

Interview Preparation

Career Skills

Team FME

www.free-management-ebooks.com

ISBN 978-1-62620-784-8

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ISBN 978-1-62620-784-8

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Preface

This eBook will help you prepare for a management-level job interview by explaining why most of the factors that determine whether an interview is a positive experience or an ordeal are decided well before the interview itself.

You will learn:

- What research you need to do before applying for a job and where to find the information.
- How building up a rapport with a respected employment agency can get you into interviews you would otherwise miss out on.
- What competency-based questions are and why they are such an essential part of the management interview process.
- How to use the job ad, role description, and employee specification to identify and rank the required job competencies.
- How to match your existing competencies to those you have identified as being essential for the role and identify any weaknesses.

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Introduction

This eBook is designed to help you prepare for a management-level job interview, whether it is for your first management job or you are trying to move up the management ladder to a job with more responsibility. Most management interviews contain a high proportion of behavioral or competency-based questions and this eBook concentrates on how to approach these, rather than more basic considerations like overcoming interview nerves or how to dress for an interview.

Almost everyone will have had the experience of being interviewed even before they go for their first management job. It may have been an interview for a school or college place or an informal interview for a part-time job. If you've already been employed and you're looking to move to another organization for some reason then you'll already have been through the interview process and you'll know more or less what to expect. If that is not the case then you may wish to read an introductory book on interviews before moving on to this one.

Before getting down to the specifics of answering management interview questions there are some things you should do before you agree to the interview. As a bare minimum, you should look at the organization's website, mission statement, and any promotional literature that you can find. Not only does this information help you to frame your answers in the interview, it can help you to focus on the culture and values of the organization and to decide whether or not they are compatible with your own.

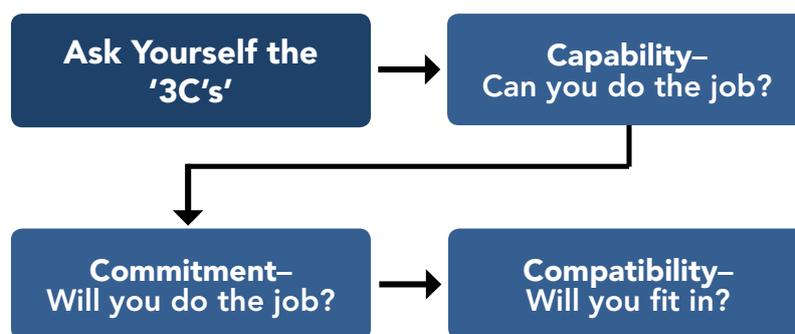
Following on from this, you need to be absolutely clear in your own mind that the job itself is right for you. If you put yourself forward for a job that doesn't suit your knowledge, skills, and aptitudes then you are setting yourself up for a stressful and unpleasant interview. It's perfectly OK to be ambitious and to want to stretch yourself, but if you apply for a job that does not play to your personal strengths then you will find yourself having a miserable interview as your unsuitability is highlighted again and again.

Quite often, when someone has had a really bad interview, they blame the interviewers for being 'asking the wrong questions' and then following up aggressively when they didn't get the answers they wanted. The truth is that the interviewers were asking the right questions, but the wrong person was answering them. Always do as much research as possible and make sure that you only apply for jobs where the organization and the job itself match your skills and abilities.

It is also a good idea to check the trade press and the financial press, because the last thing you want to do is to take a job at an organization that is about to go bust, be taken over, or have its funding slashed. This may sound obvious but many organizations carry on their recruitment operations as normal even when these things are about to happen. As a consequence, thousands of people every year find themselves joining an organization that is undergoing some sort of upheaval that leaves them either facing redundancy or doing a different job from the one they applied for.

Most of the things that determine whether an interview is a positive experience or an ordeal are decided well before the interview itself and depend on what you do in the preparation phase. If you spend your preparation time poorly then you will have some bad experiences that will lower your confidence and make you increasingly stressed in future interviews. This can quickly degenerate into a negative feedback loop, in which you perform badly because your confidence is lacking, and this undermines your confidence still further.

The level of competition for management roles is high so you want to pick those opportunities that you are best placed to win. This means taking the time to assess your compatibility with the role and the organization. You will then be able to focus on the opportunities where you are most suited to succeed.



Being honest about your skills and competencies will help you select the opportunities that you are most suited to. Answering the 'Three-C's' questions (Capability, Commitment, and Compatibility) can help you to judge your suitability for the role and the organization.

Capability—Can you do the job?

Do your skills, knowledge, and experience give you the capacity to fulfill the tasks required by the role? Does your track record support this? Do you feel confident in your own abilities?

Commitment—Will you do the job?

Do you have the motivation to do the job? Are you hard working and committed? Are you the kind of person who will do more than just what is in the job contract?

Compatibility—Will you fit in?

Do you feel positive about the organization and what it stands for? Do you share its values? If you find yourself at variance with your potential employer's value system then you would probably be advised to look elsewhere. It is almost impossible to succeed in a culture that feels alien to you.



Many interview books discuss these factors in terms of how to answer interview questions, and they are important in that context but you can save yourself a lot of grief by considering them carefully before you even apply for a job.

