, which was clearly linked to business and ATO outcomes, including vision, goals and objectives.

In this response, you can see how, even though a traditional STAR or CAR is utilised, the response still clearly outlines the context, actions and results. I have included the headings: Context, Outcome/Results, and Tasks/Experiences, for your benefit.

CONTEXT and OUTCOME/RESULT

On secondment to the position of **Interviewing and Analyst Officer**, I easily exceeded performance, by achieving 149% in the number of applications processed. Quickly adapting to the new environment, I took full accountability for a number of investigations/interviews.

TASKS/EXPERIENCES

This included determining the process before proceeding, tracking process, through to ensuring full compliance with relevant legislative, policy and regulatory framework. I also took full responsibility for my own learning to achieve results, such as sitting in on interviews in order to obtain a high level of technical knowledge and expertise in the area.

Again, you can see that although the traditional STAR or CAR is not utilised, the response clearly puts the experience into context, and talks about actions and results. I often put the results/achievements first, as this is a really great way to get a reader's attention straight away.

Step Four – Incorporate your understanding of the position and agency in the selection criteria

Write to the level required

Of the thousands of applications I have reviewed over the years, one of the **biggest mistakes candidates make, is the failure to write to the level required.**

It is crucial if you are applying for a promotion or a position at a higher classification to write to an appropriate level that reflects the responsibilities of the position.

While providing an example of how you resolved a minor office dispute, might be acceptable at entry level, responses based on relatively minor matters simply will not suffice at higher level classifications.

Remember, the higher the classification level, the more complex, challenging and demanding the role will be, and the greater the focus should be on the bigger picture, rather than small issues and examples within your selection criteria.

The Before and After examples below, highlight how you can ensure that you are pitching to the right level in order to meet the demands of the role in question. They relate to a senior administration position with a budget accountability of \$8 million associated with the management of a large scale project.

Before:

SC 1

Relevant demonstrable experience in the management of administration and office or project coordination

*My **project coordination** skills can be demonstrated by the following example.*

Whilst I was employed at Deloitte Australia, the company decided to join their international offices in donating their staff's time for one day to charity. I volunteered to lead this event for Qld. There was a lot of coordination involved in bringing together 50 staff to work for the community for one day. This involved:

- ~ contacting organisations to establish what we could do for them on the dedicated day*
- ~ working out which options were feasible*
- ~ organising the external resources that we wanted there on the day*
- ~ planning the logistics for day in regards to teams, travel, and equipment*
- ~ setting up and coordinating the day*

On the day, twenty-five staff planted 500 trees at wetlands.

Another twenty-went to the children's hospital where they:

- ~ painted the inside of 4 family accommodation units*
- ~ loaded software on PC's for the children's learning centre*
- ~ packed showbags for "bluey day"*
- ~ read to the children in the wards*
- ~ put on a barbecue for staff and patients*
- ~ We hired clowns, a face painter, and even the fire brigade with Blazer Bear turned up.*

The day was a very rewarding, team building, morale boosting exercise for staff, and a benefit to the community.

While the client had provided a couple of STAR examples, the evidence provided related to a junior role with micro details that did nothing to address the key requirements relating to a senior administration role for a large and complex project.

After:

SC 1

Relevant demonstrable experience in the management of administration and office or project coordination

Throughout my career, I have gained extensive experience in the successful management of administrative and project processes, ranging from the supervision of staff, through to the management of administrative change initiatives, including the introduction of new technologies, systems and procedures.

*In my current position as **Program Administrator**, I provide support to the IM coordinator at the council. Within this role, I provide key support in the coordination of the IM Program Project, including the preparation of reports, the development of processes, the management of project registrars, tracking resources and scheduling. This involves:*

- ~ Management of the administration of and budget review process (budget \$6 million), including reviewing financial allocations against identified priorities, objectives and outcomes, including review of expenses, project authorisation activities, cost estimation and cost/benefit analysis. This includes maintaining a balance between short and long term outcomes and reviewing functional area targets and budgets*
- ~ Utilisation of relevant project management software*
- ~ Management of vendors, contractors or consultants*
- ~ The management and coordination of project procedures and processes, including scheduling, the successful development of templates, preparation of reports, correspondence and presentations.*

To date, I have successfully developed record management systems, provided templates and detailed procedural notes, as well as carefully managed the budget, in line with a demonstrated need and cost benefit analysis.

The after example has incorporated an example relevant to the advertised position. It has also provided evidence of the client's ability to administer large budgets. Both the language and evidence provided were pitched at a higher level in line with the relevant classification and responsibilities of the position.

Interpret the fit between the role and the selection criteria

This advice sounds obvious, but candidates continually fail to interpret the fit between the role and the selection criteria. When addressing the selection criteria it is **VITAL to provide tangible proof and evidence that meets the requirements of the position.**

When you address the selection criteria, ensure you marry the duties and responsibilities with the selection criteria and if you don't have direct relevant experience in the position, then utilise transferable skills that will meet the requirements of the agency.

For example, if the selection criteria require you to demonstrate superior communication skills for a position in front line customer service, then the examples you would need to provide would be in relation to a customer service environment, or transferable skills that can be adapted to a customer service environment.

Communication Skills in a Customer Service Environment:

- ~ Resolving conflicts at the front counter
- ~ Negotiating outcomes with customers
- ~ Providing advice on products and services
- ~ Distinguishing the communication style needed for a diverse range of stakeholders
- ~ Attentive listening skills

Similarly, if you need to address selection criteria relating to communication skills and the role is for an executive appointment, then you need to frame your examples within the context of the leadership capability framework.

Communication Skills for an Executive:

- ~ Report writing
- ~ Ministerial briefs
- ~ Actively listening to stakeholders
- ~ Distinguishing the communication style needed for a diverse range of stakeholders
- ~ Establishing formal and informal communication channels
- ~ Keeping people up to date
- ~ Clear verbal, written and electronic communication
- ~ Contributing effectively at leadership/management forums, including ability to debate
- ~ Negotiation skills
- ~ Ability to influence opinions and actions

Pair up hard skills with selection criteria relating to soft skills

A surprising number of selection criteria relate to soft skills, such as communication, team work, analytical skills, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. The most effective way to address these criteria is not to provide isolated examples of these soft skills, rather pair these skills up with evidence that relates to your hard skills relevant to the position.

For example:

Role: Senior Project Manager

SELC - Selection Criteria Five

Communicates with influence

- ~ Listens, understand and adapts to audience
- ~ Communicates clearly, respectfully and appropriately
- ~ Engages in constructive, persuasive discussion and debate

Example provided:

- ~ Hard skill related to the project management of large scale whole-of-government project, involving:
 - o Management of human resources within the functional area
 - o Management of procurement of hardware / software
 - o Utilisation of project planning

Soft skills relating to communications, which enabled the effective management of the whole-of-government project:

- ~ Negotiation for resources
- ~ Actively listening to staff members, while delegating activities
- ~ Providing advice to senior management on budget issues
- ~ Communicating information relevant to the stakeholders in a timely manner
- ~ Report writing
- ~ Active involvement in senior management meetings, including influencing decisions
- ~ Consultation with internal and external stakeholders

Try to keep the examples current

Try to keep all your examples current, as most panel members and agencies are more interested in your recent rather than old experience. That is not to say that your earlier work history carries no weight, it is simply that anything that happened further back than seven to ten years ago, is normally viewed as less relevant than recent experience.

If you are a return to work mum, or you are returning back to a position after some time away, then my suggestion is to exploit your old experience and then supplement this evidence with recent transferable skills, or new qualifications obtained.

Incorporate policy

For more senior or professional level roles, you can strategically incorporate relevant policy relating to the agency, which provides evidence of your understanding of how the policy relates to the role and selection criteria.

Example one:

To demonstrate that the candidate was aware of relevant policy issues in public administration, I incorporated a very brief outline of the strategic plan, relating to public administration.

SC 1

Thorough knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues relating to public administration and legislative frameworks, including the ability to provide high level strategic advice on a range of issues

I have extensive knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues relating to public administration and have provided strategic high level advice on improving government service delivery, developing targets, assessing priorities and ensuring that strategic directions are clearly linked to business and government outcomes, which are realistic, measurable and consistent with community expectations.

In brief, key contemporary issues relating to public administration are as follows:

Provided an outline of contemporary issues for panel members, combined with examples of where these were applied by the client:

*These key contemporary issues relating to public administration are addressed in the **Service Delivery and Performance Commission Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010**. They include the vision to deliver services effectively and efficiently through demonstrating best practices, and the Commission's mission to improve the delivery of government services by enhancing performance management frameworks in partnership with Government agencies.*

Example two:

In this example, I briefly outlined the candidates understanding of Education Queensland's Strategic Plan, followed by policy relating to literacy, as the roles central purpose related to the implementation of the literacy framework.

SC 1

Capacity to provide leadership in education within the context of Education Queensland's Strategic Plan

In order to meet key challenges outlined in QSE – 2010 and Destination 2010, it is imperative to take the lead and personally contribute to and champion the Department of Education and Arts vision and goals, as well as translate broad strategies into practice, including ensuring that I work with others to influence their personal and organisational values, and promote continuous and innovative ways to meet the diverse educational needs of students.

As Program Manager, Special Needs, I took a collaborative leading role in facilitating and developing plans and strategies to meet the educational needs of a diverse range of students. This involved providing supportive programs in line with the New Basics 2010, Literacy – the Key to learning Framework for Action, and S-13 Educational Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities.

Provided outline of actions and results in the role of Program Manager which married up perfectly with the Literacy Framework

Step Five – Use selection criteria speak

I describe selection criteria speak as a way of writing a compelling case for selection panel members. In many ways it is simply a way of presenting your case in the same way that a business writes compelling copy about its products and services (advertising copy), which addresses the needs of the audience (in this case your audience is the selection panel members).

But selection criteria speak goes further. It not only maximises your presentation, but ensures that you take ownership of the various examples you provide and in a language that meets the needs of the agency.

The key elements to selection criteria speak are the liberal use of key words, action verbs or power words, writing in the first person, taking ownership of activities, and eliminating technical language, acronyms and abbreviations, which selection panel members may not be familiar with.

Make liberal use of key words

Keywords are those that signal to the panel members that you have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to match the job requirements. By incorporating these, panel members scanning your selection criteria and résumé, can make an appropriate connection between your keywords and requirements of the role, which in turn will identify you as an appropriate candidate.

The most common types of keywords that signal to selection panel members that you have the relevant background are:

- ~ Job titles
- ~ Legislation / policy connected with the role
- ~ Skills related to the role
- ~ Relevant Government “buzz” words e.g. whole-of-government,

For example:

Job Description: Procurement Specialist

This position provides an opportunity to use your extensive procurement experience to assist Ipswich in becoming one of Queensland's most desirable places to live, work and play, with new industries, new jobs and a quality lifestyle.

The Procurement Specialist will assist with the procurement functions across Council including process and system improvements, contract administration, consumption and expenditure analysis and strategic procurement planning.

To be successful in this role you will need tertiary qualifications in Business or a related discipline and relevant experience. Analytical and leadership skills and a commitment to customer service are also essential.

Key words that should be incorporated into the application (selection criteria, resume and cover letter)

- ~ Procurement specialist
- ~ Process and system improvements
- ~ Contract administration
- ~ Consumption and expenditure analysis
- ~ Strategic procurement planning
- ~ Leadership
- ~ Analytical skills
- ~ Customer service

Always write in the first person and claim ownership of activities

By writing in the first person and claiming ownership of activities, you will strengthen the evidence provided.

See the examples that follow:

Before	After
I worked with team members to We worked within a busy environment We successfully managed	I collaboratively managed the process I worked in a busy environment I successfully managed in conjunction with

Please note: In writing in the first person, it is not necessary to use 'I' at the beginning of each sentence. As a professional, I interchangeably use 'I' with sentences that begin with an action word, such as managed, spearheaded, instrumental, implemented, designed etc. particularly when utilising bullet points to list activities and results.

Acronyms / Abbreviations and Jargon

Make sure you avoid jargon, or acronyms that are specific to your current position and are not applicable to the new position you are applying for.

An acronym is a shortened form of a phrase, like an abbreviation, with the distinction that it can be pronounced as a word.

Acronym

DIAC = Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Abbreviation

ATO = Australian Tax Office

The public sector, like the private sector is littered with acronyms and abbreviations, but use acronyms and abbreviations sparingly within the application, unless you are confident that panel members are already familiar with the acronym or abbreviation in question.

Basic rules:

- ~ If the acronym or abbreviation is from another agency, insert and use the full phrase throughout your application.
- ~ If the acronym or abbreviation originates from the agency in question, make liberal use of it throughout your application.
- ~ If the acronym or abbreviation is industry standard, - for example LAN = local area network, use it throughout your application.
- ~ If you are uncertain whether the selection panel is familiar with the acronym or abbreviation, use the full phrase throughout the application.

Use action verbs or power words

How you present yourself on paper can really alter the perception of the reader and one vital way to present yourself as a strong candidate is to use action verbs, or power words within your selection criteria.

See the examples that follow:

Before	After
Started a policy to recruit Responsible for negotiating with Grant security access Set up payroll system My responsibility was to run projects Increased profitability by 100 percent	Developed and designed a policy to Spearheaded negotiations with Managed security access Instrumental in implementing new I successfully managed projects Dramatically increased profitability by

As you can see from above, by using action verbs, you can present yourself in a really strong way. This is not about exaggerating your capabilities and responsibilities - it is simply a way of presenting yourself in a powerful and honest way.

To assist you in this task, I have provided you with a table of action words, which you can utilise in your application and résumé.

Warning: Strategic power words will always ensure that the overall thrust of what you are saying is maximised, but it is important to remain truthful at all times, as you will need to substantiate these claims at interview, and have referees that can back you up. So if you did not dramatically increase profit, replace this with a power phrase that more accurately reflects the truth, such as improved profitability.

