Job Analysis and Specialized Experience

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Agenda

• The Importance of the Job Analysis
• Writing Item/Questions
• How to Consult with a Manager in order to build a Valid Assessment
• How to write a Specialized Experience Statement
• Good and Bad Examples of Assessment Questions and Specialized Experience Statements
• Selective Placement Factors
Why is a Job Analysis Important?

The job analysis along with specialized experience, determines who is Best Qualified (BQ).

Identifies essential functions, which can come into play with reasonable accommodation requests, discrimination lawsuits, performance reviews, and other related matters.
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Follow the formula: Perform What (Action verb) + To Whom or What (Direct Object) + To Produce What or Why? How? (Qualifying Statement)

Example: Give employee benefit presentations to new employees at orientation
## Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

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Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Write Clearly and Succinctly:

• Critical for helping to ensure accurate self-reporting
• Takes more time to write but are easier for the applicant to respond to accurately and reliably.
• Focus on the key or unique aspects of the task you are describing
• Select words essential to the meaning of the statement
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Write Clearly and Succinctly: Cont...

Example:

Original task statement: Checks time reports for persons under own supervision for errors in addition and hours claimed, uses daily work summary sheets as a resource if necessary, signs time reports, and/or payroll sheets, routes to payroll department before pay period deadline, in order to authorize payment for time worked.

Clear and succinct item for assessment questionnaire: Audit and sign time reports to authorize payment for time worked.
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

• Develop Items that Meaningfully Distinguish Among applicants:
  • Determine what critical behaviors differentiate those who are exceptional or highly successful in the position from the average performers
  • When assessing multiple grade levels, also consider the range of behaviors that may differentiate among your applicants.
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Develop Items that Meaningfully Distinguish Among applicants: cont...

Example: Several items that represent increasingly higher levels of proficiency on oral communication:

- **Sample 1**: Deliver a short oral presentation to peers, colleagues or customers to explain programs or services.
- **Sample 2**: Teach a workshop, seminar, or course for a professional audience or group with varied backgrounds.
- **Sample 3**: Defend sensitive, controversial, and/or technical information to managers, industry leaders, or the public in a group or public setting.
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Potential Pitfalls in Item Writing:

Common Pitfalls include:

- Unnecessary words
- Double-barreled items
- Overly specialized items
- Evaluative, vague or ambiguous terminology
- Abbreviations
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Potential Pitfalls in Item Writing: cont..

Unnecessary Words

- **Wordy**: Relay various types of written information, both in e-mail and memo format, to individuals at all levels of the organization and on multi and varied acquisition topics
- **Concise**: Write Correspondence (e.g., e-mails, memos) on acquisition topics for distribution to internal stakeholders
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Potential Pitfalls in Item Writing: cont..

Double-barreled item

• **Double-barreled**: Resolve customer problems independently and deal with difficult customers with courtesy and tact.

• **Two Statements**:
  • Resolve customer problems independently.
  • Deal with difficult customers with courtesy and tact.
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Potential Pitfalls in Item Writing: cont..

Overly specialized items

• **Overly Specific:** Add, subtract, multiply, divide, and compute percentages to calculate pay, time, and benefits.

• **Appropriate level of Generality:** Use addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and compute percentages to perform calculations
Writing an Item/Question

Some examples of acceptable uses:

• Assessing a Management Analyst on their experience writing formulas in Excel.
  • This is a task performed by most Management Analysts and Excel is industry standard. We would not qualify the statement with a specific version or year of Excel though.

• Assessing a Desktop Support Technician's experience with Apple/Mac.
  • Apple computers are widely used in business and there is a distinct difference between supporting PCs and Macs. We would not specify the operating system though.

• Assessing a Social Science Researcher's experience with Stata.
  • Stata is used across many research fields and it is essential to the position.
Writing an Item/Question

• Some examples of inappropriate uses:
  • Assessing an IT Specialist on their experience using TIBCO or Qlik.
    • While this may be essential to the position, both of these products represent a small share of the Business Intelligence market. This question would be restrictive. Additionally, most BI tools are similar and can be learned quickly.
  • Assessing an HR Specialist on their experience using Capital HR.
    • We could ask the question if we say, “PeopleSoft” instead of Capital HR. Capital HR is simply HHS’s instance of PeopleSoft (i.e., the vendor). If an individual has experience using any instance of PeopleSoft, they can quickly learn Capital HR.
  • Assessing a Chemist on their experience operating a government vehicle.
    • This is most likely not essential or even related to the job. Additionally, what is the different between a government and non-government vehicle?
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Potential Pitfalls in Item Writing: cont..
Vague, Ambiguous, or Evaluative Terminology

- **Vague:** Perform quality control procedures on time and attendance reports in an effective manner.
- **Behavioral:** Verify the accuracy of data or information in a report or database following established procedures.
Poor examples of Task Statements/Questions:

• Write reports on complex and controversial topics.
  • What type of reports are we talking about, who is the audience, what is the scope? How does an applicant know what we mean by complex and controversial?

• Analyze large amounts complicated data.
  • What type of data are we talking about, what kind of analysis is needed, is there a data presentation component, what is large and what is complicated?

• Understanding and interpreting written materials.
  • Who wouldn’t answer positively to this statement? This needs to be re-worded so that it addresses valuable experience related to the job.

• Knowledge of laboratory safety procedures.
  • The examples must be written in a task-based format and start with an action verb. Rephrase the question so that addresses experience using their knowledge of laboratory safety procedures.
Writing an Item/Question – Tips for Writing Items

Potential Pitfalls in Item Writing: cont..

