

2008
SUMMIT - SUMMIT

Greymark Inc.

Competing Successfully in Government of Canada IT Staffing Competitions



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Good afternoon everyone. The theme for this Summit is *“Achieving New Heights – A New Personal Best”*. I am here today to talk about one of the most important aspects of the public service – staffing. I want to help each of you achieve a new personal best within Government of Canada IT Staffing Competitions.

I am an IT consultant. I am not an HR advisor, and I don't pretend to be. I work together with clients and HR advisors when assisting with competitions. I speak here today on the basis of my experience with government competitions. My interest in this business is to develop instruments that help my clients make their competitions more effective. I am here now to help you demonstrate to Assessment Boards that you meet, or exceed the criteria that they have specified for the position.

As a consultant involved in many staffing processes across government over the last several years, I have seen the process from the management perspective, and I see many of the same errors or omissions being repeated. If I can help to make the process better and increase your chances for success I will have succeeded in my mission. I believe that more coaching style seminars and workshops will help to improve your chances even more.

Many people and many statements have made that you are the future of the Public Service and that you are needed more than ever because of the large number of “baby boomers” who are retiring now and in the near future. Many of you may believe that you are ready to move up, or to move into the public service if you are from the outside. The government operates a competitive staffing process that is based on fairness, openness and transparency. The more that you know about that process, the better chance you have to succeed within it.



Agenda



- An Overview of the Process
- How to Respond to the Evaluation Instruments
 - Candidate Submission
 - The Written Exam
 - The Oral Interview
 - The Reference Check
- Management Expectations
- The Informal Discussion
- Preparing Yourself to Move Up
- Questions

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First, we will have a quick overview of the standard competitive process.

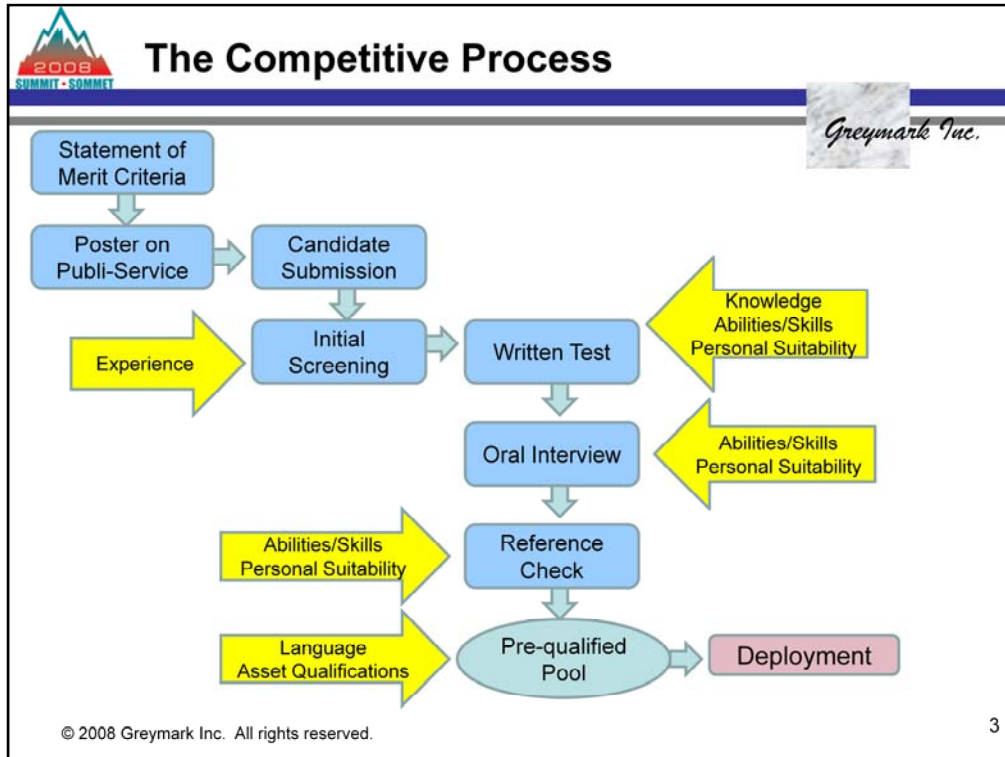
Next, I want to focus on how to respond to the evaluation instruments at each of the steps within the process. I will attempt to address the main items in the process. I am not attempting to define a standard process here, as each Department may have variances as to how and when they ask for information from you.

Then I want to talk to you about Management Expectations, to give you some guidelines as to what Assessment Boards are generally looking for from you as you compete at each classification level within the IT arena.

I also think it is important that you understand the informal Discussion and how to gain from it.