Table of Action Words

Accommodated	Developed	Organised
Accomplished	Devised	
Achieved	Diagnosed	Persuaded
Acquired	Directed	Planned
Acted	Disciplined	Predicted
Addressed	Discovered	Presented
Administered		Presided
Advised	Effectuated	Projected
Advocated	Empathised	
Analysed	Enabled	Rectified
Anticipated	Encouraged	Redesigned
Appointed	Enforced	Reduced
Appraised	Engaged	Refined
Approved	Ensured	Renegotiated
Arbitrated	Exceeded	Reorganised
Assessed	Executed	Repaired
Audited	Explored	Represented
		Researched
Balanced	Facilitated	Reshaped
Bargained	Forecast	Resolved
Brainstormed	Formulated	Restored
Built	Founded	Restructured
Changed	Generated	Saved
Clarified	Guided	Shaped
Classified		Simplified
Coached	Identified	Sold
Collaborated	Implemented	Solved
Collated	Improved	Stimulated
Combined	Improvised	Spearheaded
Communicated	Incorporated	Strengthened
Competed	Increased	Structured
Competed	Influenced	Succeeded
Composed	Initiated	Surpassed
Conceived	Innovated	
Conceptualised	Inspired	
Conducted	Instituted	
Confronted	Integrated	
Constructed	Invented	
Contributed		
Controlled	Led	
Cooperated	Lobbied	
Coordinated		
Corrected	Managed	
Counselled	Marketed	
Created	Mediated	
	Mentored	
Decided	Mobilised	
Delivered	Monitored	
Demonstrated	Motivated	
Designed		
Detected	Negotiated	

Step Six- Make it easy to read with a well laid-out document

Selection panel members need to read dozens, if not hundreds of applications, so it is important to make the document clear, easy to read and visually appealing. It never ceases to amaze me, that candidates will spend hours creating a visually appealing and easy to read résumé, yet will produce a document addressing selection criteria, that is drab, untidy, difficult to read and unprofessional.

Don't use fancy fonts

The plain 'Times New Roman' or 'Arial' is perfectly suitable for most headings and text and they also have the advantage of being two fonts frequently used in government circles.

Arial: Example font - (10 point)

Times New Roman: Example font - (12 point)

You should also avoid using more than two fonts, which looks haphazard and unprofessional. Keep in mind many agencies actually specify a font size, which you will need to adhere to if requested.

Use headings and sub-headings

The use of headings and sub-headings is a great way to highlight key information that you want to convey to the selection panel. Likewise **highlight key words** and phrases with bold type. This one little secret is more powerful than you might realise. You see, when someone is quickly reading your application, their eyes immediately wants to scan the content to get a big picture of what's on the page, before slowing down to commit reading your application in depth. By bolding key words, a reader will scan for meaning and will usually slow down and read in detail everything on the page.

Before:

I have relevant experience in workplace training and activities, which will enable me to identify, develop, review, and deliver training activities in order to improve standard operating procedures, as well as provide on the job training. As Training Officer at HO Proprietary Limited, I gained significant experience in relation to training involving:

- ~ Identification of training needs and requirements – including input into the review of current syllabus topics, to ascertain whether courses included all relevant material required for the delivery of a relevant syllabus for staff.
- ~ Development of enhanced course structures – I provided input into course proposal, including ensuring that workplace training activities were relevant to the role, such as relevant legislation and contemporary practices and procedures.
- ~ Review of delivery of training content –I was involved in the review of delivery of training, to ascertain whether new learning strategies could be incorporated to achieve desired outcomes.
- ~ Delivery of training courses – I delivered a range of training including OH & S, First Aid, Fire fighting, Weapons Training, including awareness of issues relating to space

utilisation, training schedules, presentation styles, learning strategies, including use of visuals, dynamic communication and monitoring and assessment.

After:

I have relevant experience in workplace training and activities, which will enable me to identify, develop, review, and deliver training activities in order to improve standard operating procedures, as well as provide on the job training. As **Training Officer** at HO Proprietary Limited, I gained significant experience in relation to training involving:

- ~ **Identification of training needs and requirements** – including input into the review of current syllabus topics, to ascertain whether courses included all relevant material required for the delivery of a relevant syllabus for staff.
- ~ **Development of enhanced course structures** – I provided input into course proposal, including ensuring workplace training activities were relevant to the role, such as relevant legislation and contemporary practices and procedures.
- ~ **Review of delivery of training content** – I was involved in the review of delivery of training, to ascertain whether new learning strategies could be incorporated to achieve desired outcomes.
- ~ **Delivery of training courses** – I delivered a range of training, including OH & S, First Aid, Fire fighting, Weapons Training, including awareness of issues relating to space utilisation, training schedules, presentation styles, learning strategies, including use of visuals, dynamic communication and monitoring and assessment.

Bullet points

Make liberal use of bullet points, when outlining your achievements and actions. The advantage of bullet points, is that they **make it easier to read an application and when used strategically, can highlight key skills and achievements.**

I have successfully used bullet points for all classification levels, including very senior applications, where I use them to emphasise accomplishments and achievements.

Before:

As Marketing and Events Manager at Serba Enterprises, I am responsible for aspects of business development and marketing, including business profile creation and management, business relationships and network management, market research and opportunity identification, marketing and promotion activities and service delivery performance management.

In this role, I have successfully developed schemes for marketing training products, including the development of key relationships with training centres. This has involved the development of key marketing tools for training institutions in relation to the collaborative promotion of courses in relation to owner builders, including the *Super Provider Starter Pack*. This has involved ensuring all promotional written material, and handouts are written in a user-friendly way, with unambiguous content and clear simple English. In this role, I have also managed the entire process relating to the production of an industry newsletter, facilitated meetings with Adult Community Training Centres in regards to the promotion and development of training seminars and the formation of alliances, partnerships and joint ventures, persuaded and influenced stakeholders (institutions and presenters) in regards to the huge benefits of running owner building training courses and seminars on sustainable buildings, including obtaining agreement on deliverables and persuading them of the financial benefits of the relationship. Finally, I have successfully developed media networks through proactive relationship building

Within this role, my key successes have included the effective promotion of the delivery of training programs to a diverse range of Adult Community Education Centres and individuals, including via the media, resulting in 51 new alliances, partnerships and joint ventures. I have also prepared a successful marketing package, which can be understood by a diverse range of individuals and stakeholders.

After:

As Marketing and Events Manager at Serba Enterprises, I am responsible for aspects of business development and marketing, including business profile creation and management, business relationships and network management, market research and opportunity identification, marketing and promotion activities and service delivery performance management. In this role, I have successfully developed schemes for marketing training products, including the development of key relationships with training centres. This has involved:

- ~ The development of key marketing tools for training institutions in relation to the collaborative promotion of courses in regards to owner builders, including writing and producing the *Super Provider Starter Pack*. This has involved ensuring all promotional written material, and handouts are written in a user-friendly way, with unambiguous content and clear simple English.
- ~ I have managed the entire process relating to the production of an industry newsletter.
- ~ I have facilitated meetings with Adult Community Training Centres in regards to the promotion and development of training seminars and the formation of alliances, partnerships and joint ventures.
- ~ I persuade and influence stakeholders (institutions and presenters) in regards to the huge benefits of running owner building training courses and seminars on sustainable buildings, including obtaining agreement on deliverables and persuading them of the financial benefits of the relationship.
- ~ I have developed media networks through proactive relationship building

Within this role, my key successes have included:

- ~ The effective promotion of the delivery of training programs to a diverse range of Adult Community Education Centres and individuals, including via the media, resulting in 51 new alliances, partnerships and joint ventures
- ~ The preparation of a successful marketing package, which can be understood by a diverse range of individuals and stakeholders.

Type your application

Although a few agencies may still accept handwritten applications, **don't ever submit one**, even if it means you need to pay money to have yours professionally typed.

Step Seven - Proofread your application

Proofreading your application is critical to your success. Your application is a representation of your best work to the selection panel and one of the biggest gripes of panel members are of documents littered with errors

Below are some tips to ensure that your document is error free:

Use Australian English on your computer's spell checker

Using your computer's spell checker and grammar checker is great, but don't rely on them entirely and ensure that you have your spelling check on Australian English, not US English - otherwise your document will be riddled with spelling mistakes, such as color, instead of colour, or organization, instead of organisation.

Take a break

If time allows – **have at least 24 hours away from the document** before proofreading it. Even if you think your application looks great – trust me, if you don't have time away from the document, you will miss glaring mistakes.

If you have at least 24 hours away from the document, I guarantee you will find lots of holes, gross typos, unclear wording, grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.

Read a hard copy

Although printing out your application can be a nuisance, don't be tempted to read it on your computer screen. It is easier to spot mistakes on a piece of paper, than it is on a computer screen.

Get Outside Eyes

An outsider will be able to quickly pick up spelling and grammar mistakes and offer suggestions to enhance the readability of your application, or comment on its content.

However, when you run it past people, get their **Reaction on content, NOT their Opinion.**

Opinion: This application is too long.

Reaction: I got bored half way through your application.

Opinion: You shouldn't use this kind of type and format.

Reaction: I found the application hard to read.

Opinion: I think you should replace this word with another.

Reaction: I found this word did not make sense.

By focusing on people's reactions, rather than opinions, than you will be able to focus on legitimate feedback, not someone's subjective opinion, which won't necessarily enhance your current application.

Read your application backwards

I know this tip might sound bizarre, but it really works! By reading your application backwards one word at a time, it forces you to look at each word, rather than each sentence. As your brain can't fill in information, you end up reading what is actually written on the page, rather than the brain filling in what you think ought to be written on the page.

Chapter 13

Avoiding the common pitfalls

In this chapter, I cover the major errors contained in thousands of client applications I have reviewed since 2003, including clients already within the public service sector.

By avoiding these common pitfalls, you will significantly improve upon the quality of your application.

Not providing a solid overview of your experience throughout the application

A common failing is not providing a compelling case with all your relevant experience, throughout your application. To avoid this:

- ~ When using the STAR or CAR model, it is usually necessary to provide more than one example per criterion, (depending on the word limit, or classification).
- ~ Don't make the **STAR or CAR too narrow in focus** i.e. don't use small micro examples that don't provide the reader with a real focus on what your overall responsibilities and achievements were. (Please refer to my comments on writing to the level required on page 105).
- ~ Utilise relevant experience throughout your application. For example, scatter your experience throughout your application, so it covers all your relevant work history relating to the position in question. (Please refer to Chapter 12, on Developing a Framework, which provides an example of how you can utilise various working examples throughout an application)

Not putting your experience into context for panel members

One key mistake candidates make is failing to put their experience into context.

Take for example this answer to selection criteria relating to supervising and developing staff.

SC The ability to supervise and develop staff

I am skilled and experienced in achieving organisation and operational objectives through leading and developing individuals and teams. In my role as a manager and leader of people, team objectives are participatively established, and team members are regularly briefed on work goals, plans and operational issues. Team members' personal development requirements are assessed in accordance with the corporate human resource strategy, and include development plans for each individual with relevant development activities clearly identified and agreed.

As a manager I seek to provide opportunities for staff involvement in decision making and problem solving. In motivating staff I have recognised staff members' needs and wants, and where possible, incorporate these into their work assignments. I also seek to recognise, promote and reward work group achievements, and to acknowledge the importance of individual staff contributions. In maintaining and developing team harmony I facilitate and encourage cooperation in the workplace, through work allocation and the creation of small teams for specific projects.

I seek to develop a work environment where people pull together and value collaboration and teamwork. I create a sense of 'interconnectedness' internally and with other

organisations, ensuring opportunities to share views and ideas. I role-model 'team-player' behaviour, including a willingness to consult and listen.

I value individual differences and diversity, through supporting and respecting the individuality of others and recognising the benefits of diversity of ideas and approaches. I acknowledge different skill areas and levels of expertise. I understand others and respond to them in an appropriate way.

As a leader I guide, mentor and develop staff, and encourage ongoing learning in others. I provide timely recognition for good performance, and motivate others by setting challenging goals, as well as supporting and encouraging them when they need assistance to overcome problems. I address areas of weakness by encouraging staff to take an active role in their own development, and I create a climate with opportunities to do so. I have taken action to deal with difficult performance situations.

While on the surface this answer sounds fine and it covers all the requirements relating to supervising and developing staff, **it fails dismally on several fronts:**

- ~ It does not tell the selection panel members where the candidate gained this experience in supervising and developing staff or rather it does put the candidate's experience into context. That is, selection panel members are totally in the dark in regards to the scope of her supervisory role, type of organisation, number of staff, sector and industry.
- ~ It fails to talk about how her supervisory and development skills resulted in benefits to the organisation. (Yes – I'm back to the achievements mantra)! For example, did her supervisory and development skills result in high retention rates among staff members, staff being trained successfully into higher positions, improvements in Key Performance Indicators by all staff members, or an improvement in productivity by staff members?

The easiest way to avoid this common trap is to use some sort of selection criteria methodology, which I outlined in the previous chapter.

Excessive use of soft skills without evidence

Another key mistake candidates make with selection criteria that relate to soft skills and personality attributes (e.g. communication skills, integrity, honesty, professionalism), is to simply state they have these skills, without providing any tangible evidence.

Again, the easiest way to avoid this pitfall is to simply use a STAR, or CAR methodology, and pair soft skills up with evidence relating to hard skills (refer to page 108 for further clarification).

Not keeping each selection criteria response to a consistent length

If a weighting is not provided, then you need to assume that each selection criteria has equal weighting. This means you will need to ensure that the length of your response to each selection criteria is about the same, so there is a perception of strength for each and every selection criteria. That is, don't write two pages on the first and second criteria and then only a paragraph or two, for the remaining ones, as this could weaken your overall application. Remember, each criterion will be scored and marked and the total added up, for the final result.

Don't offer an opinion

Another failing of candidates, in particular at the senior level, is to provide an opinion on a subject matter, be it why a particular work area is not functioning effectively, through to offering a personal opinion on a particular policy, methodology, or activity.

Avoid offering an opinion, as it takes you to the deep and murky waters of 'subjectivity'. That is opinions, are not facts and a personal perspective might harm, rather than enhance your application, in particular if a panel member happens to disagree with your point of view.

Other Common Failings

I have already covered these common failings, but to reiterate and highlight how important it is NOT to fall into these traps, I have provided a check list below for you to work through:

Have you addressed all parts of all the selection criteria?

Have you addressed ALL the selection criteria, including desirables?

Have you ensured your application is sufficiently results-oriented, and highlights your achievements and contributions?

Have you met ALL the agency's requirements relating to length and formatting

Have you addressed the selection criteria in a way that mirrors the requirements of the position?

Is the response relevant to the selection criteria and clear to the reader (not unnecessarily long, unstructured, or unclear)?

Have you pitched the application at the right level and provided appropriate examples?

PART FIVE

SOLUTIONS FOR ADDRESSING SPECIFIC CRITERIA

Chapter 14

Addressing selection criteria where strict word limits apply

Many agencies restrict the number of words or characters (if online) per selection criteria. These can range from a little as 80 words per criterion, through to 500 words per criterion.

I personally love addressing selection criteria where a word limit applies, as I know exactly what the agency requires, and it helps narrow the focus down to the bare essentials.

Below are my key tips for addressing selection criteria where a word limit applies.

