

RESOURCE

SECURING YOUR FIRST SLT ROLE:

RESOURCE PACK 2



ACTIVITY 1: COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS AND TASKS

Competency-based interviews are interviews where each question is designed to test one or more specific skills. The answer is then matched against pre-decided criteria and marked accordingly. For example, the interviewers may want to test the candidate's ability to deal with stress by asking first how the candidate generally handles stress and then asking the candidate to provide an example of a situation where he worked under pressure.

How do competency-based interviews differ from normal interviews?

Normal interviews are essentially a conversation where the interviewers ask a few questions that are relevant to what they are looking for but without any specific aim in mind other than getting an overall impression of you as an individual. Questions are fairly random and can sometimes be quite open.

For example, a question such as "What can you offer our school?" is meant to gather general information about you but does not test any specific skill or competency. In an unstructured interview, the candidate is judged on the general impression that he/she leaves; the process is therefore likely to be more subjective.

Competency-based interviews (also called structured or behavioural interviews) are more systematic, with each question targeting a specific skill or competency. Candidates are asked questions relating to their behaviour in specific circumstances, which they then need to back up with concrete examples. The interviewers will then dig further into the examples by asking for specific explanations about the candidate's behaviour or skills.

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STARR Technique

Situation

Task

Action

Result

Reflection

Statement	<i>I do think that x is y...</i>	<i>E.g. - I do believe accountability is essential</i>
Situation	In fact I had a situation where ...	Describe a real situation
Task	I identified the task as to ...	Say how you analysed what to do
Action	So what I did was to ...	Say what you actually did
Result	The result was that ...	Say what the outcome was
Reflection	What I believe I learned was that ...	Show you can learn new things

WRITING A GOOD LETTER

The STARR technique also applies to writing a good letter.

Read this letter and see how competencies are demonstrated

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1) Remember proper letter etiquette in terms of lay-out

Dear Mr / Mrs XXXXX (find out the head's name),

I wish to apply for the post of Deputy Headteacher at XXXXX School, as advertised in the Times Educational Supplement on XXth XXXXX 202X.

2) Make sure you have visited the school whenever applying for a senior post and share your impressions

I would like to begin by sharing my experience of two informative and truly enjoyable visits to XXXXX Girls' School; I was genuinely impressed by the character of your school, the enthusiastic comments of the pupils I met, the staff and everything the school offers, but more than anything delighted by the warmth which characterized both visits. This is rare, but having visited several schools recently as I approach deputy headship is something I have been searching for, had hoped to find and did.

3) Give context and define clearly the job you are doing currently and say a bit about who you are as a person and your values

I am currently Head of XXXXXX at XXXXXX School, an 11 to 18 comprehensive school in XXXX Town. XXXXX School bears striking similarities to my current school; it is the kind of school I know, and part of a sector in which I have chosen to spend most of my career and so understand in considerable depth. I see girls' schools as great fun, full of warmth and enthusiasm and places where girls can grow in confidence and express themselves freely, imaginatively and creatively. It may seem unusual for a man to be so passionate about education for girls, but I am. As a person I believe I am comfortable in my skin and in myself, hard-working, able to mix humour with genuine seriousness of purpose, self-reliant and yet a good team player, sensitive to the needs of others and yet astutely able to understand their motivations, and I seek always to be true and authentic, so I hope and believe these qualities make me a powerful human role-model for young women of the future, in a world where sometimes positive male role-models are scarce.

My current school's ability profile is wide but, like XXXXX School, it consistently delivers excellent results. We focus on aspiration and know that all children can achieve great things when they work at them, but also that they are all unique in their needs and their talents. I would bring this with me and work hard to support the tradition of quietly understated diligence, excellence and emotional intelligence which I perceive to be the hallmarks of the girls at XXXXX School.

4) Share your vision – try and make it match with what you have seen on the school website or know about the school

I believe leadership is primarily about big pictures and a consistent, strategic approach; in this it differs from management which is primarily operational. But schools, like any organisation, must be run primarily by clear structures of responsibility and line-management, well monitored and regularly evaluated. I have extensive experience of the development of school policy, regulatory and legal compliance and development planning, all areas which I lead in my current school at whole-school level. A current example this academic year has been my work to move standards of teaching from good to outstanding. I arranged strategic INSET at the start of the academic year for the whole staff and have monitored implementation through lesson observation, peer-coaching and one-to-one mentoring for teachers whose performance in the classroom was in need of development. The results have been positive insofar that in the latest round of observations by the senior leadership team no lessons were less than good and a significantly increased percentage were outstanding. I believe I have a deep understanding of what education is, how it works and how it can be developed.

