



Addressing Selection Criteria

Hints and Tips

Eight Techniques to Improve How you Address Selection Criteria

1. Avoid Unsupported Self-Aggrandisement

Writing about yourself in glowing terms does not tell the selection panel much. Other than you think highly of yourself. It is important to provide supporting evidence for each claim. This means achievements and examples of experience, concrete information that will convince a selection panel that you do possess the required skill or experience.

2. Watch Your Verbs

In writing to selection criteria it is your verbs which most clearly indicate how closely you meet the criteria and which give strength to your claim and application generally.

A key to strengthening a case on each criterion is to use *direct, active constructions* of verbs, rather than passive construction of verbs and to use verbs which indicate exactly what your contribution was.

For example:

Direct, active verbs	Passive verbs
I negotiated ...	I assisted with ...
I liaised with ...	I participated in...
I edited ...	I contributed to ...
I provided advice ...	I helped ...

3. Address All Parts of the Selection Criteria

Many selection criteria are made up of several parts. For example:

- *An organised and highly motivated approach to work with the ability to prioritise and work under pressure*

This criterion requires you to address four distinct elements:

- Organised approach
- Motivated approach
- Ability to prioritise
- Ability to work under pressure

Each element must be addressed so that the selection panel can judge you as *fully meeting the criteria*. The other advantage of this approach is that where there are many applicants of comparable standard, an applicant who addresses all the criteria, in full, is more likely to be shortlisted.

4. Incorporate Dot Points

Anything that makes reading your application easier and reaching an assessment as to whether you merit short-listing quicker, will help your cause. Incorporating dot

points helps clarity and makes reading easier. However, it is important to maintain a balance, as dot points will not necessarily work for all criteria, nor is it appropriate in all cases.

4. Use English Well

The written application indicates to the selection panel not only your suitability for the position but also something of your writing ability. You should ensure that all parts of the application are written clearly, concisely, are grammatically correct, and that spelling is accurate.

To help achieve this, it is always useful to ask another person who has a good command of English to look over your application. Don't rely on your computer spellchecker as many mistakes can slip through. This is extremely important as an application with spelling errors, whether 'typos' or genuine mistakes, does not give a good impression, particularly if writing skills is one of the selection criteria.

Avoid using technical terms, jargon or phrases that are only used by a handful of people as this will frustrate the reader. Also by writing in more general business terms you create an impression that you understand more than your particular specialisation. People are impressed by applications that express achievements and accountabilities are clear, concise, unambiguous, direct, active terms.

6. Support Claims with Relevant, Concrete Examples

Nothing makes an application more difficult to assess than one which rambles around vague and irrelevant material. Remember, work experience is not the only place to look for relevant examples, look at your achievements in your education, leisure activities and community work.

7. Be Results-Orientated

It is no longer sufficient to demonstrate a variety of experience or that you work long hours on multiple projects. Future employers want to know what contributions you have made in your career to the organisations for which you have worked. Increasingly, what matters is what impact you have, what difference you make, what results you achieve and what benefits were there. This is particularly so for more senior positions.

When responding to selection criteria ask yourself whether the results achieved are important and consider how you can quantify your contribution. Ways to quantify your results include:

- Cost reductions
- Number of recommendations implemented
- Timeframes reduced
- Successful negotiations completed
- Productivity increases
- Processes or procedures simplified
- Goals achieved
- Improvements made
- Critical problems solved

You may also be able to quantify results as an absence of something, for example, breakdowns, disputes, stoppages or complaints.

This may be difficult for some criteria. However, you need to think about situations where, by you being there, by your suggestions, ideas, approach, a better outcome

was achieved. Looking at your goals and achievements from past Development Reviews may provide you with information you can use.

7. Avoid Credibility-Reducing Words

Credibility in a statement against selection criteria is not built by referring to your performance in terms that suggest you are perfect, without exception. For example, words like: all, every, always, never, constantly, continually, totally, fully, completely.

- I always give my customers courteous service
- I never miss an opportunity to contribute ideas at meetings

Such writing is a variation of self-aggrandisement and implies that you are perfect and perform without exception, all of the time. Most people are not perfect all of the time. It is rare for a person to do a task perfection 100 percent of the time.

(adapted from: Villiers, Ann D (2001) How to address selection criteria 3rd ed, Australia: DM Press)

Structuring your Response to Selection Criteria

Your response to addressing selection criteria needs to have some structure. For example:

- Behaviour – how you did it
- Performance – how well you did it, what challenges did you face and how you overcame these
- Effectiveness – what was the successful outcome.

Example 1:

Example:

Position: *Training Manager*

Selection Criteria: *Business acumen*

Addressing the selection criteria:

In my current role at Fish Fingers Inc. I am required to analyse business reports (e.g. sales and production) and identify training opportunities. By reviewing sales figures and talking to representatives I discovered that many were having trouble overcoming sales rejections. Training was designed to address this problem and sales increased by 25% two months after the training. My practical experience is supplemented by graduate management qualifications from the University of NSW.

Example 2:

Position: *General Manager – Technology*

Selection Criteria: *Leadership*

Addressing the selection criteria:

As the group leader in Information Technology, I am required to identify the strategic technological and system requirements of all retail stores. This is achieved by linking current and anticipated business needs with available technology. The internet shopping site is a prime example of this. Leading a team of store managers, merchandising managers and IT managers business needs, concerns and strategies were identified. Under my leadership, the site was developed and launched within 18 months of conception.

Example 3:

Position: *Customer Service Officer*

Selection criteria: *Demonstrated initiative and excellence in customer service*

Addressing the selection criteria:

During the last five years I have held positions with primary responsibilities that demanded the provision of excellent customer service. While in these positions I demonstrated excellence in customer service by:

- *being responsive to customers, providing accurate, timely information in a friendly manners*
- *remembering the names and personal details of regular customers*
- *keeping staff informed of any particularly difficult situations which needed sensitive handling*
- *ensuring that records were updated when new information was received*
- *listening carefully to distressed customers and ensuring that they received more than just 'the standard answer'*

The quality of my customer service was recognised by the consistent positive feedback customers provided during quarterly customer focus groups, in supportive correspondence received and in the tendency for regular customers to seek my assistance when they called.

From my on-the-job experience and professional development programs I have initiated improvements in the quality of service provided. Examples of these improvements are:

- *introduction of a counter numbering system so that inquiries are handles in the correct order*
- *introduction of a standard format for answering the telephone so that customers know they have reached the correct location*
- *providing all counter staff with business cards so that customers know who they have spoken to and could reach them again if necessary.*

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