

CROSSING THRESHOLDS MODULE 3

Succeeding at Interviews



Thresholds

AGENDA – SUCCEEDING AT INTERVIEWS

Day 1

Morning

- Individual progress updates
- Developing your unique personal brand
- Interview tips
- Structuring your answers

Afternoon

- Interview practice and coaching
- Practice interviews in small groups
- Peer feedback
- Next steps and review of the module

Suggested self-directed activities for day 2 and beyond

Individual Activities

- Update your CV or resumé using the principles you learned in the facilitated day.

In Peer Groups

- Share your personal brand with each other and share your feedback.
- Refine and develop your brand statements, and practise with your peer group different ways of talking about your strengths.
- Go through the sample questions and think of headline statements for each.
- Give each other feedback on your CVs.
- Think of questions you haven't answered well in past interviews, and share ideas for how to answer them more effectively.

When You Have Time

- Talk to senior people about what things they are looking for in interviewees and what kinds of questions they like to use when interviewing others. Also, what tips they have when being interviewed.

Please visit the resources for module 3 for further activities

FIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

List your 10 most satisfying achievements ever (personal and/or work-related).

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 10 |

From these 10, pick the five which you are most proud of. Write a short description of each below. (Think about not just what you did but how and why you did it.)

1

2

3

4

5

Working in pairs – use this page to take notes about your partner

Listen to your partner's descriptions of the 5 achievements she has chosen to write about. As you listen, make notes below of what you are hearing (words or phrases) about her skills, personal qualities, behaviours, values and any other observations she might find helpful:

Once she has described all 5 achievements, feed back to her, based on your notes above and agree together three distinct words or phrases which capture her unique approach:

1

2

3

Use this page to take notes of your partner's comments about you:

Use the space below to develop three distinct words or phrases which capture your unique brand:

1

2

3

FIVE ACHIEVEMENTS ACTIVITY

Set up

The facilitator will put you into pairs

The activity

- Listen to all of the other person's stories
- Make note of the personal qualities, attributes, skills, traits, values and behaviours you are hearing about
- When all stories have been told, describe what you have heard, especially common themes or distinct messages
- Swap roles

DEVELOPING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

What are the three distinct statements that best capture your personal brand?

Take the three words or phrases you identified in the 5 Achievements activity and develop them into three statements. Think of phrases or sentences, e.g. "I bring out the best in the people who work for me"; "I can take complex concepts and make them easy to understand"; "I have a structured and methodical approach to my role"; "I can be relied on to deliver on time and within budget"; "I stay focused on the long-term goals"; "I'm known for my ability to create high-performing teams"; "I remain calm and focused when things don't go according to plan"; etc. Then elaborate as appropriate - here are some phrases to help you: **"By this I mean..."**, **"What this looks like with me..."**, **"The way I put this into practice..."**, **"How I do that is..."**

Statement 1:

Elaboration:

Statement 2:

Elaboration:

Statement 3:

Elaboration:

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS – 3 TOP TIPS

How do you differentiate yourself from all the other competent candidates you are competing with for limited promotion opportunities?

1 Inhabit the role you aspire to

- Imagine yourself in the role and describe what you see from the **inside** looking out rather than from the outside looking over/up. If **you** can see yourself in the role it is more likely that the interviewers will be able to as well.
- Use declarative rather than tentative language. Be able to describe your vision for what you would want to achieve in this role, and what you see as the key challenges.
- This positive frame of mind will convey a level of confidence which is reassuring to interviewers.

2 Take responsibility for getting your story across

- Don't leave it to the panel to draw out your story - have a clear and coherent narrative about why you are the right person for this role. Convey your strengths and attributes (your 'brand') in a matter-of-fact way.
- You know what the questions are going to be about - use each one to build up a coherent picture of your fitness that differentiates you from others. Practise your answers with a mentor or colleague, and use their feedback to hone your story.
- Have strong, relevant examples and back up every assertion with evidence. Don't just talk about what you did – talk about the result/outcome and the difference you made.

3 Hand it to them on a plate!

- Make the implicit explicit! Rather than simply giving an example (however good) tell your audience what this illustrates about your skills and abilities.
- Demonstrate how transferable these skills and experiences are to the role you are interviewing for. Show how the past relates to the future and translate the specific examples into generic qualities, insights and behaviours: "This example demonstrates my ability to...", "From this I learned..."
- Help your audience to join the dots - make everything you say relevant to the role you are interviewing for.

INTERVIEW QUESTION

Imagine that you are in an interview and you are asked this question:

"Tell me about a time when something didn't go according to plan and how you dealt with it."

Write down the **first sentence only** of your response to this question.

STRUCTURING YOUR ANSWERS

How do you put these tips into practice? Here is a simple way to structure your answers that can transform how you come across at an interview ('HER' and 'SOAR')

Headline

A high-impact statement which summarises your typical approach to this competence/situation

Example

Situation

Objective (what you were trying to achieve)

Action (in particular what **you** did)

Result

Elaborate

3 Key Points

Relevance

Making sure the interviewers understand the relevance of your answer and examples to the job you are interviewing for. (E.g. "And this illustrates how in any situation I am able to.....")

INTERVIEWING FOR YOUR IDEAL JOB

What's the job you want to practise interviewing for?

What are the three key priorities/challenges of this job?

1

2

3

What relevant attributes would you bring to this job to address these key priorities/challenges?

1

2

3

WHY DO YOU WANT THIS JOB?