If your ambition is to move up the ranks of the Public Service you will need a strategy and plan to get yourself there. My intention here is to provide you with some things to consider as you prepare your plan.

Finally, we will reserve a few minutes for your questions.



This is an overview of the competitive process. The arrows in yellow show what criteria categories will typically be evaluated at each stage. You must receive a pass mark on each and every one of the essential criteria – any criteria not passed will eliminate you from the competition.

Once the Assessment Board has developed the Statement of Merit Criteria, that information is added to the poster for the position(s) and posted on the Publi-Service website. The SOMC will separate the Essential Qualifications from the Asset Qualifications. Essential Qualifications contain a set of criteria that are mandatory for you to qualify for the position. Asset Qualifications are a set of criteria that can be used to decide who is the “best fit” for a position, utilizing one or more of the criteria to evaluate for this purpose.

When you submit your information to the competition, it is then screened to confirm that your experiences meet the criteria specified in the SOMC. Essential Experience criteria are all that is evaluated at this stage. You do not need to respond to all of the Knowledge, Abilities and Skills, and Personal Suitability criteria at this stage. You may wish to include information that demonstrates that you meet the Asset Qualification to save the Board asking for that information later.

Once you have passed the Initial Screening, you will be notified and scheduled to take the written examination. In some competitions, the oral interview is conducted before the written exam. The written exam will typically test for all of the Knowledge criteria, plus some of the Abilities & Skills, and Personal Suitability criteria. All of the Knowledge criteria is usually tested to reduce the number of candidates who will have to be interviewed.

You will be notified of your results from the written test, and if you passed, you will be invited to the Oral Interview. The Oral Interview will typically test the criteria that remain in the Abilities and Skills and Personal Suitability categories.

You will now be notified if you passed the interview stage. The Board may choose at this time to conduct a Reference Check with the names you have provided. They will use a standard questionnaire that typically results in additional information being provided for the Abilities and Skills, and Personal Suitability categories. Some of the criteria may be left until this stage as the Board may feel this is the best way to evaluate that criteria. Some of the criteria may have already been evaluated and the Board is looking for additional information for evaluation of that criteria at this stage.

Once you have passed the Reference Check stage, your Language qualifications are assessed. As this process can take some time, many organizations start the Language checks during one of the other stages. You are then placed in the Pre-qualified pool with all the other successful candidates. The manager who will hire you has the right to use one, or several of the Asset Qualifications to assess for the candidate who is the “best fit” for the position.



Candidate Submission



Don't

- Don't use the "shotgun" approach to try to win staffing competitions.
- Don't cut and paste the poster criteria into your resume
- Don't respond to every criteria of the Statement of Merit Criteria
- Don't create a cover document that simply references pages of your resume.

Do

- Create a document that directly responds to the Essential Experience criteria of the poster, and demonstrate the experience in that document.
- Show how you meet the Asset Qualifications for the position you are applying for.

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Just sending out your resume to every competition without making sure that it meets all the Essential Experience criteria is a waste of time, especially for the Assessment Board who have to review each of the resumes.

When you cut and paste the Experience criteria from posters into your resume without adding any additional information, you should be screened out because you have not provided any context to the statement. You need to demonstrate that experience by listing the organizations where you gained that experience, and describe for each organization what you did to gain that experience. See our "Guide to Responding to Government of Canada Staffing Competitions" on the Greymark website.

You don't need to respond to every criteria on the SOMC. The only criteria that will be evaluated during the Initial Screening is the Education and Essential Experience criteria.

If you are going to create a cover document that lists all of the Essential Experience criteria from the poster, don't just put references to page numbers in your resume for each criteria. You will have provided no value to the evaluator as flipping back and forth in a resume is difficult to do and can be error prone.

Create a document that shows each of the Education criteria and the Essential Experience criteria. First, demonstrate that you meet the education criteria. This is often the first element that is evaluated, thus it is important to state it clearly. For each of the experience criteria provide a list of the organizations that you have worked for to gain that experience, and for each organization show the time period you were there and describe the work that you did there. See our "Guide to Responding to Government of Canada Staffing Competitions" on the Greymark website.

You may wish to demonstrate how you meet the Asset Qualifications in your submission. This will let the Assessment Board know at the outset that you meet the criteria that they may wish to use to fill the positions from the Pre-qualified pool. It's a good way to make a "good first impression". If you do not provide this information at this time, it will be asked for later in the process.



The Written Test

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- Prepare for the Knowledge, Abilities and Skills, and Personal Suitability Criteria (Competencies may replace Abilities & Skills and Personal Suitability).
- If the SOMC criteria that are to be evaluated for the test are provided, ensure that your responses demonstrate that you meet each of those criteria. Failing to meet any one of the criteria can eliminate you from the competition.
- Clearly define topics in terms of what they are and how they apply to the situation. Don't assume that just because you say ITIL, for example, that your audience knows what that is. Evaluators must score on what is provided in the test response, not on what they themselves know.