Even if you believe that you are sufficiently capable, committed, and compatible, does your employment record support this view? This is an important point because the interviewer will be looking for evidence and if it does not appear in your employment record then you could be in for an ordeal when the questioning starts.

All of the above should make you realize that it is a better strategy to restrict your applications to jobs that you are well suited to and where you do have a reasonable chance of success. It's better to apply for a few suitable jobs and to prepare properly than to apply for dozens, prepare poorly, and hope for a lucky break. The first strategy will give you a high interview to application ratio, some good interview experiences, and hopefully

a job. The second strategy will give you a low interview to application ratio, some bad interview experiences, and you may even find yourself in the 'wrong' job.

The quality of your preparation prior to an interview is the single biggest factor in making the actual event a positive and successful experience. It also ensures that you have done all you can to avoid accepting a role within an organization that is under threat of takeover or closure.

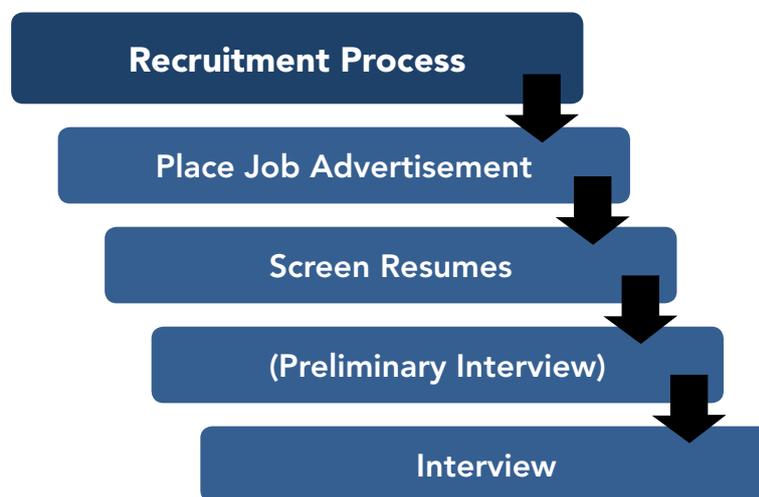
KEY POINTS

- ✓ Most of the factors that determine whether an interview is a positive experience or an ordeal are decided well before the interview itself.
 - ✓ The first step in preparation is to check that the role and the organization are a good match with your own skills, character, and values.
 - ✓ You can do this by looking at the organization's website, mission statement, and promotional literature as well as the job ad.
 - ✓ It is better to apply for a few suitable jobs and to prepare properly than to apply for dozens, prepare poorly, and hope for a lucky break.
 - ✓ Applying for unsuitable jobs will almost certainly result in rejection before the interview or an unpleasant interview experience. Both of these outcomes will undermine your confidence.
 - ✓ In contrast, an interview in which you perform well can boost your confidence even if you are not offered the job.
-

Preliminary Interviews

It is not unusual for a job ad to result in hundreds of resumes being received. However, interviewing job candidates is expensive and time consuming, which means that most organizations need to limit the number of candidates they interview.

The easiest way to do this is to go through the resumes one by one looking for anything that can disqualify a candidate immediately—for example, the stated qualifications do not match those on the job specification, or the candidate appears to have insufficient experience.



This task is usually outsourced or delegated to a junior staff member, who may be given an hour or so to go through a pile of resumes with instructions to discard almost all of them. Unfortunately, this process is often both arbitrary and unfair because most of the people applying will be sufficiently qualified and experienced and yet all but a handful of applications have to be rejected at this stage.

As a job applicant the only thing you can do to improve your chances of getting through this stage is to make sure that your resume is tailored to the job specification as closely as possible. Whoever is screening the pile of resumes is only going to spend 30 seconds looking at each one and unless the match between the resume and the job specification is clear then it will be discarded. There isn't really much else you can do to influence the outcome of this process, which can become something of a lottery when there are a large number of applicants.

Many organizations are aware of the shortcomings of this approach and opt to discard fewer resumes at this stage, which means that they are still left with too many candidates to interview properly. The solution is to give each candidate a short preliminary interview, something that can be outsourced and done over the phone in order to keep the costs down.

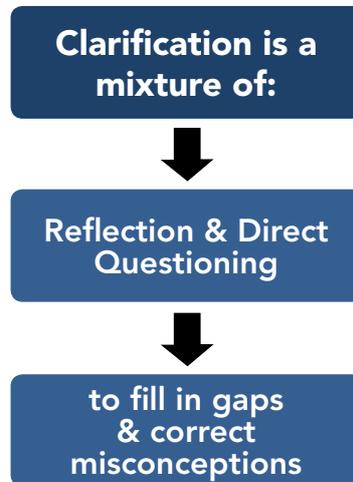
Employment agency staff or someone from the HR department are often used to conduct these preliminary interviews, which tend to be fairly short and focus on clarifying items in your resume and making a subjective judgment about your communication skills and how well you will fit in to the organization.

These interviews are often conducted outside of working hours and minimize the interference a formal interview would have on your normal working day. This is a good thing, but make sure that you schedule the interview for a time when you can give it your full attention. You don't want friends, family, or children around during the interview because background noise and distractions can make you appear disorganized and unprofessional.

