

Session 6: part 3

Effective skills for assessment centres

Maureen Tibby



Part 3 of this session aims to;

- ▶ Expand on what we covered in session 5
- ▶ Explore the types of individual and group activities used in assessment centres
- ▶ Experience a team work activity
- ▶ View a range of assessment centre activities
- ▶ Identify the competencies that are being assessed
- ▶ Explore positive and negative behaviours
- ▶ Consider how to prepare for assessment centres
- ▶ Provide sources of information



Practical team tasks: What are they assessing?

▶ Group members may be required to:

- ▶ Use children's building bricks or other materials to build the highest possible structure with the fewest possible bricks
- ▶ Devise a poster with a slogan to advertise one of the company's products
- ▶ May compete against other teams

Competencies assessed include;

- ▶ communication
- ▶ assertiveness
- ▶ co-operation
- ▶ initiative
- ▶ time management
- ▶ Working effectively under pressure
- ▶ leadership
- ▶ teamwork
- ▶ creativity
- ▶ planning
- ▶ interpersonal



Exercise 1: the balloon game



The social event: what are they assessing?



Selectors want to check;

- ▶ How you mix with others
- ▶ If you ask interesting & relevant questions
- ▶ Your listening skills
- ▶ How you deal with awkward situations
- ▶ Your interpersonal skills
- ▶ Your attitude and behaviour
- ▶ Your commercial awareness

DVD: At the assessment centre

Presentations: what are they assessing?

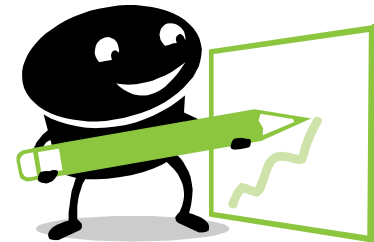
May be required to make a presentation.

May be given the brief in advance

What are they assessing?

- ▶ Communication and confidence
- ▶ Preparation and organisation
- ▶ Content and structure including knowledge
- ▶ Ability to manage time efficiently
- ▶ Ability to handle pressure
- ▶ Ability to influence, if appropriate
- ▶ Use of visual aids, if appropriate
- ▶ Ability to answer questions

DVD: at the assessment centre



The discussion group: what are they assessing?



- Topic may be **business-related** and you are given information
- Topic may be very general
- May not have time to prepare
- At the end of the discussion candidates may be invited to comment on the group's conclusions

Competencies assessed include; Communication, leadership; assertiveness, confidence, co-operation, listening, negotiation, problem-solving, influencing, planning, team work, time management and analytical skills

Examples of general topics:

- ▶ *Advertising should be banned during television programmes aimed at the under-sevens*
- ▶ *Public funding shouldn't be used to support minority interests such as opera*

Discussion group: exercise 2



- Spend 5 minutes, individually, thinking of the different experiences you have had of working in groups over the past couple of years.
 - ☐ these may have been as part of education, jobs or other activities
 - *What made the groups you were part of successful or not?*
 - *What did you learn about your own behaviour in groups*
 - *How could you put into practice what you have learned?*

- Spend 10 minutes discussing your working in groups experiences, and focus on why some groups work better than others.

E and in-tray exercises: what are they assessing?

- ▶ Ability to prioritise
- ▶ Ability to make good judgements
- ▶ Ability to take action
- ▶ Ability to manage time
- ▶ Ability to make decisions
- ▶ Ability to absorb and understand information
- ▶ Ability to work accurately
- ▶ Ability to analyse and process information
- ▶ Ability to communicate
- ▶ Ability to take initiative
- ▶ Ability to problem solve
- ▶ Ability to work under pressure

The group case study exercise: what are they assessing?



- ▶ Group given a set time to work together on a case study brief
- ▶ Usually given documents based on a real-life business situation.
- ▶ Candidates may be given a different briefing document or role to play
- ▶ The group has to reach a conclusion despite any conflicting views
- ▶ Group usually asked to present its findings as part of the exercise.

Competencies being assessed;

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Initiative
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Ability to work under pressure
- ▶ Creativity
- ▶ Team work
- ▶ Problem solving
- ▶ Time management

Role Play: what are they assessing?

Assesses;

- ▶ Understanding of role
- ▶ Communication and Interpersonal skills
- ▶ Negotiation Skills
- ▶ Initiative
- ▶ Problem solving
- ▶ Influencing
- ▶ Ability to work under pressure



DVD: at the assessment centre

Group exercises – positive behaviours



- ▶ Make quality contributions
- ▶ Provide original insights and contributions
- ▶ Be pro-active and flexible re roles
- ▶ Summarise discussion and move it on when required
- ▶ Monitor activity and remind group of objective if they stray from this
- ▶ Ensure group keep to time scale
- ▶ Demonstrate a positive, can-do attitude

Group exercises – positive behaviour



- ▶ **Support** the others in the group
- ▶ **Respect and encourage** their contributions
- ▶ **Acknowledge** positive contributions
- ▶ **Provide** objective feedback
- ▶ **Build on** points they make
- ▶ **Involve** those who don't contribute
- ▶ **Argue your case** persuasively but.. be prepared to compromise

Group exercises – negative behaviours



- ▶ **Don't** criticise, ridicule or put down other group members
- ▶ **Don't** dominate discussion
- ▶ **Don't** force your opinions on others
- ▶ **Don't** talk over or interrupt other group members (unless you have to in order to make your contribution)
- ▶ **Don't** become overly focused on reading the paperwork
- ▶ **Don't** switch off and let others do all the work
- ▶ **Don't** fall out if your ideas are not accepted
- ▶ **Don't** sulk and disengage from the task
- ▶ **Don't** refuse to contribute
- ▶ **Don't** be disrespectful to others
- ▶ **Don't** be negative
- ▶ **Don't** be aggressive



Preparing for assessment centre activities: how?

- ▶ **Prepare:** make use of resources and advice
- ▶ **Information:** read any information provided in advance
- ▶ **Job role:** reflect on the type of competencies required for the role. The tasks will be designed to assess you against these.
- ▶ **Research:** the employer, sector, market etc. Think how you might use your knowledge in any business-related tasks/discussions and interviews
- ▶ **Reflect:** on your strengths and how you can show them in the tasks
- ▶ **Reflect:** on your weaknesses and how you can overcome them in the tasks
- ▶ **On the day:** ask for clarification of instructions if you are not sure



Sources of support

Hand-outs to download:

- ▶ Assessment Centres
- ▶ Presentations
- ▶ Networking

Psychometric testing
E and In tray Exercises

- ▶ Target jobs <http://targetjobs.co.uk>
- ▶ Job Test Prep <http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk>
- ▶ Wikijob <http://www.wikijob.co.uk>
- ▶ Prospects <http://www.prospects.ac.uk>
- ▶ Career player <http://www.careerplayer.com>
- ▶ *At the Assessment Centre: DVD from AGCAS* www.agcas.org
- ▶ *Making an Impact (the graduate job interview) : DVD from AGCAS*
www.agcas.org.uk