Tip One - Make every word count

As you are limited to a word count, you must ensure that you make every word count, so you can make a strong and compelling case for the selection panel.

You also need to be aware, that while a word limit applies to many candidates' applications, the marking instructions provided to selection panel members can run into several pages, even though you are restricted to 150 – 500 words.

When writing against these selection criteria:

- ~ Make sure you address the needs of your audience, by providing evidence that meets the requirements of the agency. Ask yourself whether your information is relevant to the selection criteria, and is it something the selection panel would be interested in.
- ~ Be succinct, by removing information that is repetitive or irrelevant. Go back to looking at the needs of your audience and ask yourself: is the information critical and if it was left out, would it jeopardize your application?
- ~ Make sure that everything you write is clear and concise. This includes removing obscure sentences and confusing terminology.
- ~ If the word count is very tight, focus on achievements. In so doing you provide written evidence of how you could potentially contribute to an organisation, rather than focusing on activities, that simply outlines how you performed the job.

Tip Two - Prune

If you run out of words to express all your relevant points, then carefully re-read your responses in order to spot redundancies.

- ~ Delete concepts that repeat themselves or don't directly answer the criterion.
- ~ Use abbreviations and acronyms if related to the agency (this assists if you are restricted to a character count with an online application).
- ~ Avoid lengthy belief statements and conclusions, or if the word limit is very tight, remove them altogether.
- ~ Avoid fluff and waffle – (while you should adapt this approach for all applications, it becomes even more imperative when a word limit applies).

~ Keep sentences short and direct.

Tip Three - Use good English

Some candidates panic, and prune so vigorously, that all accepted grammatical form and sentence structure disappears. This results in a response that is at best difficult to read, at worst, completely incoherent. Just because a word limit applies, does not mean the use of good English should disappear.

Tip Four - Use bullet points for actions and results

Another mistake candidates make is thinking a word or page limit equates to squeezing everything in, without using a clear layout. While a bullet point equates to a word, by using bullet points, you can use short sharp sentences and enhance the layout of the document.

Tip Five - Adhere to the word limit

While some agencies allow some flexibility if you run slightly over the word limit, others have a strict policy of not accepting the application. Also note that most online applications are such that it is impossible for you to go over the word or character limit.

When conforming to a word count, it is usually not necessary to include the actual selection criteria question in your word count.

Tip Four - Don't address each sub-criterion under a separate heading

It is not necessary to address each sub-criterion as a separate heading (unless specified). Instead use one or two STAR or CAR that highlights how you meet all the relevant sub-criteria.

I have used an example on the following page to highlight this technique. You will see how I have used the A of the STAR selection criteria model to highlight how this candidate meets all of the sub-criteria. (I actually use a check list and run through it to ensure that each and every sub-criterion is satisfactorily met).

I also used the heading 'Results', rather than a full sentence, which further reduced the word count.

The example on the next page pertains to a training role at the Australian Customs Service, with a word limit of 400.

Example:

SC 1

Managerial and Planning

Ability to effectively organise, plan and deliver services to:

- ~ **Manage and prioritise multiple demands**
- ~ **Contribute to work area planning**
- ~ **Contribute to and be responsible for achieving team goals**
- ~ **Manage resources**
- ~ **Develop policy and guidelines and action plans**
- ~ **Manage projects and contracts**

I have the ability to plan activities and achieve results, by systematically tracking progress, determining direction and building capability through flexible resourcing options and the development of guidelines and policy.

As Training Manager, I am responsible for the management and planning of all activities relating to the Training School. This includes planning training activities and allocating financial and other resources, ensuring ideas and actions become a reality, managing a team of Instructors, and developing policy relating to the school. This has involved:

- ~ *Management and implementation of all training activities, including planning area activities and allocating financial and other resources, establishing priorities, risk management, building in check points and systematic controls to monitor implementation, conceptualisation and planning, project management, logistics, and the development of timelines for the design and implementation of training schedules and packages.*
- ~ *Development of a flexible team model including supervision of eight Instructors. This has involved delegating tasks equitably, clearly communicating to team members and ensuring staff compliance with relevant legislative, policy and regulatory frameworks.*
- ~ *Initiating flexible resourcing options and responding to various stakeholder requirements and changing circumstances as they arise, including reviewing training plans and adjusting resources relating to changing needs and in line with Senior Management task directives*
- ~ *Intervening when difficulties are encountered and implementing remedial action.*
- ~ *Management of training activities within a financial allocation, including determining and negotiating resource requirements in the context of organisational priorities and budgets and planning the School training schedule in accordance with the Net Training Liability course curriculum.*
- ~ *Resource management (equipment, IT, facilities, course resources, HR Resources and organisational capability resources).*
- ~ *Development of policy and guidelines relating to training, including stipulating procedures and training protocols, and providing continuous feedback and expert advice to the Training Cycle. I have also ensured strict adherence to OH & S, through the successful development and implementation of OH & S policy and directives, as OH & S Officer.*
- ~ *Management of all contracts and projects, including those relating to the procurements of resources. This has included the successful procurement of an array of new detection, protection and decontamination equipment for the organisation.*

Results

- ~ *The successful and effective management of the services of the School, including the introduction of improved curriculum and policy relating to OH & S requirements.*
- ~ *Effective management and procurement of resources, including reduction of operating costs by 20%*

Short succinct statements

Some agencies require only a paragraph for each selection criteria. In this case, provide a very short and succinct STAR example.

Examples:

Word limit 120 per Key Selection Criteria – Administration Support Officer

Key Selection Criteria 1

Experience in the operation of keyboard equipment and the performance of associated data entry and word processing tasks

I have a high level of word processing and PC software skills, including MS Office suite of products, including Word, Excel, Outlook and the use of database fundamentals. As Case Officer with the Department of Immigration Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs, I used a range of MS Office suite products, including Word for drafting reports, data entry of applicant's details, use of email for both internal and external correspondence and use of the intranet for information purposes. Skills utilised included word processing skills, and the extensive use of keyboard including entry techniques and the use of keystroke shortcuts. I ensured the accurate entry of information and was able to use technology to streamline operations.

Qualifications: Advanced Diploma Information Technology 2001

Word Count used in this response 119

Key Selection Criteria 2

Ability to accurately maintain and update administrative records

I am well organised, and have the ability to maintain and update administrative records. As Underwriter, Luxor General Insurance Ltd, I managed a wide range of insurance policies, including processing endorsements and new business within allocated time frames. A key part of this role was the maintenance and update of administrative records, including accessing records to amend, add, create, open and archive. I also maintained the "hard copy" filing system, ensuring the inclusion of records within the appropriate files. In order to carry out these duties, I ensured I had a thorough knowledge and comprehension of respective workplace policies, practices and procedures as they relate to information management, including policies regarding information recording, retention and release.

Word count used in this response 116

(Note: I have incorporated the word counts, so you could see how I strictly adhered to the requirements, as these were online applications)

Chapter 15

Addressing poorly developed selection criteria

In Chapter One, I outlined the reality of the process, including advertised positions that have poorly developed selection criteria. In this chapter, I cover how to overcome problems related to addressing these poorly developed selection criteria.

Repetition of skills, personal qualities and knowledge

It is not uncommon to find the repetition of the same skill, personal quality or knowledge or technical expertise in one or more criterion. For example I completed selection criteria for a Finance Accountant, with the following criteria:

Selection Criteria 1

Possess good communication, organisational, interpersonal and planning skills

Selection Criteria 9

Competent organisational and planning skills

Both of these criteria involve skills relating to organisational and planning skills.

Solution:

Provide a separate evidence based-example for each criterion relating to the same skills, personal quality or knowledge. Try not to repeat the same information and don't refer panel members to the criterion with the duplicate requirement.

It is also a good idea to go back to the duties and responsibilities of the position, to see exactly what the requirements are, which might explain some of the duplication. However, in most cases, it is an oversight of panel members, who do not understand the criterion in question, or have hastily put the application together using old application templates and without much care or thought about the process.

Too many selection criteria

I have lost count of the number of applications I have completed involving twenty or more selection criteria, or there are more than six parts to each criterion. If you have an application in front of you that looks more like 'War and Peace' then you are not alone, as there are hundreds of advertised applications out there that are unnecessarily complicated and long.

Solution:

- ~ Answer all the sub-criteria utilising one or two STARs, or CARs (see example relating to addressing selection criteria, where a word limit applies).
- ~ Keep all your responses brief and to the point and if concepts repeat themselves, eliminate them.
- ~ The more criteria you have to address, the shorter your response should be for each criterion. For example, if you are required to address 20 selection criteria separately, limit your response to no more than a couple of succinct paragraphs per criterion.

Selection criteria that are difficult to understand

One of the largest gripes from clients is poorly worded and difficult to understand selection criteria. Since one of the major keys to addressing selection criteria is to understand and then address all the criteria, this can become highly problematic for you.

Solution:

If you don't understand the selection criteria, even after reading them within the context of the duties and responsibilities, then the only way forward is to touch base with the contact officer.

Selection criteria containing spelling mistakes and poor grammar

Although irksome, don't try to correct these not uncommon errors, and copy the selection criteria exactly on your application as outlined in the application pack, spelling mistakes and all.

(My particular annoyance is the use of American spelling within documents, such as organization, instead of organisation).

Chapter 16

Online Applications

An increasing number of agencies require applications to be completed online, which sometimes entails one application form in which you provide information that you would normally include in your résumé, cover letter, cover application sheet and your document addressing the selection criteria.

- ~ If selection criteria, or behavioural questions, need to be answered online, simply apply the same rules you would employ if you were addressing them in a separate word document, subject to formatting rules.
- ~ The easiest way of addressing online applications that have application forms, is to create a word document when developing your claims against the selection criteria. This will give you more flexibility and speed while formatting your responses, allow you to do grammar and spell checks, and lets you save the file easily in case something goes wrong.
- ~ If using a word processing program, such as MS Word to draft your responses, DON'T use auto formatting, such as *italics*, **bolding**, underlining, or other automatic formatting allowed in your word processing. These features might get stripped or transformed into weird character combinations when your application is copied and sent online. Basically, you are working within the limitations of what you see on your keyboard.

For example you will need to replace any bullets with ASCII- supported keyboard characters (if it appears on your keyboard, it's an ASCII character). For example use an asterisks (*), or (~), which is located on the left hand side of the number 1. (I use the ~ bullet point in all of my work, so I don't need to worry about clients submitting applications online).

- ~ Online applications usually restrict the number of characters or words. If you go over the character or word count, your application could be rejected when you try to submit it online. Remember, a bullet point is counted as a word or character online.
- ~ If a form is provided online, it is not necessary to copy the selection criteria statement, as this is already provided.
- ~ Once satisfied with your word document, cut, copy and paste onto the online application form.
- ~ When completing your résumé online, make use of the 'additional information' sections, to really highlight your achievements and contributions.

Chapter 17

Addressing Behavioural Questions

You will often come across applications that don't require you to directly address the selection criteria, but rather involve addressing a behavioural question. For example:

- a. *Describe a situation where you were required to make a complex or difficult decision which impacted on service delivery or affected a staff member/colleague. What processes did you use? How did you deliver the message?*
- b. *Give an example where you planned an operational event, conference or other complex activity*

Related Selection Criteria

- ~ *Managerial and Planning*
- ~ *Communication and Client Focus*

When addressing these behavioural questions, keep in mind that they will be assessed against the agency's selection criteria and will need to be answered within the context of the role in question.

Write to the level required

Ensure that the examples you provide are relevant to the classification level. The higher the level, the greater the focus should be on providing examples relevant to a senior role. (Refer to Chapter 12).

Achievements

While the behavioural question might not necessarily provide scope in regards to incorporating achievements, make sure you don't leave out your achievements. I know this achievements mantra is starting to sound boring, but remember, it is the difference between an OK application and application that immediately attracts the attention of panel members.

Understand the agency's requirements

When addressing behavioural questions it is vital to understand what the agency's requirements are. If they require a candidate with supervisory capabilities, then addressing the behavioural criteria with an example that does not provide evidence of supervising staff, will significantly weaken your application.

Use the behavioural question to address the selection criteria

If you are provided with related selection criteria, then use the example to indirectly address the selection criteria. The easiest way is to utilise STAR, SAR, PAR or CAR methodology and to use this framework to cover the agency's requirements.

Example:

Provide an example of a situation where you had a difficult client. How did you handle it and what was the outcome?

Selection Criteria

- ~ **Communication skills / conflict resolution**
- ~ **Client service**
- ~ **Problem solving**

Excellent client service management requires the ability to understand clients' needs and provide solutions to a wide range of problems. It also requires the ability to objectively deal with a range of client complaints in a non-judgmental and empathetic manner, and provide satisfactory outcomes.

At the Australian Customs Service I worked as a Customs Officer at the international airport. The role involved the investigation/interception/processing and risk assessment of passengers entering or leaving Australia. In one incident I dealt with a husband and wife team. After interviewing the couple, I suspected that the wife was not declaring a diamond stone, contrary to relevant policy/procedure. While this investigation was taking place, the husband became very agitated with the situation, as he was completely ignorant of his wife carrying the said diamond stone. When the wife finally declared the diamond, the husband was genuinely shocked and stunned.

In dealing with the situation, I undertook the following steps:

- ~ *I asked the wife a series of open-ended questions, to provide her with the opportunity to declare the diamond*
- ~ *I communicated to the husband what procedures were taking place and ensured that he understood clearly that I was undertaking my role in an objective way, and that his wife was not being victimised*
- ~ *I talked in an authoritative, but quiet manner, in response to the husband's raised and agitated tones, to ensure that the situation did not escalate into a verbal content*
- ~ *I quickly ascertained and understood the husband's position. From his body language and responses to my questions, it was clear that he was ignorant of his wife's misdemeanour. In so understanding his position, I was able to empathise with his situation and deal with him in a sympathetic and understanding manner*
- ~ *I remained calm throughout the situation, understanding that the husband's agitation and abuse towards me, was not a personal attack, but a protective mechanism for his wife and frustration at the situation.*

As a result of my ability to fully understand the husband's situation, and communicate effectively I was able to:

- ~ *Pacify the situation and ensure that it did not escalate into a situation where security needed to intervene*
- ~ *Remain in full control of the situation, which allowed me to continue with the investigation of the alleged misdemeanour, resulting in the wife finally declaring the diamond.*

Chapter 18

Addressing selection criteria in a cover letter / résumé

It is becoming increasingly common, that you won't need to address selection criteria directly in a separate document, although they are still listed as the basis of candidate selection. Instead the agency requires submission of your résumé and cover letter.