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The Written Test is similar to the Submission in that everything you are evaluated on is based on what you have written. We have not met you yet. We don't know how dynamic you are, and why you are a natural for this position. All we can see is what you have penned to paper. You need to make certain that what you have written meets the criteria for that evaluation stage.

The Written Test is usually based on some of the Knowledge, Abilities and Skills, and Personal Suitability criteria from the SOMC. As I have said here, Competencies may replace some of the criteria in some of the competitions that you apply for. This will be defined in the SOMC. There are four categories of competency (Management Excellence, Engagement, Strategic Thinking, and Values and Ethics). You will find the definitions on the Canada Public Service Agency website.

Most written tests will evaluate all of the Knowledge criteria. This is done simply to complete this entire category of criteria at one stage of the process. By testing all of the Knowledge criteria at this one stage, the Board can remove all candidates who do not meet each of these criteria. This is not intended to eliminate people from the competition. This approach reduces the number of interviews that the Board members have to attend. From a logistics and effort standpoint, this approach makes sense.

The criteria that you are to be evaluated on should be provided to you at the test. This can vary from Department to Department, so be prepared for all of the criteria mentioned in the first bullet to be tested. If the list of criteria is provided, ensure that you review each of the criteria as you formulate your answers to determine if you feel confident that you have met that criteria.

Be sure to demonstrate that you have addressed each subject clearly. For example, you may know what ITIL is and think that everyone does. I repeat, the evaluation team only knows what you write on that paper, so make sure it meets the need.

When you open the written test, look at the kind of test it is. If it has several questions, count the number of questions and divide your time according to the total amount of time available for the exam, giving yourself some review time. If the exam is a single scenario, then divide your time by the number of criteria from the SOMC that have to be met. Make sure that you get through all the questions and provide a good answer. You can then go back and add more to your answers based on the time that you have remaining.



The Oral Interview



- Prepare for the Abilities and Skills, and Personal Suitability Criteria **that remain to be evaluated** (Competencies may replace Abilities & Skills and Personal Suitability).
- If the SOMC criteria that are to be evaluated for the test are provided, ensure that your responses demonstrate that you meet each of those criteria. Failing to meet any one of the criteria can eliminate you from the competition.
- Structure your thoughts and then respond in a clear and concise manner. Don't ramble on. Try to determine how many questions there will be, and then try to allocate time to them accordingly.
- Be among friends.

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The Oral Interview usually follows the Written Test. Some Departments are changing this around as they want to meet you during the first evaluation after the screening as they believe that they will get gain a better understanding of your qualifications when they are face to face with you. This requires more time commitment from the Assessment Board members as the interviews take more time to attend and evaluate than the written test.

The Oral Interview will test the criteria from the SOMC that have not yet been evaluated. If there are nine Abilities and Skills on the SOMC and four were tested with the Written Test, five will probably be tested by the interview. The same goes for the Personal Suitability criteria. A list of the criteria that you are to be evaluated on should be provided to you at the outset of the interview. Keep those in front of you and make sure you feel confident that you have demonstrated that you meet each of the criteria before the interview is over.

I think a good question for an oral interview might be "If I followed you around for a day, how would I see your actions and your behaviour supporting and using the knowledge, the skills and abilities, the personal suitability factors, and the competencies for this competition?"

This is your opportunity to make a lasting impression upon the Assessment Board members who attend your interview. Be polite, while demonstrating your confidence in being able to meet their criteria, while answering each of their questions. These are the people who you are going to be working for when they hire you, so show them what kind of an employee you are going to be, what you bring to the position and the organization, how you communicate, and how you work with others to accomplish objectives successfully.

Know that when you come to an interview that you are among friends. These people need good people to work for them. To this point they know you as a good person, who could be a fit for the positions they need to fill. As in sports activities, the more you enjoy doing something, the more likely you are to succeed at it. This is the case with the interview. The more you enjoy talking to these people about the subjects they raise, the more likely you are to be the candidate they choose.



The Reference Check

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- Prior to giving reference names, check with each reference to ensure that they are willing to provide a reference for you, and don't be afraid to ask if it will be a good reference.
- If you are eliminated based on a reference check, find out which criteria and who provided the information. Then do your staff work to ask how you can improve so that reference will be improved for next time.



Management Expectations



Classification Level	Focus
CS-01	Technical
CS-02	Technical + Methods + Best Practices
CS-03	Technical + Methods + Best Practices + Management
CS-04	Management Capability + Methods + Best Practices
CS-05	Leadership + Methods + Best Practices

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I have labelled this slide Management Expectations. I will state my caveat that this is a high level view from my perspective. The SOMC that the Assessment Board issues will define the specific requirements for each position posted.