As a leader I believe every member of a school needs to feel part of its community, that teams work best when high levels of ownership and accountability are part of strategy from the beginning of a project, and that team members need to be deployed to work to their best strengths. Last academic year, for example, I led a move to a two-week timetable, which generated considerable and foreseeable anxiety for some staff. The change worked well because I was able to develop a shared vision and understanding of the need for the move, and a degree of distributed leadership meant all staff felt empowered to critique and offer constructive and valuable contributions.

5) Show competencies from actual situations

Having taught in three very different schools, worked as a teacher, head of department, year head, head of sixth form, director of studies and deputy head I have done almost every job in teaching, which is and will remain my passion and first love. I think for all the demands on heads they must never lose sight of the reason teachers do what they do, and the difference it can make when done well. To this end I believe that schools should be places where all staff are developed constantly as part of, and in response to, each school's needs and targets; the better trained and developed the staff the better they deliver and the better the outcomes for the children. Deputy heads do, however, have a duty to tackle occasional under-performance effectively, and where necessary processes may ultimately need to be used. To this let me add the following anecdote - last term I worked very closely monitoring and coaching a teacher on the verge of a capability process; from initial lesson observations which were unsatisfactory via a regular weekly meeting with targets, visits to other schools and close monitoring and coaching, this teacher, whom I am now appraising, moved into a category which I would class as good with outstanding features. The multiple positives are that she is also now enjoying her work and the children in her lessons are progressing rapidly. I will confess that at the outset I had not been optimistic that improvement was likely or



indeed possible, so I learnt valuable lessons from the experience, namely that any delay in dealing with the issue would have made it worse and that the benefits of increased accountability and close supervision meant that this was a good use of my time as a senior leader because it impacted very significantly on the outcomes for the pupils; the difficult conversations are always worth having and not to be shied away from. Outstanding delivery in a competitive independent school sector also keeps schools successful. Independent schools rise and fall on local reputation, and what our parents want is great results and a great experience for their daughters. It is the quality of the whole experience and the development of the whole person that must be at the heart of marketing our schools, and what sets them apart from the 'one-size-fits-all' perception of local state sector competitors.

As an educator I know that care and nurture are at the heart of progress and success, so I do see the pastoral and the academic as two faces of the same coin. Good order is important, so where sanctions are needed these must be applied consistently but in ways that acknowledge human dignity, the formative nature of mistakes and the needs of the whole community. However, I think rewards are often just as powerful. My pastoral background as a head of year makes me confident to deal with any pastoral issues which arise, and to refer appropriately to the relevant authorities where necessary; the first duty of a head is to ensure the welfare of the children, and I take this powerfully seriously. On a human level, though, I will also say that I think everyone needs a bit of kindness, and the worse they are the more they need it.

Indeed, I think positive relationships are at the centre of everything. I believe myself to be an active listener, effective mediator and excellent communicator, yet I believe listening is more important to communication than talking. Effective communication with parents both about a school and what it offers and about the progress their child is making is central to fostering all-important relationships between home and school. A small example - in my current school I instituted and produce a weekly colour school newspaper. I began it as a response to some parents' concerns that the school did not communicate effectively. Now a little over a year later communication of news and events was rated among the most positive aspects of the school by parents in this year's survey. I listened and I responded, and this small thing effected a big change. I think good heads must listen very actively, be approachable and clear-sighted and their responses need to be carefully planned and measured.

I think everyone grows through feedback. Last term I set up a new system of target grade setting and reporting on a half-termly basis, allied to an academic intervention programme for pupils who do not meet their targets. This has been hugely well received by parents, the formative comments and clear explanation of attainment data allied to much higher frequency of reporting meaning that no pupil is allowed to coast or slip through a net. Our recent inspection report commented very favorably on this system. So good communication matters, but I have learnt that the marketing of schools is not only about a good prospectus or an accessible website, but intrinsically about the advocacy of existing parents and pupils; they need to feel proud of what they are a part of and confident to tell everyone about it, as were the girls who showed me around Leicester High. Important too is the development of really strong relationships with local feeder schools and tempting the potential 'first-time buyers' of independent education, those who can afford it but hadn't considered it. As head I would expect to be very active in this field to maintain numbers on roll and a balanced yet diverse intake.