The key to addressing these requirements is to ensure that you provide ample evidence in your résumé and cover letter as to how you meet the selection criteria. It is not always necessary to directly respond to each and every criterion within the cover letter, but usually advisable to do so.

I have provided you with a checklist to assist you with this task.

Résumé Checklist

Incorporate the key skills relating to the role into your profile.

Incorporate key words relating to the role into your job descriptions.

Provide tangible achievements that demonstrate how the agency will benefit from appointing you. Highlight these achievements within your résumé.

Utilise the CAR or STAR methodology and incorporate those examples most relevant to the position. For example:

- ~ *Instrumental in ensuring organisational compliance with Workplace Health & Safety*
 - o *Designed policy and established and implemented training and induction systems for personnel.*
 - o *Lifted company performance, with independent third party audit showing quantifiable 96% overall improvement in performance in 2005.*
 - o *Company awarded Health, Safety, Security & Environmental (HSSE) Small Contractor Award for the State 2005.*
- ~ *Initiated business development strategy aligned with strategic goals, including identification of business opportunities and acquisitions to enable expansion of services*
 - o *Facilitated expansion of training programs, at over 10% per annum for previous 3 years*
 - o *Overhauled ad hoc services, with successful consolidation of services for both draft survey and terminal operations*
 - o *Reached significant growth targets*

Write relevant job descriptions that focus on the tasks of your prospective role. For example, if the role you are applying for is focused on project management, and your current and previous roles entailed many aspects, including project management, cull some of the less relevant information, and make the project management element the key focus within your résumé.

Substantiate soft skills outlined in selection criteria, such as communication and interpersonal skills, with evidence in your résumé, For example:

'Instrumental in negotiating new contracts with suppliers.'

Incorporate your understanding of relevant policy and legislation, if you have already worked within this framework. For example:

'Implemented policy, legislation and regulations relating to the Taxpayer's Charter, the Compliance Model, Income Tax Acts, GST Acts ,and Excise Act, successfully translating legislation to inform decisions and support organisational objectives'.

Cover Letter Checklist

Use the cover letter to indirectly cover all the selection criteria.

For example:

The relevant selection criteria for this position, included:

- ~ Sound accounting and budget management skills.
- ~ Ability to set priorities and monitor workflow of section.
- ~ Well developed analytical and research skills.
- ~ Ability to develop and implement programs to achieve departmental goals.
- ~ Highly developed computer skills, including the use of various software packages.
- ~ Ability to interpret relevant legislation.
- ~ Comprehensive communication skills.
- ~ Well developed interpersonal and conflict resolution.
- ~ Ability to negotiate and resolve problems.
- ~ Ability to compile written correspondences and verbalise in a professional manner.
- ~ Ability to meet deadlines for budgets, issuing of rates notices, electoral rolls.
- ~ High level customer service skills.

The response in the cover letter below indirectly addressed the selection criteria.

My relevant experience includes that of Debt Collection Officer at City of Ipswich, Senior Rates Officer at Brisbane City Council, and Finance Officer at the Council of Beaudesert. Within these roles:

- ~ *I managed processes in line with relevant legislation and policy including the use of sound accounting and budget management skills and the interpretation and analysis of legislation, including the Local Government Act 1995 (such as payment options and differential rating determination), and Rates & Charges (Rebates & Deferment) Act 1992.*
- ~ *I set priorities and monitored workflows, including establishing new procedures, which improved the efficiency of rating units to support council requirements, while simultaneously managing junior staff members.*
- ~ *I provided a high level of customer service, including the resolution of rating issues and the effective negotiation of the collection of debts, including the resolution of problematic and protracted customer issues.*
- ~ *I provided accurate written reports on matters such as the calculation of rates to meet budget requirements, options in relation to revenue, strategies on collection and the management of rates debtors and reconciliation.*
- ~ *I successfully prepared detailed budgets for council, within strict timeframes.*
- ~ *I analysed information in relation to the calculation and management of rates, including successfully translating complex information on rates into user-friendly reports*

- ~ *I compiled and managed the Owner Occupiers roll.*
- ~ *I used relevant software including, MS Excel, MS Word, MS Outlook, DataWorks, Authority, WCS Community, Prospect, Mainframe System and SynergySoft, for reconciliations, rating calculations, electoral rolls, rates modelling, rates record management and excel integration.*

Outline your relevant achievements that relate to the new role and the selection criteria.

For example:

Selected achievements in my previous positions have included:

- ~ *The provision of staff training in my current role as Rates Debt Collection Officer, City of Ipswich, which has significantly streamlined operational processes.*
- ~ *The establishment of new procedures at the Brisbane City Council, which supported the efficiency of the rating unit, by dramatically improving day to day operations.*
- ~ *At Finance Officer at the Council of Beaudesert, I spearheaded a total restructure of the rating unit, which dramatically enhanced customer service and boosted operational efficiencies. I also re-staffed the area, resulting in a significant improvement in team members' responsiveness and ability to meet deadlines and legislative obligations.*

Addressing an Expression of Interest

For many applications, there is a trend away from long and complex applications that require a candidate to address selection criteria. Instead, a candidate simply needs to submit an expression of interest (EOI).

An expression of interest will involve either a word limit (say 700 words in total), or a page limit (usually no more than a 2 page cover letter). An expression of interest is common for temporary positions or positions advertised internally.

When addressing an expression of interest (EOI), you still need to address the selection criteria, but instead of answering them in a separate document, simply address the requirements (either directly or indirectly) within the resume and the 2 page cover letter.

Use the same techniques outlined above for addressing selection criteria within a cover letter. When addressing an EOI, make sure you really focus on your major achievements and accomplishments RELEVANT to the position in question.

See my example below, of a cover letter addressing selection criteria for a government position in Queensland, with relevant selection criteria relating to leadership, strategic planning, communication and interpersonal skills, policy implementation, problem solving and contemporary human resource management.

Nicole Brown

26 Chelsea Court
Flinders View, QLD 4305
H: (07) 3288 0754
M: 0407 127 154

6th May 2010

The Vacancy Processing Officer
Workforce Operations (Training)
Human Resource Services
PO Box 12164, George Street
Brisbane, Q 4003

RE: Administration Officer – Disabilities Services p DSQ 776/10

Please find attached my application for Administration Officer at Disabilities Services. I enclose a copy of my current résumé, outlining my relevant experience and qualifications, along with an outline of my experience and knowledge to demonstrate my capabilities within the context of the key accountabilities. I am very interested in this position, as I would relish the opportunity to provide a high level of service to stakeholders to ensure appropriate administrative, policy, HR and financial support in line with the requirements of the functional area.

I believe I have the relevant experience and qualifications for this position, including:

Demonstrated effectiveness in discharging duties of an administrative nature.

I have sound administration skills, with the capacity to discharge duties of an administrative nature. Demonstrable examples include:

- ~ As **Administration Officer** with the Department of Treasury, I provided key administrative support to the Director, Senior Administration Officer and Contracts/Purchasing Officer. This involved mail distribution, preparation of correspondence, diary management and high level confidential secretarial support. I also successfully managed challenges relating to strict record keeping/file management and ensuring accurate information within specific databases within the Department of Treasury.
- ~ As **Supervising Pharmacy Technician, Queensland Health**, I successfully improved administrative processes, including the creation of a log to ensure items did not expire on relevant wards, and the tracking and recording of inventory. I successfully maintained ledgers, validated and corrected data and documented movements on a range of supplies across a complex hospital system, in line with strict policies and procedures. In this position, I was also the first point of contact for answering a range of reception enquiries in line with organisational requirements.

Computer Competencies

I also have relevant skills in **MS Windows based operating systems and web-based products and reference tools**, including MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Outlook and pharmacy related software in both the public and private sector. My skills include: entering alpha/numeric data via a keyboard, word-processing, knowledge of entry techniques and controls for spreadsheets and data bases, touch typing skills, searching the world-wide web and use of in-house technologies. I also have the ability to quickly acquire new skills, and in my various positions rapidly acquired knowledge of software systems to ensure the accurate management of records.

Demonstrated ability in organising and prioritising work demands / Demonstrated effectiveness in meeting deadlines.

I have the ability to achieve results and complete conflicting tasks. Various examples include:

- ~ As **Customer Service Officer/Pharmacy Dispensing Technician**, I managed all processes relating to contracts and purchasing, including meeting financial and procedural guidelines.

- ~ As **Administration Officer**, Department of Treasury, I successfully juggled the demands of a hectic reception system, as well as providing key administrative support on all areas relating to contract management
- ~ As **Supervising Pharmacy Technician**, I played an instrumental role in ensuring that the District met strict budget requirements, simultaneously improving systems to ensure streamlined and standardised work practices.

Core to this position was **meeting strict deadlines** relating to reporting functions. This included meeting deadlines relating to the distribution of emergency supplies in line with ward requirements, documenting movements across the hospital, deadlines relating to reporting requirements, management of stock take processes, and meeting deadlines relating to staff training on the roll out of new software systems.

In successfully undertaking these roles: (a) I identified my own work goals and prioritised them in accordance with the agency and stakeholder requirements; (b) Achieved work goals and revised work plans to attend to ongoing or new responsibilities; (c) Continuously reviewed and reassigned priority to tasks; (d) Implemented procedures to alert myself of impending deadlines; (e) Used technology to assist with task management; (f) Ensured prompt attendance to tasks and commitments; and (g) Communicated continuously with my team members.

Demonstrated ability to carry out tasks of a financial nature.

I have the capacity to carry out a range of tasks of a financial nature. My relevant experience includes:

- ~ As **Administration Officer/Assistant Purchasing Officer** at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, I successfully managed all administrative processes relating to the procurement of goods in line with State Purchasing Policies. This included meeting statutory requirements and maintenance of financial records, including management of databases and processing of procurement requirements.
- ~ As Supervising Pharmacy Technician, I led a team of 6 staff members and I played an **instrumental role in ensuring that the whole District met strict budget requirements** relating to the purchase/procurement of pharmaceutical supplies. This included taking lead role in regards to tracking and recording inventory, purchase orders, claims, stock adjustments, maintenance of financial ledgers, validation and correction of data, the documentation of movements across the hospital, through to complex financial reporting.

Procedural Compliance

Within my various positions in both the public and private sector, I have ensured appropriate compliance with regulatory requirements. This has included meeting statutory requirements relating to dispensing medicines and products as Pharmacy Dispensing Technician, through to meeting strict procedural requirements at Queensland Health.

Conclusion

Finally, I would describe myself as proactive and determined, with the ability to take personal responsibility for getting things done and for achieving success. I also have the ability to work credibly and effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders, including customers, contractors and staff.

I trust this brief outline provides you with sufficient information and I look forward to the opportunity to meet with selection panel, to discuss my application further.

Yours faithfully

Nikki Brown

Chapter 19

Addressing generic selection criteria

Quite a few agencies use **generic selection criteria**, which apply to all roles, with the only variation relating to technical or specific knowledge related to the role.

The most common generic selection criteria you will find are those relating to the leadership capability framework, known as Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework, or SELC.

The SELC framework outlines the criteria for executive positions at federal government. **However you will find this framework used at all levels of government, at both the federal and state level and I have even seen them used by private organisations.**

Addressing the SELC framework

The SELC framework is as follows:*

Shapes Strategic Thinking

- ~ Inspires a sense of purpose and direction
- ~ Focuses strategically
- ~ Harnesses information and opportunities
- ~ Shows judgement, intelligence and commonsense

Achieves Results

- ~ Builds organisational capability and responsiveness
- ~ Marshals professional expertise
- ~ Steers and implements change and deals with uncertainty
- ~ Ensures closure and delivers on intended results

Communicates with Influence

- ~ Communicates clearly
- ~ Listens, understands and adapts to audience
- ~ Negotiates Persuasively

Cultivates Productive Working Relationships

- ~ Nurtures internal and external relationships
- ~ Facilitates Cooperation and partnerships
- ~ Values individual differences and diversity
- ~ Guides, mentors and develops people

Exemplifies personal drive and integrity

- ~ Demonstrates public service professionalism and probity
- ~ Engages with risk and shows personal courage
- ~ Commits to action
- ~ Displays resilience
- ~ Demonstrates self awareness and a commitment to personal development

Technical skills

- ~ Developed specifically for each role in question if required

(*Source – Australian Public Service Commission 2006 – www.apsc.gov.au/selc/index.html)

At the state level, you will also encounter capability frameworks. For example, for NSW, each capability is made up of the following components:

Capability:

Communication

Description:

Listens, interprets and conveys information in a clear and accurate manner. Provides timely delivery of information and selects the most appropriate method of communication.

Elements

Utilises written communication effectively
Communicates verbally
Presents and facilitates
Influences and negotiates

Behavioural Criteria Levels

Generally, each capability has 6 levels (4 for Leadership and Management Capabilities), which describe levels of behaviour that are to be demonstrated at a particular level.

The **KEY to addressing these selection criteria (including the NSW capability framework) is to address them within the context of the position in question and to provide tangible evidence of your achievements.**

For example, if you are from the **Australian Federal Police (AFP)** and you are applying for a team leader position in investigations, you will need to shape your application in a way that demonstrates how you will be able to perform the duties of an inspector, by highlighting your investigative and leadership skills within the AFP.

For example, under **Cultivate Productive Working Relationships**, your response would need to be framed around providing evidence relating to nurturing relevant working relationships in the area of investigations, such as working with SAPOL (including specialist investigation areas, local CIB's and the State Intelligence Branch), Australian Tax Office, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Magistrates, Registries and so on.

Likewise, if you were **Marketing Manager**, under **Cultivate Productive Working Relationships**, you would outline evidence relating to nurturing and building client relationships, working effectively with management and building and developing an effective sales and marketing team.

The **biggest mistake** candidates make when addressing generic criteria, is the failure to directly address the requirements of the position. That is, marrying the job profile, with the generic selection criteria. Keep in mind that providing evidence in relation to an entirely different sector or role can result in you not being selected for an interview. You must provide evidence that is relevant to the advertised position.

When addressing these generic selection criteria, it is not necessary to address each sub-criterion under a separate heading, as long as you provide concrete evidence of each sub-criterion in your STAR / CAR examples that you provide the selection panel.

See the example below:

SC 1 – Shapes strategic thinking

- ~ **Inspires a sense of purpose and direction**
- ~ **Focuses strategically**
- ~ **Harnesses information and opportunities**
- ~ **Shows judgment, intelligence and commonsense**

Possessing well developed strategic leadership skills, acquired in a variety of roles within both the private and public sector I have been able to effectively drive an initiative or project to fulfilment, at the same time gaining support from peers and staff to ensure successful outcomes.