If you do receive a call and the timing is poor, it is always best to ask for a callback ten minutes later, which will give you time to arrange things so that you can give the interviewer your undivided attention.

Statements that would be quite clear when supported by facial expressions and body language can be ambiguous over the phone, because a telephone interviewer is blind to all of your nonverbal signals. This means that you need to think carefully about what you say, and answer questions in a straightforward manner. Remember to smile when you are talking, the interviewer will detect it in your voice and feel more positive about the conversation.

Those individuals who come across well in phone interviews have good active listening skills and use them throughout the interview. [Active Listening](#) is made up of three components: reflection with clarification, listening orientation, and questioning skills.



During any phone interview it is essential to clarify that your understanding of the question is correct. You can use a quick question and short pause to allow the interviewer to correct any misconceptions.

Make sure you have an up-to-date resume in front of you and a notepad to take down anything that could be useful in later interviews. At the end of the call, don't be afraid to ask whether or not you have got through to the next stage.

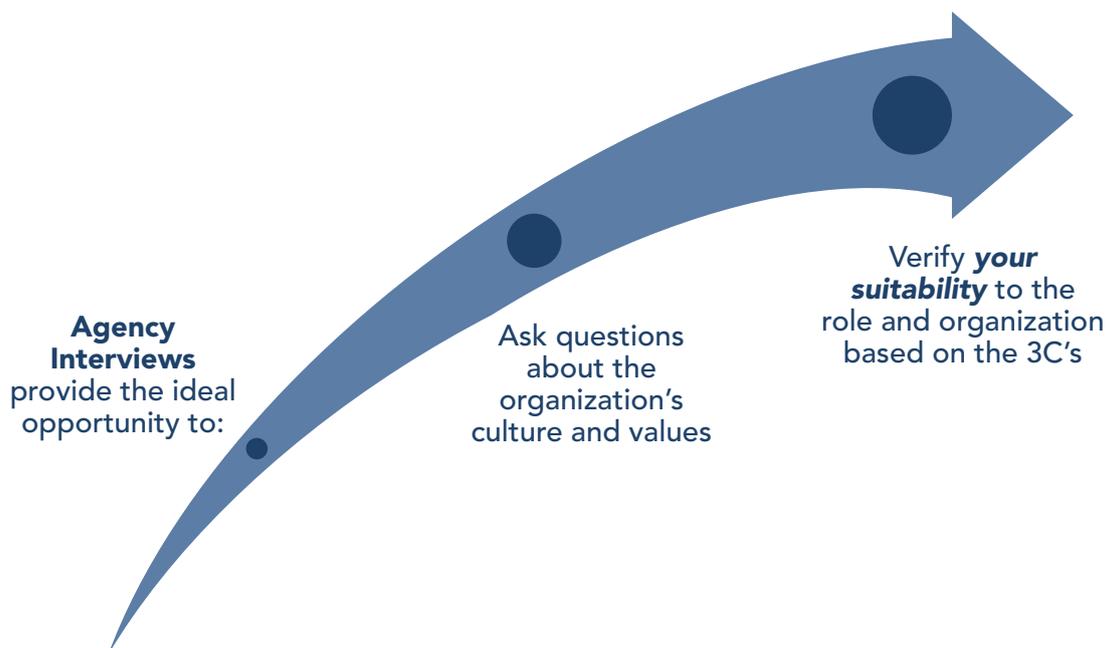
KEY POINTS

- ✓ Preliminary interviews are often outsourced and done over the phone in order to keep the costs down.
- ✓ They are usually scheduled outside of normal working hours and tend to be quite short with an emphasis on fact checking.
- ✓ Your interpersonal and communication skills will also be evaluated, so it is important to give the interviewer your full attention and give clear answers to questions.

Using a Recruitment Agency

In some industries, almost all recruitment is done through preferred agencies and having an agent that you have a good professional relationship with is essential. Not only does it mean that you are notified of job opportunities as soon as they become available but the agent can often recommend you for the shortlist without having to go through a preliminary interview.

A good rapport with an agency is essential if you are taking short, fixed-term jobs, something that is becoming more and more common. Agencies incur most of their costs in the initial screening process and they risk their reputation every time they put forward a candidate they don't know very well. As a result, they tend to value candidates they already know and who have a proven record of dependability and professionalism.



Consequently, you need to take your preparation for agency interviews as seriously as you would for one with an employer. This is true even if there is no specific job offer on the table because it could be the beginning of a long-term relationship. An agent who is impressed by your professionalism can be a powerful ally in securing a future interview, and an enthusiastic endorsement from an agent can open doors that would otherwise remain closed.

A good relationship with an agency also allows you to ask questions about both the role and the employer that can help you decide whether a particular opportunity is right for you. Even though agencies are only paid when a candidate is successful, it is not in their interests to place someone who turns out to be unsuitable.

Having a respected agency on your side can really improve your career prospects and it is not difficult to have a long-term relationship provided that you give a good account of yourself in any interviews they arrange for you, and that you stay with an employer for a reasonable length of time if you are successful.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ An ongoing relationship with a respected recruitment agency can be a great help in getting onto the interview shortlist.
- ✓ This is important because there can be so many applicants for a job that the initial screening process can be something of a lottery.