6) Say what else you bring

I am a Chair of Governors of a school. I am also an examiner for a major awarding body at GCSE with responsibility for setting papers and managing teams of examiners. My experience in these areas means that I have close first hand current experience of governance, school-level budgeting, effective policy making and accountability in two other organisations. For me good budgeting is simply about ensuring that a school lives within its means and that at every level we assure best value.

7) Rallying-cry ending on a positive note

It is no easy task to summarise a whole career in two pages, but I hope that I have given you a flavour of who I am, my background and what I can offer to build further on the outstanding work of XXXX School. I will end where I started by saying what a great school I think you have and that it is one which I would be proud and honoured to serve.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Name in full

STRATEGIC VS OPERATIONAL

Strategic objectives

Strategic objectives are long-term organisational goals that help to convert a mission statement from a broad vision into more specific plans and projects. They set the major benchmarks for success and are designed to be measurable, specific and realistic translations of the mission statement that can be used by management to guide decision-making. Strategic objectives are usually developed as a part of a two- to four-year plan that identifies key strengths and weaknesses and sets out the specific expectations that will allow the company or organisation to achieve its more broad-based mission or vision statement.

Operational objectives

Operational objectives are daily, weekly or monthly project benchmarks that implement larger strategic objectives. Operational objectives, also called tactical objectives, are set out with strategic objectives in mind and provide a means for management and staff to break down a larger strategic goal into workable tasks. For example, achieving the strategic goal of a 25 percent increase in exam grades at C or above requires the completion of the operational objective to develop and execute an effective advertising strategy along with other operational objectives. As with strategic objectives, operational objectives also should be measurable and specific, though their focus is narrower.

Important differences

The most important difference between a strategic and an operational objective is its time frame; operational objectives are short-term goals, while strategic objectives are longer-term goals. Strategic and operational objectives also function differently in practice as strategic objectives are still usually too broad to make sense as a specific set of daily tasks or weekly projects. Operational objectives, on the other hand, are specific and short term enough to be considered usable in everyday time and asset allocation.

Relationship between Strategy and Operations

Even though strategic and operational objectives are substantially different, it is important to recognise that they are closely related. An organisation is unlikely to achieve a strategic objective if it fails to effectively translate it into workable operational objectives. At the same time, operational objectives will lack cohesion with each other and with the overall organisational mission if they are not designed to affect the achievement of strategic objectives. Put simply, strategic objectives only become useful when translated into operational objectives and operational objectives are only effective when designed to serve a strategic objective.

THE OPERATIONAL ROLE

Communication

A school can be a challenging environment, particularly when communication lines between teachers and other staff and senior leaders are not running smoothly. It is vital for communication to begin from upper management and filter through to each employee so that people feel safe, comfortable, motivated, and clear in their goals when they are at work. Poor communication is the easiest way for a school to lose sight of what it can achieve. Poor communication often results in people being unmotivated and unhappy, which shows when they deal with students, parent and each other. The best way to increase positivity is to have a happy workforce, and communication is the key to achieving that.

Teacher Morale:

The biggest side effect of poor workplace communication is that teacher morale will slowly decrease to a point when they no longer care about the school. They will still go about their jobs, but they will only do the minimum required. Extra effort and enthusiasm will not be on display, which will impact the results from their work. If this atmosphere spreads to the children the school will decline, and the root of this is poor leadership.

Clear Goals:

A school must have clear goals when it comes to the short and long term. Such goals can only be accomplished if everyone is working towards them in an enthusiastic, dedicated and professional manner. With clear communication, any realistic goal is achievable. All teachers and support staff are aware of what their leaders want and what the potential rewards are. This motivates them to do a better job and allows them to focus their energy in a certain direction. On the flipside, uncertainty about what needs to be done just leads to poor performances.

Mistakes happen:

Most errors come from a lack of understanding, rather than neglect. A lack of understanding stems from a lack of communication. If an member of staff does not understand instructions, it is likely that they will perform their task incorrectly. Instructions must always be clear, concise and logical. Employees must be encouraged to ask their line-managers if they do not understand something, and when mistakes are made a good manager deals with the situation first and the person second. This creates open lines of communication and helps ensure that misunderstandings do not take place.

A no-blame culture

Increasingly good leadership and management consciously adopts a no-blame culture to mistakes. It is often better to accept that mistakes happen, know about them sooner and sort them out than create a culture where staff are anxious and will react by covering up their perceived failings. And remember that many failings are failures of leadership because organisational goals are unclear, time is poorly managed and staff are mis-employed.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

1. Self-awareness

If you're self-aware, you always know how you feel, and you know how your emotions and your actions can affect the people around you. Being self-aware when you're in a leadership position also means having a clear picture of your strengths and weaknesses , and it means behaving with humility.