*This is evident in my current role as **Senior Manager EL1** at the DIAC. Within this role, I have provided leadership in relating to data reporting, both within the Department and whole-of-government initiatives. This has involved establishing area direction and preparing plans which analyse all available facts and reflect DIAC goals and organisational priorities. This has included identifying, developing and articulating outcomes that are realistic, measurable and consistent with government requirements, including understanding current key issues and how they impact on the area, recognising the need to anticipate future challenges and the necessity to create flexibility in order to ensure ongoing sustainability.*

Relevant plans and policies I have created within the area have included:

- ~ *The development and implementation of a communication strategy within the branch. This complex strategy successfully highlighted the failure of various sections to communicate effectively and involved addressing the problem from the perspective of what DIAC requires, at the same time understanding the complex interplay and political environment in relation to the inter-relationships between different stakeholder and client groups within the department.*
- ~ *The development of policy for enterprise data capability for the department, including keeping abreast of shifts in the environment and bringing a businesslike orientation into the area. This included the use of reporting services, the use of 'remoteness classification' for funding arrangement and data and metadata issues.*
- ~ *Collaboratively contributing to the strategic direction regarding reporting, in particular the DIAC Online Management System (OMS), which utilises several complex business intelligence tools in relation to the delivery of financial reports to the Department. This included providing relevant training to members of the Executive Management Group on the reporting components of OMS.*
- ~ *I have led the process in regards to the design and development of an intranet site for delivery of reports and user documentation.*
- ~ *I spearheaded the established of the whole-of-government Socio-Economic Working Group for data enabling the government. This was as the result of the need to build organisational capability and through this working group, collective minds are now assessing a range of potential solutions and taking a logical approach to problem solving, at the same time sharing resources. Beneficial results have included significant enhancement of the process and resource sharing amongst socio-economic agencies, such as DEST, DEWR, ABS and CentreLink.*
- ~ *I successfully developed a quality assurance process for outgoing work, ensuring that business area coordinators now understand and are committed to the quality initiatives, designed to provide high quality reporting for the Minister's office.*

As a result of my ability to shape strategic thinking within the area, I have been able to establish processes which are clearly linked to business and departmental outcomes. I have also been able to ensure that the functional area resources are directed in a way that contributes to the achievements of the area outcomes

I am confident that this experience will enable me to ensure that all tasks align with DEST strategic direction and that people understand the importance of their work and how it aligns with DEST goals.

Addressing Executive Level Applications

If you need to address Generic Selection Criteria for executive level or senior executive level service, (EL1, EL2, SESB1, SESB2, SESB3), then most of the advice and tips already outlined in this chapter and manual, will also apply to executive level applications. Below, however, I have outlined issues that are related specifically to these executive applications.

- ~ **Understand the basis on which an agency assesses these applications, before you even start applying for these executive positions.** Have a detailed look at the SELC Framework, relating to both hard and soft skills and identify those areas in which you have a skills or leadership gap. By doing so you will be able to judge what areas you need to improve, in order to ascend through the classification levels. Major skills at the senior executive level include change management, whole-of-government challenges, strategic leadership, government finance, policy management, presenting at parliamentary committees, and understanding the regulatory environment.

Useful links:

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/selc/framework.pdf> - Outline of the SELC Framework

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/ils/index.html> - Have a detailed look at the Integrated Leadership System, which is based on and expands the SELC framework and contains guides and tools to assist in professional development, capability planning and agency succession management.

- ~ When working with the SELC Framework, you will need to address the capabilities in the context of the position and develop responses that meet the core areas of the position. It is unnecessary to address each of the inter-related capabilities separately, but it is vital to ensure that you meet the specific needs of the agency.
- ~ **Contributions, contributions, contributions – is my constant mantra at this level.** You need to show in-depth, quantifiable achievements across all criteria and the more outcomes focused the better. At this level, it is about shaping and making high level contributions, so you won't nail it unless you have a quantifiable pattern of achievement and you can demonstrate this throughout your application.

Chapter 20

Solutions to general problems

Length of response per selection criteria, where no word or character limit is prescribed

Quite a few clients ask me how long their application should be, and while there are no hard and fast rules, I suggest the following:

- ~ **NEVER under any circumstances, exceed more than two pages per criterion.** While some agencies are used to and expect, long and tedious responses, others have a strict policy that results in a selection panel disregarding information that extends beyond two pages. This could be detrimental to your application.

Remember, real people read these applications and long applications, usually contain unnecessary waffle, which will either send your reader to sleep, or encourage a reader to skim through your application. (Keep in mind, some selection panel members need to read hundreds and occasionally up to a thousand applications or more).

Your focus should always be on quality, not quantity!

- ~ The higher the level of classification, the more evidence you will need to provide of your skills, achievements and contributions. At senior management level it will become increasingly difficult (but not impossible if pruned to the core), to achieve this in less than one page per criterion. (Refer to my tips on how to prune an application in Chapter 14). At this level, I usually provide around one and no more than one and a half pages per selection criteria if there are only four to six criteria (unless I know that the unwritten rules of the agency require less or more than this).
- ~ At entry level half a page per selection criteria is more than sufficient.
- ~ The more criteria you have to address, the shorter your response should be for each criterion. So for example, if you are required to address twenty separate selection criteria, limit your response to one or two succinct paragraphs per selection criteria.
- ~ If you need to address several sub-criteria, then unless you are specifically advised that you need to address each sub-criterion separately, address them using a couple of STAR examples, as previously outline in Chapter 14. That way, you will still be addressing the agency's requirements, without having to write 'War and Peace'

Adding 'meat on the bone' for criteria you are weak on

Occasionally, you will come across an application where you are the perfect fit, but are weak on one criterion, or some of the desirables.

If this is the case, and you feel strongly that this is the role for you, then so long as you are strong in all other areas of the application, use these techniques below to create a compelling case, even if this criterion is your 'weakest link'.

Research, Research, Research

Whenever my client is weak on a particular area, I research thoroughly what the actual requirements are, and then incorporate this research into the application.

For further information on research and how to incorporate this within your selection criteria, refer to Chapter 8.

Use Transferable Skills

While you may not have the specific skills required, you can effectively use transferable skills to highlight how you meet the criterion in question.

Example:

This example related to project management in the conservation arena.

While my client had no direct experience in project management within this sector, I used a range of transferable skills to highlight his ability to undertake the role.

I also have a range of transferable skills, from my legal background, which will enable me to effectively manage projects and support and lead a team. In my current role as Claims Manager – Clifford & Brown, I successfully led process relating to the project management of the development and implementation of a complex claims database, as well as maintain five separate databases across separate lines of Insurance. In delivering this complex project:

- ~ I managed the project development, including assessment of the cost*
- ~ Systematically tracked progress and monitored timelines*
- ~ Ensured that the professional expertise required to meet project/business outcomes were utilised, including active collaboration with the IT Department and management of staff*
- ~ I steered and implemented the change, including monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the database*
- ~ I provided technical, strategic and business advice to the partnership*

Results from the effective management of the database included increased efficiency, allowing me to successfully fulfil all requirements of the role, previously requiring two people. There has also been a significant improvement in services delivered to major business clients.

Don't state that you don't meet the criterion

I never highlight my client's weakness in any area and I strongly suggest you don't either.

You should treat your application in the same way as an advertiser writes motivational copy about their goods and services. That is, you highlight what you can offer, NOT what you can't offer and ensure that you indirectly and directly meet the agency's needs and requirements.

DON'T under any circumstances, start or conclude your response with a statement such as:

While I have not as yet learnt or worked on cabinet processes, senate estimates or questions on notice, I am willing to learn and confident in my ability to do so.

By so doing, you could be putting the final nail in the coffin of your application being relegated to the 'not for interview list'.

Example:

Below is an example, of how I used research and transferable skills to develop a case for a client, who had no experience in preparing and presenting evidence to the courts. This client secured an interview!

SC 6

Demonstrable ability to prepare and present expert evidence to courts, inquiries or tribunals

I have the ability to prepare expert evidence for courts, inquiries or tribunals and have an understanding of the judicial processes, interpretations and conventions that must be complied with in carrying out investigatory activities and preparing expert evidence to courts.

At Stevenson, I was seconded to the National Insolvency Coordination Unit of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. In this role, my primary responsibility was the investigation and review of the level of compliance by directors of their duties under the Corporations Act 2001. In this position, I prepared detailed affidavits for referral to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission's enforcement unit, and this involved a detailed knowledge of relevant provision of the Corporations Act, along with the ability to effectively draft affidavits for presentation to court.

I have also prepared the following when undertaking work relating to insolvency matters:

Preparation of Public Examination

This involved the detailed preparation of evidence under Division 1 of Part 5.9 of the Corporations Law (Sections 596A – 597B) in relation to Public Examinations of persons concerning the examinable affairs of corporations.

This involved the preparation of a material in such a way to ensure that it was unlikely to be challenged on the basis of inappropriate evidence, relating to examinable affairs contained in s 9 – 53 of the Corporation Law, along with ensuring the matter would not be challenged in regards to the ASIC authority to conduct a public examination under the Act.

Preparation of Insolvency Reports

I was involved in the preparation of detailed Insolvency Reports, which included the preparation of evidence and claims for submission to court.

Cont: -

- ~ In preparing these reports, I researched and examined evidentiary material, including examination of records and business operations, including detailed analysis of budgeting systems, actual costs of revenues, managerial control of resources, income, expenditure, capital usage and cash flows for use for submission to court.*
- ~ I outlined non-financial information that supplemented and elaborated on the matter*
- ~ I provided evidence in regards to actions and decisions of Directors of companies*

I also have the ability to present expert evidence to court and understand the basis of acting as an expert witness. For example:

- ~ It must be agreed or demonstrated that I have a field of specialised knowledge*
- ~ I must demonstrate that I am an expert in an aspect of the specialised knowledge by reason of specialised training, study or experience*
- ~ My opinion must be based wholly or substantially on my expert knowledge*
- ~ The facts that I base my opinion on, must be established as evidence*
- ~ It must be established that the facts on which my opinion is based form a proper foundation for it and*
- ~ I must clearly explain the logical basis of my opinion and how it relates to the established evidence in my expert knowledge*
- ~ I must abide by the expert witness code of conduct that is required in Queensland and Federal proceedings. This code requires an expert to set out facts and matters upon which each opinion expressed in the report is based and any investigations by any other party upon which the expert report relies.*

This knowledge is enhanced by my extensive experience in public speaking relating to specialist matters. This has included providing lectures and internal training on a range of specialist subjects, including:

- ~ Providing an overview of the role of NICU and insolvency administrations*
- ~ Providing a lecture to National Australia in regards to an overview of insolvency administrations*
- ~ Providing internal training to staff on a range of matters, including credit review processes and insolvency administrations.*

As Senior Financial Investigator, I am confident that I would be able to integrate relevant financial evidence with other components of the investigation, prepare briefs of evidence, statements of witnesses, affidavits and reports and provide expert evidence before courts, inquiries or tribunals.

Chapter 21

Graduate applications

Graduate applications at federal, state and territory level are **fiercely competitive, with thousands of graduates applying for a limited number of positions within each agency.**

Most of the advice and tips already outlined in this manual, will also apply to graduate candidates. I have covered additional material below and have reinforced some important issues, which are specific to graduate applications.

Tip 1 – “Grades aren’t enough babe!”

It was over a decade ago, but I still clearly remember how competitive graduate programs were, and how the whole focus seemed to evolve around ‘grades received’ (and what grades everyone else was receiving), and the purchase of a designer suit in anticipation of being offered an interview.

While grades are often used as an initial ‘culling process’ in the private sector, in the public sector they are only one component of your application. To get selected for the short list, your application needs to be strong and professional throughout.

Also keep in mind that one of the annoyances of recruiters is the **entitlement mentality** – namely, ‘I have high grades and an honours degree, so what can you do for me?’

Remember, your focus should always be on the needs of the agency. By addressing their needs, your own needs will in turn be met by way of training and an opportunity to gain valuable experience.

Tip 2 – Focus on the quality of your evidence

Whether you need to address behavioural questions or selection criteria one of the most common failings of graduate applications is the poor quality of examples provided.

While as a graduate you won’t have a large arsenal of evidence-based examples you can draw upon, you can still develop strong claims by:

- ~ Providing examples of your experience gained in volunteer roles (if you don’t have voluntary experience, then I advise you obtain this experience).
- ~ Using transferable skills developed while working in part-time jobs, holiday jobs etc.
- ~ Utilising knowledge gained while completing your degree
- ~ Utilising any practical working examples obtained while working on joint assignments, undertaking research papers, field research or completing practical modules.

Tip 3 – Be innovative when using examples

One way to ensure you stand apart from the rest of the graduate pack is to integrate practical working examples, instead of using examples almost every graduate uses.

For example, just about every graduate I know refers to their ability to write essays and research papers, when addressing selection criteria in relation to communication skills. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this answer, it is difficult to frame a brilliant response around essay writing, and essay writing has very little to do with an ability to write memorandums, brief management, write clear emails, or communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders, including clients.

Instead, focus on **working examples** and exploit what limited experience you have, in the same way as someone with ten years post-graduate experience addresses selection criteria, using strong evidence-based examples.

Example:

The example below drew upon a one month, part time voluntary role undertaken by a graduate.

SC 4

Demonstrate how you have utilised your highly developed communication skills

I have well developed influential communication skills and would be able to meet all administrative requirements of this role.

In my role at Salvation, I was responsible for assisting in the facilitation of the Young Parents' Project. Within a limited time frame, I undertook a service mapping exercise in order to identify the existing services available for young parents within the region, created a comprehensive service directory and identified the various strengths and gaps in the service. This involved:

- ~ Actively listening to representatives of community groups, to ensure that views and information were effectively exchanged and understood. I also ensured that I created opportunities to listen to those whose input would add real value to the exercise.*
- ~ Effectively documenting the process in writing, ensuring that the service directory was written in a clear, unambiguous and concise way.*
- ~ Keeping management fully up-to-date and informed, both orally and in writing*
- ~ Engaging in constructive discussions with various organisations, clearly outlining Salvations Young Parents' Project and discussing the need for and viability of the proposal*

As a result of my effective communication skills, I was able to successfully communicate to stakeholders, and provide a comprehensive, coherent and unambiguous service directory, which is currently in use at Salvation.

Tip 4 – Incorporate your understanding of the agency and the role, when addressing selection criteria or behavioural questions

Although I have already covered this in Chapter 12, Number four, I emphasise it again, as it is important to ensure that you don't try to write a one-size-fits-all application, but tailor each application to target different types of agencies.

Graduates who meet agency requirements are much more likely to get interviews, even if their grades are not spectacular.