Interview Preparation

When preparing for a face-to-face interview with a prospective employer you should refer to the original job ad, the role description, and the employee specification if one is available.

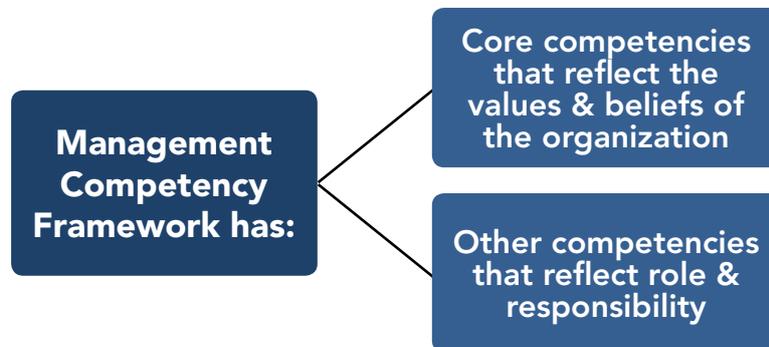
The job ad will give you some basic information—for example, the location, salary, qualifications required, and job title, along with a basic outline of the role. The phrasing of the language used gives a good initial indication of the culture and values of the organization.

The detailed role description expands on this and includes information about the duties to be performed, the areas of responsibility, and the reporting structure. This is one of the key sources you will use to identify and rank the role's competencies.

Many organizations include an explanation of how they want an employee to act and the value set they believe best suits their culture in the role description. Others write separate statements known as an employee specification. These can relate to specific

roles or to the level of responsibility and management assigned to the role. It usually consists of a list of personal qualities, competencies, and skills that the HR department have deemed appropriate for the grade or level assigned to the role. You should always try to get as much information as you can from the HR department even if this means calling them and asking if there is any additional information they can give you.

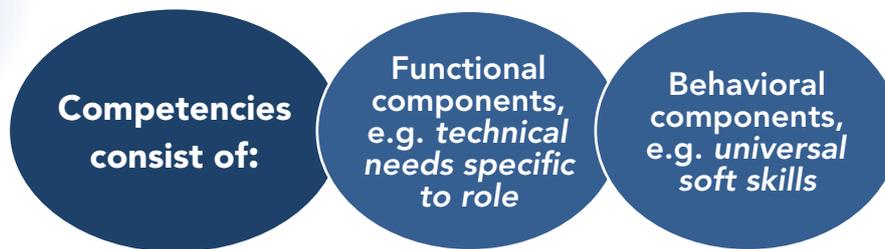
Once you have these documents, you can compare the role’s competencies with your own. You will need a management competency framework to help you do this. The alphabetical list below details the 12 most common management competencies. You will need to identify which of these 12 match the role.



For a detailed description of the behaviors associated with these competencies you can download our free [Management Competency Framework](#) template, which covers the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Agent • Continual Improvement • Customer Focused • Decision-Making • Interpersonal Communications • Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring & Coaching • Planning & Organizing • Professional Development • Resource Management • Stakeholder Management • Strategic Thinking |
|--|--|

An organization’s management competency framework will consist of functional and behavioral components. These components are ranked in accordance with the organization’s culture and values.



It is important to remember that a role's competencies are the aggregate behaviors an individual needs to perform a role. It is how someone delivers their objectives, not what the objectives are.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ The job ad, role description, and employee specification can all be used to list and rank the competencies required.
- ✓ Competencies are the aggregate behaviors an individual needs to perform a role.
- ✓ You can use a competency framework to compare the required competencies with your own.

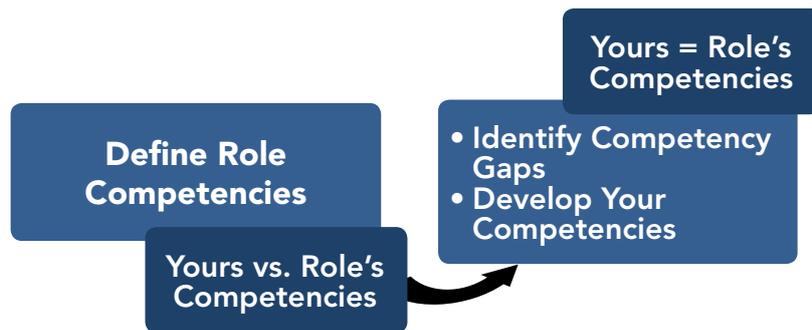
Worked Management Example

Matching a role's competencies to your own is a three-step process:

1. Define the Role Competencies
2. Relate Your Competencies to the Role's
3. Develop Your Competencies (if required)

This example uses Sam, who has applied for a marketing manager's role, and shows how to relate his behaviors to the required competencies. It only covers the first two steps of the process in detail as the third step is covered in our free eBook '[Developing Competencies](#)'.

This example uses the job ad and the associated job description. The details often contained in an employee specification are described under the 'Required Qualifications & Abilities' section of the ad. This enables you to see how to extract key competencies out of a short description rather than a detailed specification.