Abbreviations

- **Abbreviated**: Prepare MOUs in order to bring in new contracts.
- **Written Out**: Prepare Memorandums of Understanding in order to bring in new contracts.
• Perform work involving the analysis, planning, design, implementation, documentation, assessment and management of the enterprise architecture framework
  • Perform work involving the analysis, planning and design of the enterprise structure framework.
  • Perform work involving the implementation, documentation, assessment and management of the enterprise structure framework.
Writing an Item/Question – Example #2

• Develop long-range plans, regulations, and technical policy guidelines interpret and apply policy to specific investigative actions and other compliance activities with program providers.
  • Develop long-range plans, regulations, and technical policy guidelines consistent with the organization’s mission.
  • Interpret and apply policy to specific investigative actions and other compliance activities with program providers.
Writing an Item/Question – Example #3

• Serves as a contracting expert for large, complex requirements for all types of requirements.
  • Determine the most advantageous acquisition methods to meet a variety of program needs.
Writing an Item/Question – Example #4

• Analyze and interpret industry trends.
  • Analyze industry trends to determine how they may impact existing and future contracts.
Specialized Experience

- Definition Specialized Experience
- Legal Requirements
- Importance of Specialized Experience
- Reference Tools
- Examples of Specialized Experience
Specialized Experience

• Definition

• Specialized experience is an explicit description of required general or specialized experience to ensure that applicants possess the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)/Competencies to perform the work of a position

• To be creditable, specialized experience must be one year equivalent to at least the next lower grade level or equivalent in the Federal service
Specialized Experience

Legal Requirements

• Specialized experience requirements are covered in the qualification standards established by OPM and is mostly used for positions above entry level

• Minimum qualification requirements always include the qualification standards that OPM validates and sets for occupations in the Federal Government
  • Minimum requirements(e.g. education, training, experience, or any other requirements) are intended to reduce the processing of unqualified applicants by screening out those who are unlikely to succeed in the job.
  • Most qualification standards permit applicants to qualify on the basis of education/training, experience, or a combination of the two.
Specialized Experience

Importance:

• Directly relates to the major duties of a job
• By identifying the most critical elements of a job, an applicants who does not meet the minimum qualification requirements (including specialized experience) is screened out
• Determines whether an applicant is ‘qualified’ or ‘not qualified’ for a job
**Specialized Experience**

- **Specific**: The examples should be specific, especially at high grades. Avoid generalized examples when possible.

- **Measurable**: The examples must be measurable on a resume or cover letter. Avoid examples that are typically measured through observation (e.g., Attention to Detail, Presentation Skills).

- **Attainable**: The examples must be attainable or realistic for the position. Write examples that are appropriate for the grade level. While specific is good, we cannot be restrictive.

- **Relevant**: The examples must be relevant to the position and the occupational series. Avoid examples that do not have a nexus to the position.
Specialized Experience

For multi-grade recruitments, specialized experience must be defined at each grade level advertised

• Well defined specialized experience statements:
  • Are as clear and concise as possible
    • Written in plain language
    • Government jargon or acronyms are well defined

• Measure the most critical elements of a job

• Avoid use of qualitative adjectives
  • Words such as knowledge of, basic knowledge of, considerable skill in, demonstrated ability to, or familiarity with

• Avoid requiring job-specific or agency-specific knowledge that could be learned in a reasonable period of time on the job
Specialized Experience

- Poorly Written:
  - Specialized experience for this position includes considerable skill in directing work in classification and recruitment within a federal agency; familiarity with HR program evaluation and oversight activities; extensive experience advising senior agency leaders

- Well Written:
  - Specialized experience for this position includes experience performing and managing or directing work in classification and employment/staffing/recruitment; conducting HR program evaluation and oversight activities; and providing comprehensive management advisory services to senior management
Specialized Experience

Poor examples of specialized experience:

• Develop reports in Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services 2014.
  • This is restrictive. Not only is the year/version restrictive, we are excluding individuals who have experience using similar reporting tools, and most of these tools are similar and can be learned quickly.

• Manage a federal workers’ compensation program.
  • This is also restrictive. Applicants from the general public will not have had the ability to gain this experience.

• Have you lead a project?
  • This is too general. Who hasn’t lead a project in their lifetime? Be more specific with the type of project and the scope.
Specialized Experience

Specialized Experience is the basis for determining qualified vs. not qualified

• Specialized experience lists or states the experience that is necessary to bring to the position in order to perform the duties at a **fully successful level**.

The applicant questionnaire determines where on the scale of qualified the candidate is by evaluating the degree of their knowledge, skill or ability.
Selective Placement Factor

• In approving a selective placement factor you should have:
  • The selective placement factor language
  • The duties that require the requested selective placement factor
  • Justification that shows:
    • How the selective placement factor is tied to the documented duties
    • Why it is required for the potential selection to have that skill upon entry on duty rather than learn it on the job.

• When reviewing a selective placement factor for approval ask yourself:
  • Does the PD require this selective placement factor?
  • Is it supported by the duties of the position?
  • Are there alternatives, i.e. are there other ways other than a certificate that a candidate could have gained the same skill?
    • Example: In the request for SPF there was an option for a waiver.
  • In reviewing the job analysis, is the requested skill set listed, does it appear to be an important part of the job?
Key Takeaways

• If the selective placement factor requires experience it is likely not a selective placement factor but should be added to the specialized experience statement.

• In developing a specialized experience statement have a manager to think of the type of work a candidate would have performed to make them qualified for the position.

• Remember the specialized experience statement is minimum qualifications. The assessment questions is what should distinguish candidates from minimally qualified to highly qualified.

• Task statements/Assessment questions should not come directly from the PD as that is requiring the candidate to have performed the job.
Resources

• For additional information please visit:
• Delegated Examining Operations Handbook
• Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures
Contact Information

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