So, when writing a sizzling response to a graduate position:

- ~ Think of benefits you can bring to the organisation that meet the agency's requirements.
- ~ Research, research, research and obtain a clear understanding of the agency and advertised graduate program.
- ~ Substantiate all claims with relevant examples and highlight your accomplishments

Example:

Listed below is an example of a graduate, who had limited experience, but through the utilisation of his transferable skills in voluntary roles, and by incorporating an understanding of what would be required of him in representing the agency in the community, he secured an interview which resulted in his successful appointment as a Youth Support Worker.

SC 5 – Youth Support Worker

Demonstrate how you would be able to represent the agency in the community to enhance position and profile

I have the relevant skills and attributes necessary to represent the agency in the community to enhance position and profile.

Profile and position among agencies and schools

In my role at Youth Australia, I was responsible for assisting in the facilitation of the Parents Project, an initiative targeted at building capacity in a disadvantaged community sector, namely the high risk sector of young parents. A key part of this role was representing Youth Australia while networking extensively with service providers within the region to create a comprehensive service directory, obtain feedback on the initiative and provide service providers with information relating to the program.

In representing Youth Australia:

- ~ *I ensured appropriate professionalism and probity, including being consistently genuine in my interactions with others and showing a personal commitment and loyalty to the program.*
- ~ *I promoted the program's vision, goals and objectives to a diverse range of stakeholders, including community organisations, non-profit groups, employment agencies, Indigenous services and government departments.*
- ~ *I communicated information relevant to the program in a relevant and effective manner.*

Cont:

As Youth Support Worker, I would promote the service, including ensuring appropriate professionalism, commitment and effective networking. I would:

- ~ Help market the program, through promotional materials such as information brochures*
- ~ Liaise extensively with relevant stakeholders, including nurturing a wide range of contacts and alliances with agencies and schools*
- ~ I would ensure consistent communication with relevant stakeholders, including providing information on the program, as well as keeping people up to date, by establishing both formal and informal communication channels and keeping all stakeholders fully informed (both schools and agencies).*

Profile and position among the Youth and Disadvantaged Communities

As a volunteer at the Salvation Army Service, I provided support to Youth Workers and a diverse range of youth, utilising the outreach centre. In this role I promoted the services at the centre by actively communicating with, and working with disadvantaged youth. This included:

- ~ Clearly communicating to youth the relevant services available at the centre*
- ~ Treating all clients with respect and courtesy, regardless of their behaviour and ensuring that I did not show favouritism or bias when dealing with people*
- ~ Being open, ethical, and honest*
- ~ Being accountable and adhering to sound practice*
- ~ Ensuring that young people were made to feel welcome and important as a human being.*

As Youth Support Worker, I would enhance the profile and position by ensuring that I:

- ~ Am approachable at all times to discuss problems, and provide full support in overcoming obstacles.*
- ~ Provide a commitment to client service, including responding to feedback and providing empathetic and non-judgmental support*
- ~ Act with integrity at all times*

I am confident that my professionalism, strong interpersonal skills, ability to communicate, network and build relationships with key stakeholders, will enable me to enhance the position and profile of the program and agency.

PART SIX

USEFUL TIPS, RESOURCES AND FURTHER SELECTION CRITERIA SAMPLES

Chapter 22

Turbo-boosting your writing output

Writing quality responses to selection criteria and job applications can be a time consuming exercise. Many of my clients have spent every waking moment outside of work developing and writing responses to selection criteria. Even as a professional I find them time consuming, having never been able to get a full application out in less than half a days work, (even entry level applications), and occasionally spending a couple of full days on one client file, if I'm writing at a very senior level.

There are days when I can sit down at my computer and effortlessly crank out page after page, seamlessly addressing selection criteria for my clients. Sometimes, I can even work for four to five hours without taking a break and 'nail' even complex applications at the senior executive level in less than one day.

Days like that are productive and invigorating, but like all professionals who write for a living, other days are painfully sluggish and unproductive, to the point where I end up 'writing off time' on client files.

However, over the years, I've used some simple techniques for kick-starting and sustaining output, which I am going to share with you to help turbo-boost your writing when addressing selection criteria.

Number One – Just write

Once you have developed a framework and you have some idea as to what you want to write, then **write quickly from the opening sentence to the end without a break.** It doesn't matter if you write long hand or use a word processor, the key is not to stop, even for a few seconds, to edit or to criticize what you have written.

This is not fine literature. Keep it simple and keep it direct. Remember getting those first words out is the toughest part of the process, so leave the critical editing until after you get your thoughts down on paper. Once you have finished writing:

- ~ Read over your responses and start doing some editing and fine-tuning, including moving sentences and paragraphs where necessary.
- ~ Go over what you have written and ensure it addresses the requirements of the selection criteria and / or performance indicators
- ~ Ask yourself if the response adequately promotes you as a candidate, with a large injection of achievements and contributions
- ~ Take a break and put the application aside for a day, then go back to it with fresh eyes to make corrections, additions and alterations.

Number Two - Tackle the easy criteria first

I always 'knock over' the easy selection criteria first, which allows the brain to warm up to the task at hand. It also allows me time to come to grips with the remainder of the application.

Number Three – Find your 'Peak Writing Hours'

We all have different bio-rhythms - which mean, we all have a peak time of productivity, when output soars and both quantity and quality is high. By identifying your own peak periods, you will not only increase the quality of your application, but you will reduce the time it takes for you to create your responses.

I find I am most productive between the hours of 8am and 2.30 - 3pm and again between the hours of 7pm and 9pm. Conversely, I am at my most unproductive between 3pm and 7pm and anything after 9pm is a total write off. (I'm usually in bed by 9.30pm - 10pm). Accordingly, I schedule my work day around these peak writing hours and leave the mundane administrative tasks of running a business during my off peak hours.

Number Four – Work on two or more selection criterion at a time and/or more than one application at a time

I always work on more than one criterion at a time and occasionally on more than one application at a time. The benefits of doing so include, preventing the brain from becoming oversaturated in any one thing, and it will also allow you to re-focus and refresh your thoughts by moving onto another criterion.

If you get stuck on a criterion, don't sit there and lament on your inability to address it, move onto another criterion or application quickly. When you switch to another criterion or application, it enables you to turbo-boost your writing output, and **transfer ideas** throughout your application.

Number Five – Save your cover letter for the end

Don't waste time writing your cover letter at the beginning. Skip it, and save it for the end, as cover letters are basically the final touches to your application and are easier to write when the whole framework is in place.

Number Six – Keep a notepad handy at all times

The brain works in mysterious ways and usually when you are not working on the application your subconscious mind will be at work putting the pieces of the jigsaw together.

Often when you are most relaxed, or you are doing relatively 'brain dead' tasks, such as cleaning your teeth, weeding the garden, or washing the dishes, ideas will pop into your head.

To ensure you get these ideas on paper, make sure you have a small notepad where you can jot ideas down as quickly as possible.

So often solutions as to how to approach a complex criterion, or recalling accomplishments from a role will suddenly pop into the head at the weirdest times! Usually my weird time is first thing in the morning, when in a still half conscious and sleepy state of mind, I find the perfect solution to addressing a complex criterion for a client, or I will scribble down new ideas for my regular client e-zine 'Boost your Career'.

Chapter 23

Useful links and resources

Ways to obtain work in the Public Sector

There are several ways you can gain employment in the Public Sector:

- ~ Apply for a specific permanent (ongoing) job advertised in the Public Service Gazette or various states job websites
- ~ Apply for temporary, contract (non-ongoing) roles advertised in the Gazette and various state websites
- ~ Apply for a role in government through a recruitment firm
- ~ Apply for role through an agency temporary register

All Government jobs and traineeships are posted on the internet. Listed below are sites for federal government, state government and territory.

You will also find government jobs advertised in local and regional newspapers, for example in Queensland they are advertised in The Australian and The Courier Mail.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Australian Public Service Gazette

Ongoing jobs are published every Thursday in the APS Gazette

www.apsjobs.gov.au/

www.gov.au - entry point for all government departments

If you are interested in obtaining employment within a particular agency, then most agencies have recruiting information directly on their website.

STATE / TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Entry points for state and territory roles are as follows:

Queensland

www.jobs.qld.gov.au

New South Wales

www.jobs.nsw.gov.au

Western Australia

www.jobs.wa.gov.au

Tasmania

www.jobs.tas.gov.au

Victoria

www.careers.vic.gov.au

Northern Territory

<http://www.notes.nt.gov.au/dcis/RMS.nsf/NTGEmploymentHome?OpenForm>

South Australia

www.vacancies.sa.gov.au

ACT

www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For Local Government jobs, refer to your local council web site, or www.job-directory.com.au which is a good entry for local government jobs.

Other useful websites:

www.counciljobs.com

www.lqnet.com.au

www.walga.asn.au/careers

Legislation Governing Public Service Employment

Federal Government

- ~ *Public Service Act 1999*
- ~ *Public Service Regulations 1999*
- ~ *Public Service Classification Rules 1999*
- ~ *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- ~ *Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987*
- ~ *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*
- ~ *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*
- ~ *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- ~ *Privacy Act 1988*

www.comlaw.gov.au

New South Wales

- ~ *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002*
- ~ *Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment Award 2006)*

Queensland

- ~ *The Public Service Act 1996*
- ~ *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992*
- ~ *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- ~ *The Directives of Public Service Employment*

Victoria

- ~ *Public Sector Management and Employment Act 1978*

ACT

~ *Public Sector Management Act 1994*

Northern Territory

~ *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*

Western Australia

~ *Public Sector Management Act 2004*

Chapter 24

PORTFOLIO OF SELECTION CRITERIA SAMPLES

Below are some sample selection criteria. Each has been selected to demonstrate how you can effectively present information in completely different ways in order to focus the response for the position. Some use the traditional STAR or CAR methodology, some use bullet points to simply list work highlights, and some show how to write effective responses when working with strict word limits or behavioural questions.

Remember, these samples are only to demonstrate different methods of responding against diverse criteria. You will need to adapt your application using the 7 steps to writing sizzling responses to selection criteria.

Remember, there is no magic standard formula or 'government buzz words' you have to incorporate within your application. The most effective way to address selection criteria is to focus on the needs of the position, write responses that are of interest to the prospective panel member, and highlight accomplishments, using powerful language that positions you as the best candidate for a job.

SC 1. In relation to the Assessment Criteria Clinical Skills, please address the following questions in no more than 200 words for each section.

Please outline your experience of performing the duties of a dental assistant and assisting the needs of the technician.

I have extensive experience as a dental assistant, with relevant experience in the provision of assistance to other dental workers, such as dentists, in the provision of treatment to the teeth/mouth and gums. Various tasks that I have performed to assist the needs of the technician have included:

- Receiving patients and preparing them for necessary dental procedures.
- The preparation of surgery for dental treatments with correct instruments/materials ready for use as directed by the technician.
- The provision of assistance to the technician during oral examination or treatment (e.g. provide instruments, dispensing material as directed by the operator, and clearing the patient's mouth of saliva or dental materials used in the treatment, through operation of handheld suction or air and water-spraying equipment).
- The provision of pre and post operative care for patients undergoing local and general anaesthesia
- Cleaning and sterilising the instruments used after treatment, clean and tidy the surgery and implement standard decontamination procedures for infection control
- Process, mount and file dental X-rays
- Maintain and re-stock dental supplies
- Perform routine care and maintenance of dental equipment
- Undertake receptionist duties, such as making patient appointments, keeping records of patient treatment, answering the telephone, and carrying out other office duties. **(Word Count 202)**

Due to the strict word limit, these responses simply highlighted the experience of the client, without using the STAR methodology.

Please indicate when and where you have demonstrated these skills.

I was employed as a Dental Assistant by John Lawes in March 2009 and worked in this position until June 2010. I have also provided assistance in surgery at St Andrews Private Hospital and Tri Rhosen Day House, and provided care at Blue Care Nursing Home and Nowlanvil Nursing Home. I note that I am currently employed at West Morton Health Service. In these roles, I obtained extensive experience in all facets in the provision of client care and assisting dental workers, as well as carrying out chair-side and receptionist duties.

At John Fisher, I gained comprehensive experience in assisting two dentists in relation to a wide range of procedures, including oral surgery, endodontics, orthodontics, periodontics, preventative dentistry, prosthodontics, restorative dentistry and dental emergencies. I also ensured that I met all standards in relation to infection control/sterilisation, as well as maintaining a safe workplace. This role also involved a great deal of

dental customer relations, as I was involved in the provision of pre and post operative care and receiving patients from a diverse range of backgrounds. Other aspects of this role included reception, inventory/stock control, processing and filing of X-rays, and direct liaison with technicians, laboratory staff, and sales representatives. *(Word Count 199)*

Key Selection Criteria 6

Evidence of experience in the maintenance of records and client correspondence.

I have extensive experience in the maintenance of records and client correspondence. I ensure all records, case notes and client correspondence are kept in an appropriate manner, and written in a way that avoids unnecessary jargon and acronyms.

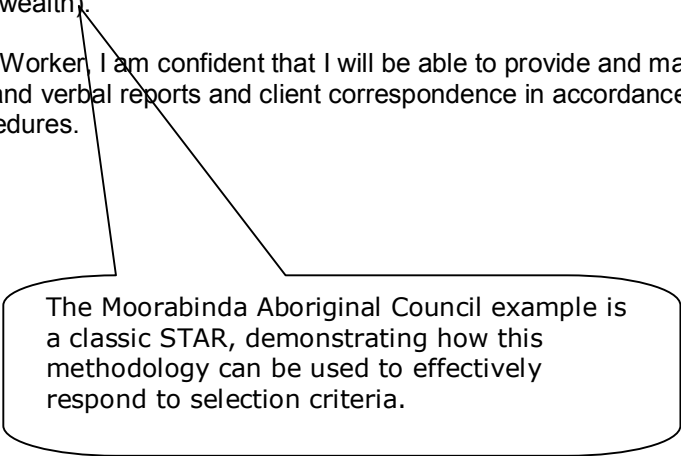
As Youth Worker at the Sir David Mann Youth Detention Centre, for the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, I was responsible for the supervision and support of young people, along with involvement in their daily activities. A key aspect of the role was to help maintain comprehensive reports/records of each individual in detention and to monitor and report clients activities on a daily basis.