Sam's resume is not included but you can see how he extracts items from it that demonstrate the competencies needed to complete the comparison. This also shows him the level of management—*supervisory, manager, executive, strategic*—he is currently performing at and whether this is sufficient to be a serious contender for the marketing manager's role.

Marketing Manager Ad Details

Marketing Manager—Medical Devices/Healthcare
New York, NY up to \$75,000 + Bonus + Benefits
<p>My client is a thriving, international brand that provides specialist products to the healthcare sector. They seek a marketing professional with 7+ years' experience in marketing with focus on public relations, internal communications, and event planning within the healthcare sector.</p> <p>Required Qualifications & Abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master of Business Administration in Marketing (MBA) Doctoral Member of American Marketing Association (AMA) 7+ years' experience in marketing, public relations, internal communications, & event planning. Strong financial and contract management. Experience working in health or professional services sector preferred. Academic Membership of Marketing Science Institute (MSI) beneficial. Excellent verbal and written communications skills. Substantial problem identification & resolution skills at strategic & tactical level. Excellent interpersonal skills.

Marketing Manager Job Description

Job Description: Marketing Manager

You will be responsible for the development of a strategic marketing plan and its execution throughout the East coast of the States.

The main responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Manage and implement all marketing and communications programs within the region. This will include the management and development of all marketing personnel (team of 15), both at the head office in New York and in the five regional offices.
- Review the Regional Strategy and develop a marketing plan that supports this strategy and is acceptable to the Business Development Director.
- Oversee the entire marketing activities for the region and ensure all the marketing team is up to date at all times and comprehends the implications of their individual activities.
- Ensure the organization's website, intranet, and social media reflect the corporate identity, company mission, and business development plans at all times.
- Develop and maintain the corporate identity that is supportive of the Mission Statement and is disseminated throughout all literature.
- Incorporate the latest R&D announcements into the marketing strategy appropriately and integrate each launch into the marketing plan.
- Coordinate with Professional Development of the marketing team to ensure sufficient training and coaching initiatives are utilized.

This information gives Sam sufficient data to enable him to start defining the required competencies of the marketing manager's role using the management competency framework template.

Defining Role Competencies

Using the ad and job description it is easy to tease out the competencies that are required of someone in the marketing manager's role. Sam recognizes that his experience and behaviors need to show an individual operating at a strategic level rather than the hands-on level his current resume suggests.

Job Description	Competency
Manage and implement all marketing and communications programs within the region.	Resource Management Stakeholder Management Decision-Making
This will include the management and development of all marketing personnel (team of 15), both at the head office in New York and in the five regional offices.	Leadership, Change Agent Mentoring & Coaching Interpersonal Comms.
Review the Regional Strategy and develop a marketing plan that supports this strategy and is acceptable to the Business Development Director.	Continual Improvement Strategic Thinking Resource Management
Oversee the entire marketing activities for the region and ensure all the marketing team is up to date at all times and comprehends the implications of their individual activities.	Planning & Organizing Leadership Mentoring & Coaching Interpersonal Comms.
Ensure the organization's website, intranet, and social media reflect the corporate identity, company mission, and business development plans at all times.	Strategic Thinking Decision-Making Planning & Organizing
Develop and maintain the corporate identity that is supportive of the Mission Statement and is disseminated throughout all literature.	Strategic Thinking Interpersonal Comms. Continual Improvement
Incorporate the latest R&D announcements into the marketing strategy appropriately and integrate each launch into the marketing plan.	Strategic Thinking Decision-Making Resource Management Leadership
Coordinate with Professional Development of the marketing team to ensure sufficient training and coaching initiatives are utilized.	Professional Development Leadership Mentoring & Coaching
You will be responsible for the development of a strategic marketing plan and its execution throughout the East coast of the United States.	Strategic Thinking Resource Management Planning & Organizing

Using the management competencies described in our free template framework Sam can map and rank these requirements and responsibilities. The first task is to pull out the various responsibilities described in the job description and ad.

Always be mindful that certain competencies, such as ‘Customer Focused,’ may not be specifically named because there is an innate expectation that this is included for this level of role and does not need to be stated. Using this assumption and the frequency with which each competency appears an initial ranking can be made.

Sam’s second task is to repeat this process using the information contained in the ‘Required Qualifications & Abilities’ section of the ad.

Required Qualifications & Abilities	Competency
Master of Business Administration in Marketing (MBA) Doctoral Member of American Marketing Association (AMA) Academic Membership of Marketing Science Institute (MSI) beneficial	Professional Development
7+ years’ experience in marketing, public relations, internal communications, & event planning	Customer Focused Decision-Making Planning & Organizing
Strong financial and contract management	Stakeholder Management Resource Management Decision-Making
Experience working in health or professional services sector preferred	Customer Focused Leadership
Excellent verbal and written communications skills	Interpersonal Comms.
Substantial problem identification & resolution skills at strategic & tactical level	Change Agent Interpersonal Comms. Leadership Strategic Thinking
Excellent interpersonal skills	Interpersonal Comms.

The final table shows how the priorities of the different competencies alter from that of just the job description and then the whole ad. Customer Focused remains at the top because it is a marketing manger’s role Sam wishes to attain.

You can see that the emphasis on 'Interpersonal Communications' is much greater than the initial ranking. Also that equal ranking is given to 'Resource Management' and 'Decision-Making' competencies after the second task.