So, what can you do to improve your self-awareness?

Keep a journal – Journals help you improve your self-awareness. If you spend just a few minutes each day writing down your thoughts, this can move you to a higher degree of self-awareness.

Slow down – When you experience anger or other strong emotions, slow down to examine why. Remember, no matter what the situation, you can always choose how you react to it.

2. Self-regulation

Leaders who regulate themselves effectively rarely verbally attack others, make rushed or emotional decisions, stereotype people, or compromise their values. Self-regulation is all about staying in control.

This element of emotional intelligence, according to Daniel Goleman, also covers a leader's flexibility and commitment to personal accountability.

So, how can you improve your ability to self-regulate?

Know your values – Do you have a clear idea of where you absolutely will not compromise? Do you know what values are most important to you? Spend some time examining your "code of ethics." If you know what's most important to you, then you probably won't have to think twice when you face a moral or ethical decision – you'll make the right choice.

Hold yourself accountable – If you tend to blame others when something goes wrong, stop. Make a commitment to admit to your mistakes and to face the consequences, whatever they are. You'll probably sleep better at night, and you'll quickly earn the respect of those around you.

Practice being calm – The next time you're in a challenging situation, be very aware of how you act. Do you relieve your stress by shouting at someone else? Practice deep-breathing exercises to calm yourself. Also, try to write down all of the negative things you want to say, and then rip it up and throw it away. Expressing these emotions on paper (and not showing them to anyone!) is better than speaking them aloud to your team. What's more, this helps you challenge your reactions to ensure that they're fair!



3. Motivation

Self-motivated leaders work consistently toward their goals, and they have extremely high standards for the quality of their work.

How can you improve your motivation?

Re-examine why you're doing your job – It's easy to forget what you really love about your career. So, take some time to remember why you wanted this job. If you're unhappy in your role and you're struggling to remember why you wanted it, try the Five Whys technique to find the root of the problem. Starting at the root often helps you look at your situation in a new way.

And make sure that your goal statements are fresh and energising.

Know where you stand – Determine how motivated you are to lead. Be hopeful and find something good – Motivated leaders are usually optimistic, no matter what problems they face. Adopting this mindset might take practice, but it's well worth the effort.

Every time you face a challenge, or even a failure, try to find at least one good thing about the situation. It might be something small, like a new contact, or something with long-term effects, like an important lesson learned. But there's almost always something positive, if you look for it.

4. Empathy

For leaders, having empathy is critical to managing a successful team or organisation. Leaders with empathy have the ability to put themselves in someone else's situation. They help develop the people on their team, challenge others who are acting unfairly, give constructive feedback, and listen to those who need it.

If you want to earn the respect and loyalty of your team, then show them you care by being empathic.

How can you improve your empathy?

Put yourself in someone else's position – It's easy to support your own point of view. After all, it's yours! But take the time to look at situations from other people's perspectives.

Pay attention to body language – Perhaps when you listen to someone, you cross your arms, move your feet back and forth, or bite your lip. This body language tells others how you really feel about a situation, and the message you're giving isn't positive! Learning to read body language can be a real asset in a leadership role, because you'll be better able to determine how someone truly feels. This gives you the opportunity to respond appropriately.



Respond to feelings – You ask a teacher to work late – again. And although he agrees, you can hear the disappointment in his voice. So, respond by addressing his feelings. Tell him you appreciate how willing he is to work extra hours, and that you're just as frustrated about working late. If possible, figure out a way for future late nights to be less of an issue (for example, give him next Monday morning off if he has no lessons).

5. Social skills

Leaders who do well in the social skills element of emotional intelligence are great communicators. They're just as open to hearing bad news as good news, and they're expert at getting their team to support them and be excited about a new mission or project.

Leaders who have good social skills are also good at managing change and resolving conflicts diplomatically. They're rarely satisfied with leaving things as they are, but they don't sit back and make everyone else do the work: They set an example with their own behaviour.

So, how can you build social skills?

Learn conflict resolution – School Leaders must know how to resolve conflicts between their team members, students or parents. Learning conflict resolution skills is vital if you want to succeed.

Key Points

To be effective, leaders must have a solid understanding of how their emotions and actions affect the people around them. The better a leader relates to and works with others, the more successful he or she will be.

Take the time to work on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Working on these areas will help you excel in the future!