As Family Support Worker for the Moorabinda Aboriginal Council, I worked with individuals, families and groups in the community. I implemented the "Black Boy Program", which involved supporting children in Family Departmental care (including support of other family members and parents), and implementation of a number of projects, including the Young Mothers Parenting Program and Youth Programs for school aged children. In this role, I provided regular reports for management and this included:

1. Maintenance of accurate reports on various clients/youths and ensuring all relevant information was accurate and up to date, including ensuring all modifications required were made in a timely manner.
2. Collection and interpretation of data and statistics, in order to comply with the Department of Families Youth & Community Care Programs/Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission, and Department of Families (Commonwealth). This included reporting on a new program, titled "One Service Agreement" piloted in Moorabinda by the state government. In this role, I ensured accurate reports in regard to programs in order to enable a one-line funding process across all government funding bodies and agencies.
3. The provision of management reports in regard to updates on various programs and feedback obtained on services provided.
4. Accurate record keeping in regard to budgets and financial matters.

As a result of my accurate record keeping, I provided management with timely reports in regard to services, which enabled them to identify and prioritise issues in the community. I also ensured that all reports and records were maintained in accordance with Moorabinda Aboriginal Council's policies and procedures, along with the requirements of the Department of Families Youth & Community Care Programs/Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission, and Department of Families (Commonwealth).

As Family Support Worker, I am confident that I will be able to provide and maintain accurate and timely written and verbal reports and client correspondence in accordance with the Centre's practices and procedures.



The Moorabinda Aboriginal Council example is a classic STAR, demonstrating how this methodology can be used to effectively respond to selection criteria.

KSC 3 At least two (2) consecutive performance appraisals, which have been rated well above average.

My performance appraisals reflect a well above average standard and my ability to efficiently and effectively execute the responsibilities of the role of Custodial Correctional Officer, Security.

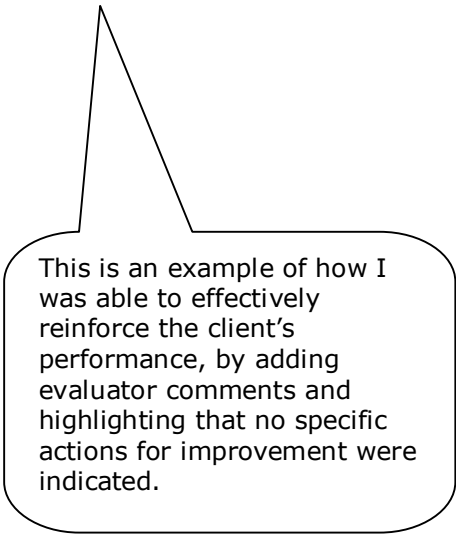
My most recent appraisal contains ratings between 3 – *"Performance clearly meets the requirements of the position"*, and 2 – *"Performance clearly exceeds the requirements of the job"*.

The evaluator's comments in this instance were as follows:

"Stuart works well without supervision. He is part of a team that works in a highly active area, which requires officers of a certain calibre. Stuart's performance to date has been of a high standard and he conducts himself in a professional manner."

Specific actions for improvements were indicated as *"Nil apparent"*.

Please find attached a copy of my most recent two appraisals for your information.



This is an example of how I was able to effectively reinforce the client's performance, by adding evaluator comments and highlighting that no specific actions for improvement were indicated.

Computer and Administrative skills - Demonstrated sound computer and office skills and the ability to acquire knowledge of new technologies.

In many work environments today sound computer skills are required to perform a role. Can you outline your computer skills including environments these applications have been used and the extent of your administrative experience?

I have excellent computing and administrative skills and have the ability to rapidly acquire knowledge and adapt to new technologies. I have worked in a diverse range of roles in which administration skills and computer skills were a key aspect of the role.

At Smith-Dawn, as Assistant Production Manager, I was part of a team which successfully established a fully integrated manufacturing accounting software program - MFG/PRO. My role in this process was to detail formulas, productivity rates etc, and to ensure that data inputs by other production staff were accurate. I was also responsible for the creation and compilation of production reports incorporating both Excel and Word applications.

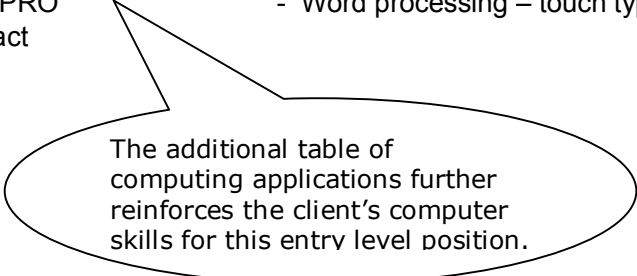
Shortly after my employment as Administration/Production Manager, Mandarin Foods Australia, my role was expanded to include the additional responsibilities of maintaining the company's financial records. I was required to undertake additional courses, learning new systems and processes and procedures in order to successfully carry out my added responsibilities. I also worked closely with the company's accountant, relying on his experience and direction with regard to the accuracy and effectiveness of financial reports I was generating. After finding the application "Quicken", which the company was using, did not fully cater for its financial needs, I introduced the M.Y.O.B. system, improving report production and simplifying processes.

I am also familiar with general office and administrative duties including fielding telephone calls, sorting correspondence, drafting replies, word-processing/data entry, and file and record maintenance. I am also competent in the operation of office equipment including photocopiers, fax machines, document shredders, printers and scanners; and being responsible for their continuous operation, which involves checking and changing toner and ink cartridges, as well as arranging service and repairs.

As a result of my administrative skills and computer literacy, and my ability to rapidly acquire knowledge of new technologies; I have always successfully fulfilled all aspects of the administrative and operational requirements of any role I have undertaken.

Computing Applications

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| - MS Word | - Internet and email |
| - MS Excel | - Printshop |
| - MYOB | - Publisher |
| - QuickBook | - Attaché |
| - MFG/PRO | - Word processing – touch typing – 50wpm |
| - Accpact | |



The additional table of computing applications further reinforces the client's computer skills for this entry level position.

SC 1. Proven ability and sound knowledge of sales techniques and strategies for a high profile visitor attraction.

With a sales career spanning over 20 years in advertising and community newspapers, I have the ability to successfully implement sales and marketing strategies and have a sound and comprehensive knowledge of sales techniques.

As Manager of the Toowoomba Advertiser, I was responsible for all aspects of the development and implementation of sales/business development strategies, the review and analysis of financial performance and growth, operational management, and human resource management. As Manager, one of my key responsibilities was the identification of sales and marketing opportunities for the Toowoomba Advertiser (TA), and the creation of new products in order to increase the public profile of TA and generate significant revenue for the company. After extensive research and analysis, it was decided to revitalise the Toowoomba Home Show, which had ceased operations due to poor management and marketing.

In partnership with an events manager, I was responsible for all aspects of the operation and sales/marketing of this visitors' attraction, including:

- Development of a new home show concept, including canvassing the local business community and obtaining input into their needs.
- Development of a sales strategy, including targeting specific businesses, cold calling, and prospecting.
- Brand management of the home show, including the creation of a uniform profile and message with all sales literature, advertising, brochures, banners, feature articles, and radio advertisements (in conjunction with graphic artists, feature writers at TA and sponsors).
- Implementation of a strategic advertising campaign, which included an analysis of the effectiveness of different advertising media versus target audience - Media used included radio (4KQ), signs and banners, regional newspapers and TA.
- Use of features and advertising profiles in the TA, including up-selling of advertising space to participants.
- Development of high profile attractions for the show, to engage the community and provide value added concepts to sell home show space to businesses - including the use of celebrity chefs (Bernard King cooking demonstrations), hourly draws, free day for pensioners, and giveaways.
- Sales presentations and proposals to businesses.
- Use of new venue space at show grounds in order to create a new profile for the home show.

As a result of a new revitalised home show, there was:

- **Significant uptake** from local business participants in the home show, including high profile participants such as R. T Edwards.
- Significant increase in advertising revenue for TA, through feature articles and home show supplements.
- **Exceeded estimated visitor numbers by 100%.**
- Established the home show as a **viable annual visitor attraction** for both local and state businesses and the Toowoomba community.

As Manager, I continued in my role in the sales and marketing of subsequent home shows, which over the years, increased its profile and became a successful annual visitors' feature in Toowoomba.

As Sales Co-ordinator, I would apply my knowledge in sales techniques and strategies to develop product/events and identify opportunities and achieve revenue growth.

Substantial knowledge of the Workplace Health and Safety Act, in particular in relation to effective cleaning of premises.

I possess a substantial knowledge of the Workplace Health and Safety Act and the guidelines governing employee responsibilities and behaviours in relation to this Act.

Workplace Health & Safety legislation and regulation (WH&S Act QLD1995), sets out the laws about workplace health and safety (in Queensland). The objective of the legislation is to prevent anyone being killed, injured, or contracting an illness because of a workplace, workplace activities, or specified high risk plant. This is achieved by preventing or minimising exposure to risk.

In my present role of Leading Hand at Proveneer, I follow strict health and safety policy guidelines and procedures in the execution of all duties. This includes:

- ◆ Completion of safety check sheets before commencing operation of machinery.
- ◆ Ensuring compliance with safe operating and shut-down procedures of all machinery.
- ◆ Ensuring the specified number of people is operating machinery at all times.
- ◆ Use of personal protective safety equipment including dust mask, rubber gloves and ear plugs.
- ◆ Prompt cleaning of workshop floors and correct disposal of waste materials.
- ◆ Identifying hazards, assessing risks (including unsafe equipment), and notifying supervisors.

Within my roles of Restaurant Kitchen Assistant, Double Golden Dragon Restaurant, and Waitress/Bar Attendant at the Abu Dhabi Gulf Hotel, I was required to maintain and ensure the cleanliness and safety of these premises. This entailed:

- ◆ Adherence to safety data sheet on various chemicals, including the usage of chemicals and actions required in emergencies.
- ◆ Safe storage of chemicals and other cleaning equipment – to ensure they are out of the reach of children and the general public.
- ◆ Use of approved chemicals only and adherence to instructions on the use and dilution of chemicals.
- ◆ Disposal of old or incorrectly labelled chemicals in an environmentally responsible way.
- ◆ Use of a mask and rubber gloves when using harsh chemicals.
- ◆ Use of signage to warn patrons of the restaurant or hotel, of slippery floors.
- ◆ Prompt cleaning of wet floors, glass and other debris from pedestrian areas to ensure people were not injured.
- ◆ Correct hygiene procedures during food preparation and when washing glasses and dishes.

As an employee, I ensure that I obey the instructions of an employer regarding the health and safety of myself and others, including following all procedures at the workplace. I also ensure that I do not interfere with, or misuse, anything that has been provided for workplace health and safety, or deliberately endanger the workplace health and safety of any person.

Selection Criteria 3

Sound knowledge of and demonstrated effectiveness in applying quality assurance principles and procedures

I have extensive knowledge in applying quality assurance principles and procedures as evidenced in my roles as Deputy Contract Manager, Network Area Manager, and Project Manager for Works Infrastructure Limited. At Works Infrastructure, I gained considerable experience and knowledge relating to quality assurance principles and procedures. Briefly, my knowledge and experience includes:

- ~ AS/NZ ISO 9001 (Quality Assurance Systems) – I note for the panel that my current employer Works Infrastructure is ISO9001 accredited.
- ~ AS/NZ ISO 14001 (Environmental Management Systems).
- ~ AS/NZ 4801 (Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems).
- ~ Quality assurance during contract management, programming, design and construction, including:
 - o Standard reporting requirements
 - o Compliance reporting
 - o Methods of quality control assurance during variation and claims
 - o Party Certification
 - o Quality plan requirements
 - o Surveillance, conformance, measurement and payment, including conformance reports

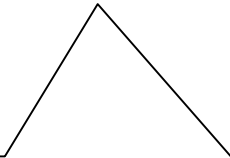
A few selected examples of my involvement in effectively applying quality assurance processes at Works Infrastructure include:

- ~ Quality surveillance, conformance for the Puhoi State Highway, 1 re-alignment project.
- ~ Inspection and reporting on the C4009 RDC Roading maintenance contract.
- ~ Preparation of quality assurance, inspection and test, site safety and traffic management for the East Coast Road Shoulder Widening.
- ~ Quality assurance of the Pre-Reseals Repairs Programme.
- ~ Quality Assurance plans, traffic management plans, inspection and test plan and site safety information on the C6023 Seal Smoothing South.
- ~ Quality assurance on the Rodney District Council Seal Smoothing Contract C8027.
- ~ The development of a contract quality plan for the Rodney district Council Maintenance Contract.

This involved:

- ~ Quality assurance during contract management, design and construction.
- ~ Ensuring that all material used met required standards and specifications (i.e. such as strength and thickness of pipes, grading of aggregate, mPA of concrete).
- ~ That the finished product met all standards and requirements (i.e. metal or concrete place at the correct depth and recorded as such, structures constructed in the correct location to correct measurements, using quality materials).
- ~ Testing and measurement, including stringing sheets for metal depths, testing of metal samples for grading strength, post construction testing, including roughness testing, falling weight deflectometer testing, CBR testing, clegg impact hammer, and nuclear densometer.

I am confident that my relevant knowledge and experience will enable me to ensure the effective management of processes in an efficient and effective way to ensure the end product satisfies quality outcomes.



The client had relevant experience, but was working at a more junior level, so I simply created an effective portfolio of work demonstrating both knowledge and effectiveness in applying quality assurance principles and procedures, rather than using a couple of detailed examples on major project infrastructure work.

SC 5

Proven ability to undertake research, prepare reports, briefings and submissions of a substantial nature relating to native title issues, policies and operational procedures. Including the ability to present and negotiate recommendations with senior management

I have detailed understanding of the current and emergent issues that impact on issues relating to native title. I utilise and build upon this knowledge when undertaking general research and preparing reports, briefs, and submissions of a substantial nature relating to native title issues, policies and operational procedures.

As team leader, I undertake research and prepare reports and briefings for management. This includes the provision of reports, briefs and submissions to the Regional Contact Officers, DG and Minister; and detailed submissions to Director RKD and Director of Policy, on a range of complex issues relating to native title. In undertaking this research:

- ~ I research and translate a range of cases, including, but not limited to: *Fejo v Northern Territory*, *Mabo v Queensland*, *Western Australia v Ward (Miriuwung-Gajerrong)*, *Wik Peoples v Queensland*, *Yarmirr v Northern Territory (Croker Island Case)*, *Yorta Yorta v Victoria*.
- ~ I research and translate the *Native Title Act 1993*, *Native Title (Qld) 1993*, relating to agreement making and native title, including Indigenous land use agreements.
- ~ I research a diverse range of other legislation, including *Land Act 1962*, *1994 Water Act 2000*, *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*.
- ~ I research issues such as expert evidence in native title claims, along with native title and international law.
- ~ I research native title applications and determinations.
- ~ I undertake research of Indigenous land use agreements, along with ILC land acquisitions, Indigenous land management and Indigenous projected areas.
- ~ I undertake research relating to historical records and documents along with field notes
- ~ I research and understand the state's native title policies and procedures.