Competencies from Job Description	Competencies from Whole Ad
1. Customer Focused	I. Customer Focused
2. Strategic Thinking	II. Strategic Thinking
3. Leadership	III. Leadership
4. Resource Management	IV. Interpersonal Communications
5. Decision-Making	V. Resource Management
6. Mentoring & Coaching	VI. Decision-Making
7. Interpersonal Communications	VII. Mentoring & Coaching
8. Planning and Organizing	VIII. Stakeholder Management
9. Continual Improvement	IX. Planning and Organizing
10. Professional Development	X. Continual Improvement
11. Stakeholder Management	XI. Professional Development
12. Change Agent	XII. Change Agent

When comparing the two sides of this table you can also see that the priorities have changed and that the top four competencies have altered. As we work through this example we will demonstrate how Sam can match his own competencies to these top four required competencies.

This mapping exercise will reveal any gaps in the required competencies that need developing if he wants to attain the role. It also highlights where his behavior is not at the appropriate level and needs to be changed. In some instances Sam may need to use behaviors from what he has called 'External Responsibilities' on his resume.

This can be especially important if faced with a short time period to prepare for an interview. Sam also uses one detail on his resume to cover several competencies to varying degrees and this is another useful strategy to ensure you have all the required competencies.

E.g. Sam uses 'Production of regular budget monitoring and reporting for local government sector' to illustrate the competencies:

- *Customer Focused*
- *Planning & Organizing*
- *Resource Management*
- *Decision-Making*

KEY POINTS

- ✓ This example shows you how to define the role competencies, if this has not been done explicitly. It also suggests a way of ranking them.

Matching Competencies

To illustrate how you make a comparison between your own competencies and that of the role we will use the top four competencies from the previous example. These are:

- Customer Focused
- Strategic Thinking
- Leadership
- Interpersonal Communications



For each competency the [common management framework](#) definition is used and displayed at the top of each competency table.

- The left-hand column shows the required management behaviors.
- The middle and right-hand columns provide examples of how Sam has displayed this competency through his behavior at:
 - Work (middle); and
 - Different social situations (right).

This method of comparison enables you to quickly identify whether your behavior matches that required. Any gaps that occur mean that you will need to draw on outside activities.

The following four tables illustrate how Sam made his comparisons and identified his competency gaps for the role of marketing manager.

Customer Focused:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding as well as identifying the needs of existing & potential customers. ▪ Ensuring that the main focus and priority is on meeting customer needs. 		
Management Behaviors	Sam's Work Examples	Sam's Social Examples
Proactive in seeking feedback from customers, which is then actively used in decisions in all aspects of customer service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer events used to cross-sell services through customer recommendation. ▪ Merchandising campaign offering on-site technical support & communication. ▪ Informed & recommended changes to product development/production following customer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Parent Teacher Association (PTA) AGM feedback is used to base next year's events on.</i> ▪ <i>Ask parents of soccer squad you train for feedback on where they feel the children need further skills training.</i>

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

<p>Strives to gain an in-depth understanding of customer needs so that future recommendations can be made.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducted structured post-bid interviews (in both won/lost sales) to gain an understanding of prospects' views of the organization. ▪ Merchandising campaign set up to understand travel agent & tour operator relationship & its impact on sales. ▪ Following research group product reviews, recommended product changes—design, build, & sales offers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Talk to head teacher about shortfalls in annual budget & impact this has on school & where PTA funds can help plug these gaps.</i> ▪ <i>Regularly chat to parents at school to assess how well they feel their child's needs are being met.</i>
<p>Where customers have concerns or specific needs agree a timescale in which they will be dealt with effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From structured post-bid interviews agreed how & when to respond to feedback from prospects & customers. ▪ Created & updated user literature & POS goods for travel agent staff to ensure they knew which tour operators were available. 	
<p>Have a clear understanding of customer expectations and aim to add value without causing cost implications to the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diverted budget from travel exhibition to create & update user literature & POS goods for travel agent staff. ▪ Altered focus & budget of travel exhibition from large stand to smaller one, targeted sponsorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Ensure that costs of any PTA event are minimal allowing school to gain most benefit.</i> ▪ <i>Seek sponsorship or gifts of time for both PTA and soccer club.</i>
<p>Deal with customer complaints effectively, understand why they happened, and develop procedures to prevent it happening again.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structured post-bid interviews. ▪ Merchandising campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Explain school's budgetary constraints & how this has operational implications.</i> ▪ <i>Outline how you plan to address such issues.</i>
<p>Seeks to develop knowledge of marketplace so services can be improved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structured post-bid interviews. ▪ Merchandising campaign. ▪ Created local government forum to educate authorities on potential use of outsourcing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Seeks advice from other age groups within the soccer club as to how best to train youngest age group.</i>

During the management assessment Sam can be confident that he has displayed the customer-focused behaviors required of the role. But he will have to ensure that his verbal answers and behaviors in any interview exercises portray the language of a strategically focused individual rather than that of his current tactical level.

The second competency that is required is strategic thinking and for Sam to be successful he must display this at the correct level.