Use HER to structure your answer, using the information above

H

E

1

2

3

R

PREPARED QUESTION

What question would you like to be asked in your practice interview:

Practise your answer using HER:

H

E

R

SAMPLE QUESTIONS – BEHAVIOURS

Behaviours are the actions and activities that people do which result in effective performance in a job. The Civil Service has defined a set of behaviours that, when demonstrated, are associated with job success. Civil Service Behaviours are specific to the grade level of the job role. Vacancy holders will choose a selection of behaviours which are best suited to the specific job role.

When looking at behaviours, it is to get an understanding of the actions and activities that you have done (or would do) that result in effective performance in a job. As behaviours can be observed and measured, they can help predict what your performance in the role could be.

Here are some examples of typical questions you might be asked to determine whether you have the relevant strength. Note: these are examples only and this is not a full or prescriptive list.

Seeing the Big Picture

Understand how your role fits with and supports organisational objectives. Recognise the wider Civil Service priorities and ensure work is in the national interest.

- Tell me about a time you delivered a cross departmental strategy or government priority and how you achieved that.
- Tell me about a time when you responded to a challenge to the business direction/strategy.

Changing & Improving

Seek out opportunities to create effective change and suggest innovative ideas for improvement. Review ways of working, including seeking and providing feedback.

- How have you overcome challenges when introducing something new, provide a specific example?
- Tell me about creative, different solutions you have tried when implementing change.

Making Effective Decisions

Use evidence and knowledge to support accurate, expert decisions and advice. Carefully consider alternative options, implications and risks of decisions.

- Tell me about a time when you used analysis to inform decision making.

Leadership

Show pride and passion for public service. Create and engage others in delivering a shared vision. Value difference, diversity and inclusion, ensuring fairness and opportunity for all.

- Tell me about a time when you felt you have really achieved something as a leader.
- Give me an example where you have motivated a demotivated team.

Communicating & Influencing

Communicate purpose and direction with clarity, integrity and enthusiasm. Respect the needs, responses and opinions of others.

- How do you amend your communication style for different situations and provide an example?
- Tell me how you ensure that complex messages are fully understood.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS – BEHAVIOURS

Working Together

Form effective partnerships and relationships with people both internally and externally, from a range of diverse backgrounds, sharing information, resources and support.

- Have you ever successfully negotiated a mutually positive outcome by working collaboratively with others?
- Provide an example where you have built an inclusive team.

Developing Self & Others

Focus on continuous learning and development for self, others and the organisation as a whole.

- How have you built a capable team, using all its combined talents?
- Tell me about a time when you have dealt with performance issues or a member of staff who was struggling to learn the job.

Managing a Quality Service

Deliver service objectives with professional excellence, expertise and efficiency, taking account of diverse customer needs.

- What achievements have you made with regards to service improvements, provide an example?
- Tell me about a time when you have prevented service slipping when resources were tight.

Delivering at Pace

Take responsibility for delivering timely and quality results with focus and drive.

- Tell me about a time when things went wrong and how you approached this.
- Give an example of when you have had to deliver much quicker than you were originally expecting.

SAMPLE STRENGTH-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Strengths are things that we do regularly, do well and that motivate us. The Civil Service Strengths Dictionary defines the 36 strengths that are relevant to the culture and the type of work undertaken in the Civil Service. Strengths are not defined by grade and they can be mapped to the most relevant Civil Service Behaviour(s) but any strength can be assessed if suitable for the role.

In an interview you may be asked questions to understand whether you have strengths relevant to the job role. It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The best way to prepare is to reflect on what you feel your personal strengths are and your preferred ways of working. When looking at your strengths, the key is whether you and the organisation or job role are a good fit. This is established by looking at what you enjoy doing and what you do well and often. And by ensuring that the role is the right fit for you, you are more likely to enjoy it and perform well.

Here are some examples of typical questions you might be asked to determine whether you have the relevant strength. Note: these are examples only and this is not a full or prescriptive list.

Adaptable: You can adapt to variations in work or environment and your effectiveness isn't impacted by change. You are flexible and versatile and act as an advocate for change.

- How do you react when plans or priorities change at the last minute?

Analytical: You seek and analyse information to inform decisions based on the best available evidence.

- How do you incorporate analysis in decision making?

Confident: You take charge of situations, people and decisions. You communicate confidently and give direction.

- Would you describe yourself as confident?

Learner: You are inquisitive, you seek out new information and look for new ways to develop yourself.

- What are your development areas?

Motivator: You are highly driven and inspire others to move things along and make things happen.

- How do you keep people around you motivated?

Precise: You are detail-focussed, you ensure everything is accurate and error free.

- Is your preference to focus on the big picture or are you more detail focussed?

Relationship Builder: You quickly establish mutual respect and trust, building long lasting relationships with others.

- Do you find it easy to form long-lasting relationships?

SAMPLE STRENGTH-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Resilient: You have inner composure, recover quickly from setbacks and learn from them.

- How do you manage your own resilience?

Strategic: You look at the big picture and consider the wider factors and long term implications of decisions.

- Is your preference to focus on the big picture or are you more detail focussed?

Team Leader: You are confident to lead a team and can effectively manage team dynamics to drive forward a shared goal. You take into consideration everyone's individual needs and create a genuine team spirit.

- How would you/your team describe your leadership style?

Team Player: you work well as part of a team and strive to ensure the team pulls together and is effective.

- Does team working come naturally to you?

FEEDBACK

Name:

+

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Name:

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Name:

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FEEDBACK

Name:

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Name:

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Name:

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