In this role, I also:

- ~ Continually monitor native title issues, to ensure that the AAT keeps abreast of relevant current and emergent issues impacting on the operations of the department.
- ~ I utilise my extensive understanding of native title issues in order to provide "off the cuff" advice, as well as assess how current and emergent native title issues could impact on present and future operations of the department.
- ~ I work closely with the policy unit in order to ensure an effective flow of information relating to native title, and to ensure the best operational results for the department.
- ~ I actively contribute to the development and implementation of policies and procedures relating to native title, including active contribution to the development and implementation of new operational policy in order to enhance capability.
- ~ I negotiate with senior management in relation to native title recommendations, as well as physical resources in accordance with demonstrated need, and cost benefit analysis relating to operational procedures.

Specific demonstrable examples relating to this selection criteria include:

I researched the Julia Creek pastoral reserves, including historical records of use of reserve, reports of travelling stock numbers, construction and operation of stock dips, and aerial photographs. From this complex research, I found sufficient evidence of valid public works for travelling works, including water pumps, loading docks and dips, and undertook the first full assessment of s. 25ID NTA over pastoral reserve. My recommendations and findings were approved by the Policy Director.

I researched the Indigenous Land use Agreement Kaurareg, and realized that the state was not fulfilling its obligation in regards to this ILUA. This complex project, included research of the relevant issues, preparation of instructions to the Crown Law for advice, DG and ministerial briefing notes, and consultation and negotiation with staff from various departments and agencies at all levels, including management in regards to how to protect the state.

I successfully managed the development of operational procedures relating to *Water Act 2000*; namely, provisions relating to native title under the water licences and permits. This has included detailed research of the *Water Resources Act 1989*, *Water Act 2000*, *Commonwealth Native Title Act*

1993, *Native Title Act (Qld) 1993* and *Native Title Work Procedures*. I also negotiated with management and received approval for the development of a risk management approach and operational policy towards native title issues under the *Water Act*.

I negotiate with senior management in regards to the needs of AAT, within the context of organisational priorities, including negotiation of workloads and resources, including new staff and technology.

Further information to support application

2002 Advanced Negotiation Workshop

1. I promote positive student outcomes and high level learning experiences in the following ways:

I have considerable experience in contemporary pedagogical practice, including bringing leadership talent in the areas of planning, curriculum, change management, educational innovation, performance management and behavioural management. Selected key successes as Acting HOD, Manual Arts, include:

- ~ I spearheaded, developed and implemented the Behavioural Management Program for Manual Arts, resulting in increased awareness of behavioural management strategies that can be successfully utilised by staff. In addition, I have delivered students contracts to assist students take accountability for their own behaviour and safety.
- ~ I led and managed the change from VET to SAS, including designing from inception the entire program, including the utilisation of productive pedagogies, moderation of the program, recording, through to the development of effective assessment tools.
- ~ I have worked with staff to successfully grow the department and student participation in Manual Arts. Student participation has doubled at the senior level, as a result of a tailored curriculum and expanded subject offerings in Building and Construction, Furnishing, and Senior Manual Arts.
- ~ I have collaboratively worked with the Special Education Unit, including the development of online assessment tools to ensure inclusiveness for all students.
- ~ I have provided students with assistance in critical decision making such as career development and behaviour management; in particular working, with students with high support needs from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes the successful identification of students 'at risk', the implementation of behavioural management strategies, and direct engagement with industry (e.g. Bradken) and the Career Development Officer, to secure learning opportunities and apprenticeships within industry.
- ~ I have tailored subject offering, so the program meets diverse student needs within vocational education. For example: (a) within Building and Construction, I have successfully secured funding for the project management of the Building and Construction Compound (including completion of the shed and current tendering of the compound fence), as well as leading and managing an ongoing program of school maintenance. These programs are teacher directed, but students are doing the work, which has successfully engaged a diversity of students. Results include helping students to see themselves and the school more positively and to gain control over their behaviour and learning, and counteracting apathy and negativity, through positive experiences at school. (b) In Furnishings and Building and Construction, I have ensured the installation of new machinery, which has enhanced opportunities for students in learning essential vocational skills, required by industry.

2. In my role as a Senior Teacher I have engaged in positive interaction with the school community including parents/guardians, fellow teachers, support staff and community members. This is demonstrated through:

I have the capacity to work effectively with staff and parents and it has been my goal to build and upgrade productive interactions with internal and external stakeholders. Selected key successes as Acting HOD, Manual Arts, include:

- ~ I have worked towards improving community perceptions of the school, by securing media coverage of student achievements within Manual Arts, as well as the facilitation of positive community engagement. For example: (a) I ensured positive media coverage of the student-designed and constructed lunch area at Toggs State High School. (b) I have facilitated community projects, such as the building of benches for the Toggs Retirement Village. This resulted in benefits to both community members and students, with students acquiring new skills and simultaneously building school pride in something that students had produced themselves.
- ~ I have successfully engaged with industry to enhance opportunities for students, through access to jobs and career pathways. This has included: (a) collaboratively securing up to 15 apprenticeships for students, including working closely with the Career Development Officer. (b) The initiation of the highly successful Billy Kart Program, including ongoing engagement with industry stakeholders (Bradken) and ensuring student exposure to the engineering sector.
- ~ I have encouraged a team based approach with other members of staff. For example, I have shared my expertise and resources with other HOD's in the development of Risk Assessment for their curriculum area.
- ~ I developed the Behavioural Management Program for Manual Arts, including the framework for effective parent and teacher communications, including successfully engaging and communicating to parents with students identified 'at risk' (academically and behaviourally).
- ~ I have readily participated in extra-curricular activities, including: (a) participation and involvement in the Year 10 school camp, award and cultural evenings etc. (b) Engagement and involvement in the Workplace Health & Safety Committee, and ongoing commitment to workplace health & safety as Emergency Evacuation Officer.

With one page to address 2 criteria for this Head of Department (and an internal marking sheet running into several pages), I simply listed all of the department's major accomplishments that directly or indirectly addressed all of the departmental requirements

Selection Criteria 2

Knowledge of, or the ability to rapidly acquire knowledge of, current practices and philosophies relating to the provision of services to people with an intellectual disability and the ability to apply these when interacting with and providing support to clients

I have extensive knowledge of the current practices and philosophies in relation to the provision of services to people with an intellectual disability and have applied these on a daily basis when interacting with and providing support to clients.

Underpinning the current practices and philosophies related to this service is the *Disability Services Queensland Strategic Plan 2005 – 09* including:

Purpose – Delivering quality services and building supportive communities.

Vision – a society that values people with a disability, upholds rights and supports their equitable participation in everyday life.

Values – of respect, integrity, accountability, consumer focus, collaboration and learning.

In addition to this, the current practices and philosophies relating to services to people with an intellectual disability are as follows:

1. **Least restrictive alternative** – namely, the promotion of independence and ensuring a client lives a life that is not restrictive or limits their freedom within the framework of their disability.
2. **Developmental model** – understanding that each person (no matter what intellectual disability), can learn and develop through out their lifetime.
3. **Social Role Valorisation** – ensuring that clients are perceived as valuable members of society and that they see themselves as such by taking their place in society.
4. **Social Justice** – there are four social justice principles that apply to the role of Residential Care officer; namely, rights, equity, participation and access, advocacy on behalf of the client, ensuring participation in society, fostering relationships and ensuring clients are linked up to the appropriate cultural network, including social and spiritual.

These values and philosophies are reflected in relevant legislation, policies, guidelines and procedures outlined in the Code of Conduct. The key ones include: *Disabilities Services Act 1992*, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and *Anti-Discrimination Act*.

In addition to this relevant knowledge of current philosophies and practices, I have applied these in practice while working in **Relief Support for the Endeavour Foundation**, and as **Residential Care Worker** for the previous Department assigned with this responsibility - the Department of Family Services & Aboriginal & Islander Affairs. Demonstrable examples include:

Least Restrictive alternative

I promoted client independence within the framework of their disability, and community engagement, through the movies, bowling, shopping, attending church, or going to a restaurant. At all times, I encouraged independence and provided opportunities to participate in a community life. I also accessed community services within my role at Endeavour, so I could provide opportunities for my clients to improve their independence and quality of life.

Developmental Model

While working at Endeavour I was responsible for two teenagers with an intellectual disability. In this role, I provided a developmental program and taught a range of life and other skills. Both clients significantly improved their life skills, and in turn, their independence and quality of life. This included arranging cooking classes, investigation and successful placement of clients into TAFE courses, investigation of employment and volunteer roles, including the successful placement of one client within a child care centre (on a part- time voluntary basis).

I also had great success with another client, who self-mutilated. Through constant behavioural management, including consistent praise, along with teaching life skills, I successfully boosted her sense of self and this client ceased self-mutilating herself.

Social Role Valorisation

On a daily basis, I ensured clients were perceived as valuable members of society and that they themselves felt valued. Examples with various clients I worked with include:

- ~ Helping them attend to their personal care and hygiene, including dressing them in age appropriate clothing and ensuring their appearance was clean and tidy so that society perceived them a positive way.
- ~ I worked towards boosting the client's image of 'self' and increasing confidence through life skills and training; and changing society's perceptions through competencies such as teaching them how to handle money, and road safety.
- ~ I ensured access to employment opportunities, which boosts sense of self and changes society's perceptions about those with disabilities participating in the workplace. This included the successful placement of clients within volunteer roles.

Social Justice

Various examples of my ability to apply the principles of social justice include:

- ~ When working with all clients as Relief Support Worker and Residential Care Worker, I valued all clients, including ensuring that I knocked on their door before entering their room. I also ensured that I talked to a client in age appropriate language, and was never condescending.
- ~ I acted as advocate on behalf of clients, including advocating for improvement in living standards. This included, successfully advocating for an improvement in living conditions for a client at Endeavour by removing him from the hostel environment and ensuring his placement in private accommodation. This move significantly enhanced his life and improved his living standards.
- ~ I ensured that every client participated in society and had access to resources, as per the mission statement and DSQ Strategic Directions - *"improving access to services and strengthening individuals, families and communities"*. A key aspect of the role was the implementation of individual plans and I ensured these were executed for each individual client. For example: I ensured that a client participated in society by ensuring that he was enrolled in an appropriate TAFE course and that he participated in social recreational activities in the community, as well as re-establishing existing family relationships.

At all times I worked with clients to ensure they were provided with opportunities that allowed them to participate fully in society and to continue to learn and grow. This included treating clients with respect and dignity, seeking and investigating opportunities to increase their life skills and participation opportunities, while continuing to encourage and build their confidence and sense of self-worth.

"Anne is a very dedicated carer who approaches her work in a cheerful, efficient manner. In my capacity as a Residential Duty Officer for this department, I have nothing but praise for the tireless effort that she exhibits towards her clients and their welfare. I would have no hesitation in recommending her to anyone who needs a trustworthy, diligent, caring person." **Michael E. Smith**
Residential Duty Officer

This is an example of how you can place a short excerpt of a written reference to further strengthen a response to a criterion.

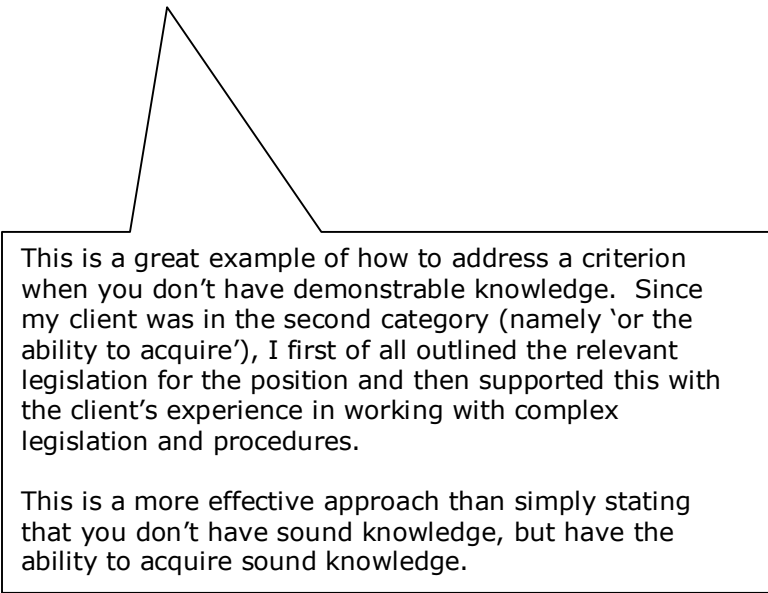
SC 5

Have sound knowledge (or the ability to quickly acquire sound knowledge) of legislation, policies and/or systems relating to transport.

I am confident that I will rapidly acquire all relevant knowledge relating to legislation, policies and procedures relating to transport. I understand that the functional area is responsible for transport safety and security, along with transport system efficiency, access and equity. Relevant legislation and regulations includes: *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, and Regulations, Transport Operations (road use Management) Act 1995, along with regulations relating to Dangerous Goods, Driver Licensing, Fatigue Management, Mass, Dimensions and Loading, Road Rules, Vehicle Registration, and Vehicle Standards.*

In my current role as Legal Support Supervisor – Wakefield Chambers, and previous roles within the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I rapidly gained a sound understanding of procedures and legislation relating to this role. This has included practice and procedure, the Criminal Code, the Director of *Public Prosecutions Act 1984, Coroner's Act 1958, and Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995*. I also have the ability to read and interpret legislation and policy; therefore I am confident that I would rapidly acquire detailed relevant knowledge relating to issues regarding transport. Selected examples within my current role as Legal Support Supervisor include:

- ~ I gained detailed knowledge and extensive understanding of applicable practice and procedure and regulations relating to, court applications, appeals, court filing, serving of subpoenas, and preparation of mentions and callovers.
- ~ I ensure functional area adherence to relevant processes and procedures, including reading and successfully interpreting relevant legislation and procedures.
- ~ I provide guidance, mentoring and training to new legal officers on relevant practice and procedure, legislation and regulations.
- ~ I ensure full compliance with the *Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995*, including ensuring notification of Victim Support Services Officer.
- ~ I ensure strict adherence to departmental code of conduct.



This is a great example of how to address a criterion when you don't have demonstrable knowledge. Since my client was in the second category (namely 'or the ability to acquire'), I first of all outlined the relevant legislation for the position and then supported this with the client's experience in working with complex legislation and procedures.

This is a more effective approach than simply stating that you don't have sound knowledge, but have the ability to acquire sound knowledge.