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Back to Basics

What Kind of Selection Criteria Are There?

This article was one of the most popular articles in our first newsletter series and so we have repeated it here for those who missed out first time around.

Selection criteria represent the skills and abilities, knowledge, experience, qualifications and work related qualities a person needs to perform a role effectively. As a general rule, criteria can be divided into five categories:

- 1. Skills and abilities.** This can include technical skills which are generally quantitative (or measurable) such as engineering skills, computer skills, mathematical abilities etc. It can also include more conceptual skills (which are harder to measure) such as interpersonal skills, negotiation skills, strategic planning abilities etc. If a criterion asks about your ability to do something, give an example of your level of ability.
 - How can you prove your ability?
 - How can you improve your ability?
 - How much experience do you have?

- What skills do you have that are transferable to the position and support your ability?
- Provide a few examples of your abilities in action.

- 2. Knowledge.** Criteria which ask for "knowledge" usually look something like "knowledge of the policies and procedures relating to procurement", "an understanding of the Code of Conduct", "knowledge of project management methodologies" etc. If a criterion asks for your knowledge or understanding of something, don't just simply state what your understanding is, anyone can cut and past from a text book.
 - Where did you gain your understanding?
 - How is it relevant to the position?
 - How would you or how have you applied it?
 - How do you intend to further develop your knowledge?
- 3. Experience.** This type of criterion requires you to substantiate a particular level of experience. This experience should be substantial (that is, more than a few weeks), recent, and relevant to the position. If a criterion asks for demonstrated experience make sure you demonstrate your experience.
 - Where did you gain your experience?



- How many years experience do you have?
- What level of proficiency have you reached?
- How has this experience benefited your current employer?
- Provide a few examples of your experience in action.

4. **Qualifications.** Criteria requiring qualifications are the easiest to respond to. A paragraph stating your qualification and where and when it was obtained is generally sufficient. If the criterion has not been specific in the exact qualification required e.g "a qualification in social sciences", it is best to add an additional paragraph describing how your qualification is relevant to the position, or outline any major areas of study that are beneficial for the position or work area.

5. **Work related qualities.** Work related qualities could include things like initiative, motivation, and commitment. Criteria that address work related qualities will often be criteria that ask for commitment to a set of workplace values, a code of ethics, a code of conduct or ask an applicant to demonstrate a personal work style that includes using initiative, being proactive or displaying a particular focus or motivation (for example a "strong customer service focus"). Address this criterion as you would the skills and abilities criterion, and if a criterion asks for your commitment to provide examples of how you commit to the principle. Knowing and understanding are generally not enough.

These categories of criteria can be used as a guide when addressing criteria and knowing what to include in your responses to the criteria. Be aware however that some criteria can cover multiple categories, for example, "knowledge of and commitment to the APS Code of Conduct" requires both knowledge and commitment – it is not just a knowledge criteria.

In short, take note of the expression used. For example:

"demonstrated experience"
"ability to"
"knowledge of"
"commitment to"
"awareness of"
"understanding"

It is important that you take note of these keywords, and reflect them in your responses. It is not good for example, if you spend a page detailing theory about a topic and your knowledge of something if the criterion is asking for "demonstrated experience" or "ability to".

Feature Article

Setting Career Goals and Meeting Them

By Vanessa Jordan

Those who are truly successful in their careers will have one thing in common – it didn't happen by accident. They have all taken the time to create a clear plan for themselves and put a goal setting framework in place to reach their career ambitions.

Goal setting is an extremely powerful process that will give you a long term vision. And, if you take the next step which is putting a plan in place to achieve your goals, then you'll have the next piece of the puzzle: motivation.

By knowing exactly what you want to achieve, when to do it and how to do it you'll find the satisfaction from meeting your targets incredibly motivating which will drive you to bigger and better goals and a bigger and better future.

So how do you find out what your goals are and how do you set them?

Firstly, you should start big. What do you want out of your career? Where do you want to be in ten years for example? What is your *ideal*?



Once you have articulated this, it is time to break these goals down into smaller goals. A great (and generally well known) acronym to help with breaking your goals down is SMART.

Firstly, your goals should be **specific**. Saying, "I want to earn more money" is not specific. Saying "I want to be promoted within 12 months" is very specific. A specific goal gives you something tangible to work towards rather than just a general idea of what you want that is easy to procrastinate against.

Your goals should also be **measurable**. Saying "I want to be happier in my career in 12 months" might be specific, but how do you measure "happier"? You would be better off identifying areas in your job that you currently find unsatisfying and coming up with ways of addressing this dissatisfaction.

Goals should be **achievable**. I would love to be able to retire in 12 months, but unfortunately that is not going to happen. Perhaps aiming to scale down my working hours over the next ten years is more achievable.