Strategic Thinking:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aware of & understands organization’s strategic objectives. ▪ Regularly reviews the ‘market place’ from a strategic viewpoint & its potential impact on the organization. ▪ Analyzes the strategic stance of competitors. ▪ Educates and leads others in their appreciation and understanding of how they contribute to the organization’s objectives. 		
Management Behaviors	Sam’s Work Examples	Sam’s <i>Social</i> Examples
Contributes to the strategic objectives of the organization, and division/department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contributes to the divisional strategic objectives (Local Government). ▪ Actively participates in the annual strategic objectives for public relations. 	
Researches new opportunities that could contribute to the organization’s strategic objectives.		
Approaches short-term operational issues with a long-term perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prospect & customer database creation and management to ensure meet targets set in 5-yr business plan for sector growth. 	
Regularly feeds back to the board/management any issues or competitor intelligence that may impact the organization’s strategic objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Findings of structured post-bid interviews presented to board. ▪ Monthly presentations to travel sector management on merchandising campaign & its impact on revenue. 	

Concentrates on identifying and resolving any operational aspects that may impact the strategic objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merchandising campaign's impact on sales revenue and network usage. 	
Ensures that individuals' and team objectives clearly reflect the organization's strategic objectives.		
Manages the allocation of the division/department resources in a strategic manner.		
Proactively addresses divisional or departmental issues before they impact on the organization's strategic objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following poor conversion rate in sales bids set up structured post-bid interviews to gain feedback. Network usage declined despite 150% growth in tour operators so piloted travel agents & found staff uninformed & needing to be educated. 	

After completing this table it is quite clear that Sam lacks the necessary 'strategic thinking' behaviors required by the role and that his behavior is below that of a marketing manager. His examples also lack evidence of Internet marketing and its strategic use and importance.

This is one area that his social activities do not offer any assistance at the management level. His behaviors in both work and social activities show considerable awareness of strategies but not its formation.

For the role of marketing manager the competency of leadership is one to be expected in the top four and Sam's behaviors will need to clearly and consistently portray his strength in this area.

Leadership:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses a variety of strategies to persuade & convince others to accept/commit to their proposals. ▪ Takes ownership of decisions and their impact on the organization. ▪ Provides direction to & motivates others ensuring an effective and productive team. 		
Management Behaviors	Sam's Work Examples	Sam's Social Examples
Ensures their team has a clear picture of the organization's goals and how their objectives fit into these goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through annual objectives of his staff links their objectives to the divisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>As finance governor knows what school needs to achieve & what objectives need to be met to do this & present a balanced budget.</i> ▪ <i>Performance review of the head teacher.</i>
Accepts responsibility for achieving the organization's goals and portrays personal commitment to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does so ONLY as part of marketing team. 	
Through careful and detailed questioning gains an understanding of others' viewpoints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structured post-bid interviews. ▪ Merchandising campaign that matches needs of tour operators to organization's. 	
Is concise, assertive, and persuasive in all communications and gaining others' support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Persuading Sales of need for structured post-bid interviews. ▪ Adoption of the merchandising campaign to address network usage and tour operators' disappointment in travel agents' use of network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Parent Teacher Association (PTA) activities gaining support for events and delegating the organizing.</i>
Prepares responses to likely risks and objections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formulation of sector marketing communications plan. ▪ Persuading Sales of need for structured post-bid interviews. ▪ Adoption of the merchandising campaign to increase travel agent awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Performance review of the head teacher.</i>
When faced with disagreement is constructive in trying to achieve consensus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Persuading Sales of need for structured post-bid interviews. ▪ Formulation of sector marketing communications plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Acceptance of school budget by school and parents.</i>

When recommending an action or informing others of a decision they use a well-balanced and soundly reasoned argument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of the merchandising campaign to increase travel agent awareness. Defining priorities for PR campaign for sector. 	
Strives to achieve tough targets and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulates marketing communications plan to meet sales targets of sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Understand language & communicate using this when dealing with school authorities.</i>
Works to meet customer commitments despite obstacles that may occur in the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of the merchandising campaign to increase travel agent awareness. 	
Ensures that organizational needs are met in all that they do.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Performance review of the head teacher.</i>
Stands by their own decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulation of sector marketing communications plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Parent Teacher Association (PTA) activities gaining support for events and delegating the organizing.</i>

This table shows that Sam has established leadership behaviors. He has taken on social roles to acquire those behaviors he is unable to develop at work.

- Parent governor (2nd Term) and Chair of Finance Committee
- Chair of school Parent Teacher Association
- Responsible for setting and reviewing (in connection with selected authority representative) the head teacher’s annual performance against the School Development Plan.
- Qualified as one of the soccer coaches for local club.
- Responsible for first aid within the age group.

These examples show that he actively plans his personal development to advance his **KSA's** (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes). To be successful he will need to ensure that his

behaviors during a management assessment display the strategic focus of the role, not his current tactical-level behaviors. For example:

Show the ability to create the marketing plan in its entirety not just the marketing communications plan.

Display the capability to manage a team over multiple sites, using a variety of communication tools to enable him to fulfill this requirement.