At the CS-01, you are the entry level position for the CS Category. Your focus will be on demonstrating your current technical skills and learning new ones, while getting to know the organization that you are working in.

At the CS-02 level, you now have good technical skills, you may need to learn more, you will learn more about the bigger picture of methods for carrying out your work and delivering services, and you will learn and implement best practices that help you contribute to making your organization better, and improve the services that you deliver, while understanding how others within the organization view and utilize these best practices.

At the CS-03 level you are now a leader and need to have supervisory and management skills that augment and complement the capabilities you have built up to date.

At the CS-04 level, you are now a manager responsible to deliver products and services, with the capability to have the management team and your clients assist you in the delivery of products and services with their participation and oversight, all while treating the people who work for you well, and harnessing their capabilities to work individually and in teams to accomplish the objectives and successfully deliver services.

At the CS-05 level, you are the equivalent of the entry level Executive category. You are looked upon for your ability to lead, and inspire others to accomplish the tasks that continue to improve the IT environment in which you work, and the services you deliver.



Management Expectations - Defined



Expectation		
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Languages➤ Software Tools➤ Operating Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Networks➤ Desktops➤ Hardware/Operations
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ SDLC➤ Project Management Methods and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Frameworks<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ EMF▪ CoBIT, etc.
Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ ITIL, CMMI, etc.	
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Mgmt. of Resources➤ Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Operations Mgmt.➤ Team Leader
Management Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The People Aspects➤ The Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Compliance/Oversight➤ Innovation
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The People Aspects➤ Ability to Inspire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Ability to Lead➤ Ability to Review

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I developed this table to give a bit more of a definition of each of the Management Expectations that I introduced on the previous slide. I am not going to spend any time on these definitions today as I will surely run out of time. The presentation will be available on the DPI website, and on the Greymark website where you can review these at your leisure.

Another good source of information regarding expectations is the Technical Competency Dictionary published by the Organization Readiness Office. The link for the document is: http://www.solutions.gc.ca/oro-bgc/comptech/comptech_e.pdf



The Informal Discussion

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- Your opportunity to find out why you were eliminated from a competition, at that point, and get advice on how you can improve for next time
- The discussion is not to add new information, but to discuss the information that you have already provided
- Prepare for the discussion by reviewing the guidelines for informal discussions published by the Canada Public Service Agency
- Approach the discussion in a positive manner and ask the questions that you think you need to ask
- Listen and learn about what you need to improve – then take action to do so

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The informal discussion is a new method of providing feedback as quickly as possible to you as a candidate following your elimination from a competition. To understand the intent of the Informal Discussion, see the “Tips for the Informal Discussion Process for Employees” at the following link:

http://www.psagency-agencefp.gc.ca/hrmm-mgrh/psma-lmfp/centre/features-divers/hrmw_amrh_tip_infodisc_conseils_e.asp

Approach this discussion in a positive fashion. It is your opportunity to find out why you were eliminated, and to get advice on how you can improve for next time.

Do not approach the discussion as an avenue to vent your frustration and complain about the competitive process. If you want to display how upset you are, you will be in the wrong meeting and the person who is performing the discussion should tell you that.

You do have the opportunity to discuss why you think that you met a certain criteria by discussing the material that you have provided for that stage of the competition. For example, if you have been screened out at the Submission stage, and know that you have provided the material necessary in your covering letter or resume, then have the discussion with the Board member(s) to understand their perspective of that information, and whether they are willing to entertain a change to your mark. Always approach this in a positive manner and listen to the response.



Preparing Yourself to Move Up

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- Don't wait for someone to tell you what to do – be proactive
- Have the desire to Learn
- Learn how to be effective at watching and listening
- Learn the Building Blocks of your profession
- Learn the Regulations, Policies, and Standards of your environment
- Learn how to be an effective Team Member
- Learn how to Manage
- Learn how to build Relationships
- Learn how to be Innovative, to improve, to review and adapt
- Learn how to get your ideas across and value feedback
- Learn from your mistakes
- Learn how to Inspire and Lead
- Learn how to Teach/Coach others

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As you prepare to move up the ranks in the IT arena, these are some of the things that I think you should consider when you are formulating your career strategy and plan.



My Question for You

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If you're not revolutionizing the way that your Department or Agency is doing business and utilizing technology . . .

What are you waiting for ?

You work within one of the most exciting functions in any organization, and we have only just begun to demonstrate the role that IT can play in the world around us. . . what an amazing future you have the opportunity to be part of!

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My Advice to You



Be a leader . . . Inspire others with your ideas and your commitment to improvement, and be a good person in your treatment of others.



Questions



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