Goals should be **realistic**. If you are considering a career change you should weigh up what is realistic in terms of a time and money investment. Is spending the next four years at university and starting your career again from the bottom of the ladder going to be realistic? Perhaps if it's something you've always wanted to do then the answer is yes. But if you only want to do it for a change, or because you are not satisfied with what you are currently doing then maybe not.

In order to fulfil your goals, they should be **time bound**. Just like the first point, saying "I want to be promoted within 12 months" is a lot better than just saying "I want a promotion." It gives you a clear timeframe and path to follow and something against which to measure your success.

Once you have come up with your big goal/s, and broken them down, it is time to assign tasks to your smaller goals. If one of your goals is to find a new job within six months, then you could set a weekly/fortnightly task list for example. Your task list could look something like this:

- Spend one hour on a Thursday night looking through the government vacancy gazettes.
- Spend half an hour on Friday morning requesting selection documentation for the jobs I found on Thursday night.
- Spend one hour on Monday morning ringing contact officers and asking more details about the positions I'm interested in, and one hour reviewing the positions and deciding which one/s to apply for.
- Commit to apply for at least one job per fortnight.
- Dedicate half an hour per fortnight to chasing up feedback for positions that I was unsuccessful in.
- Devise a weekly / monthly reward that I can have if I meet all my goals for that timeframe!

You might also want to create a more time bound set of tasks such as:

- Within one month:
 - Update my resume
 - Create a career journal to refer back to for each application
 - Enroll in a course to improve my technical skills / knowledge.

Tips for successful goal setting:

Write your goals down. Having them on paper will give them more meaning and make them easier to monitor.

Stay positive. Use positive language to word your goals and remember, you're the one who has set them and you can also review them or change them if you want to. If a timeframe is beginning to look unrealistic then move your deadline.

Start small. You are not going to change your career in a week, so start small and build up as you see that your goals are being met and you are seeing some change occur.

Set priorities for your goals. If you have several tasks to complete or goals to meet, then prioritise them in order of what you think is most important. Being overwhelmed by your goals will not motivate you to work at them and not prioritising means the less



important ones may end up receiving the most attention.

Reward yourself. Once you have met a goal or series of goals take some time to enjoy the feeling of having reached a target and reward yourself for doing so! A reward could be a cup of coffee, a meal out, a bar of chocolate, going to see a movie, enrolling in a new course, or even just a sleep in the next morning. Your reward should be as big or as small as you like but it should reflect the importance of your goal. It is a good idea to come up with your rewards before you embark upon reaching your goals.

Re-assess. Your goals should be fluid and not set in stone. Once you have met a goal it is a good idea to review the process of goal setting and achieving. If the goal was too easy to meet then make your next goal more challenging. If it was too hard to meet, then maybe you should break it down further. If you've noticed that you don't have the skills to meet your goal, maybe you should set a whole new series of goals to overcome this. For example, if your goal is to get promoted, but you don't have the technical skills required at this level, then overcoming the lack of technical skills should be your first priority – not continuing to apply for promotions.

Remember that it's okay for your goals to change. Infact, it is recommended that you review your goals and change them regularly as your knowledge, skills and ambitions change.

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Reader Questions

Q. Q. I've been asked to attend a second interview. Is this normal for public service positions?

A. Second interviews in the public service are quite rare, and are usually only conducted for more senior positions. In private industry, second (or even third)

interviews are often used to negotiate conditions of service and salary, but I have never come across this in the public service. From my experience there are three reasons for conducting a second interview in the public service:

1. There are two close candidates and the panel want to gather more information on one or both candidates in order to differentiate between them;
2. There are slight concerns from one or more panel members (or the delegate) regarding the preferred candidate, and the panel are using a second interview to gather more information or introduce the candidate to the delegate;
3. A referee's report has highlighted a concern that the panel want to explore further by means of a second interview.

In all cases, you should take time to prepare for your second interview, identify areas from your first interview that you might not have performed too well in, or general areas of weakness and focus on reinforcing your claims in these areas.

Do you have any questions about applying for a government job that you think other newsletter readers might also want the answer to? Send them to us at the email address below. (Unfortunately we won't be able to provide individual responses, so keep your eyes peeled on future editions of the newsletter!)

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What's New @ www.selection-criteria.com.au

The newest free article to be added to the selection-criteria.com.au website is Interviews Inside Out – 30 tips for your next government interview. Check it out here:

<http://www.selection-criteria.com.au/interviewsinsideout.html>



Product Spotlight



Get That Job! The Best Guide to Applying for a Government Job

Get That Job! is our best selling e-book that has been helping thousands of people over the past years get their foot in the government door, or get promoted within the government.

Get That Job! covers government selection processes, resumes, referees, addressing selection criteria, interviews and more.

To find out more, check out the "products" section of www.selection-criteria.com.au.

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