The fourth of the competencies to be used in this comparison is 'Interpersonal Communications.' From the table below it is evident that Sam operates at the appropriate level for a marketing manager in this competency. Much of this has been done as part of his own professional development with the AMA and working towards a doctoral membership.

Interpersonal Communications:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds & maintains good working relationships throughout the organization and externally. Develops a sound understanding of others & their needs to ensure a good working relationship. 		
Management Behaviors	Sam's Work Examples	Sam's Social Examples
Respects and acknowledges other people's and organization's values and ethos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the marketing communications plan, both internal and external 'customers.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Liaison with school authorities, school management, teaching & support staff, and parents.</i> <i>Parents & children at soccer club.</i>
Puts forward recommendations and makes decisions based on agreement and commitment from the other parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing communications plan activities. Liaison with external suppliers. 	
Is a careful listener to others' standpoints and concerns and on understanding this communication will respond accordingly.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Part of AMA's professional development & seeking doctoral membership (reflects more strategic & management skill base).</i> <i>Within PTA meetings and event planning.</i> <i>Soccer coach meetings.</i>

Is a persuasive and clear communicator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In all commercial & professional dealings, including contract management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In all dealings connected with responsibility as school governor & PTA Chair.</i> <i>In all contacts with parents & children at soccer club.</i>
Has an understanding of the reasoning of other people's actions and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing communications plan activities. Liaison with external suppliers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>AMA professional development.</i>
Welcomes others' feedback on issues and their own performance in a constructive way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In all commercial and professional dealings. Management of outsourcing services contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Peer & group feedback as part of AMA professional development.</i> <i>In all dealings connected with responsibility as school governor & PTA Chair.</i> <i>In all contacts with parents & children at soccer club.</i>
Treats all those in the organization with respect and acknowledges all their contributions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal & external customers within sector and other areas of organization he has dealings with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As school governor & PTA Chair.</i> <i>All contact with parents & children at soccer club.</i>
Encourages free expression of ideas, feelings, and opinions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within sector team and liaison with Sales team of sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Within PTA meetings and event planning.</i> <i>Soccer coach meetings.</i>
Welcomes with enthusiasm the challenge of overcoming obstacles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within sector team and liaison with Sales team of sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>AMA professional development.</i> <i>Within PTA meetings and event planning.</i> <i>Soccer coach meetings.</i>
Continually encourages self and others to over-achieve and exceed targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within sector team and liaison with Sales team of sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>AMA professional development.</i> <i>Encouragement of team to work towards AMA doctoral membership.</i> <i>Within PTA meetings and event planning.</i>

Sam will also have to demonstrate that he has the right level of skill in managing budgets as well as defining objectives from the organization's public relations (PR). He has the knowledge from his AMA involvement but must ensure his behaviors and responses to questions reflect a strategic rather than tactical approach to tasks. A simple and effective

way to understand the difference is to observe how the current occupant of the role or other managers of equivalent authority and responsibilities conduct themselves.

Overall, this comparison exercise of the four main competencies required for the marketing manager's role shows that Sam (whilst knowledgeable and capable of performing the role) is lacking wider management experience. However, his personal ambition is evident and could be enough to get him to the interview stage of the recruiting process.

This example demonstrates how a comparison of competencies can be made and how gaps within an individual's competencies can be identified. Using the descriptions of the behaviors associated with particular competencies makes it possible to determine the most effective way to fill any gaps using either work or non-work examples.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Comparing your own competencies to those required involves establishing what evidence you have for claiming a particular competency.
 - ✓ You may need to look outside of your work activities to find evidence of those competencies you have been unable to develop in the workplace.
 - ✓ This exercise is time consuming but it will highlight areas where you are weak and likely to be challenged in the interview.
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Summary

A successful management career is based on a series of job moves with each one bringing more responsibility and authority. In order to make these moves you will need to develop a long-term career plan in which each of the upward steps is big enough to be worthwhile whilst still being achievable.

Each move will involve some sort of management assessment that may be internal or external. The interview preparation discussed in this eBook is only part of a much bigger picture because there is no point in preparing well for the 'wrong' interview. It is far more beneficial in the long run to have a proper career plan and to only apply for jobs that further that plan than it is to apply for jobs that offer a better package but represent a backward step or a dead-end careerwise.

It should go without saying that you need to understand any organization that you are considering going to work for. You can get all of the information you need from their website, annual reports, financial statements, press releases, and social media.

All of this information can be brought together to help you understand how the organization sees itself, what it considers important, and where it is going. Re-reading the job ad in the light of this information can help you to see the role in a wider context. This is important because you need to be sure that it matches your expectations and desires.

You should also develop a good understanding of the market. The easiest way to do this is to read the industry press to gain an understanding of the main topics of discussion and concern. It can also be useful to look at how the national press describes the market and its main players. Although we are using terms like 'market' and 'industry' this still applies to the nonprofit sector because even charities and NGOs are subject to external influences and operate in a market where funding takes the place of profits.

Officially published information can be crosschecked with what is being said in blogs and social media comments. These sources can sometimes be at odds with more established media but tend to be ahead of the curve if something disruptive or controversial is in the offing.

The knowledge that you can gain from this research will prove invaluable in making a decision about whether a particular organization is right for you in terms of the culture, values, and direction.

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