

# Tips for Completing Competence-based Application Forms (Personal Branding)

What we mean by competence is “an appropriate skill, aptitude or ability that you have demonstrated”

**Q** - How do you *demonstrate* a competence on an Application Form?

**A** – By describing *specific* examples of times when you have demonstrated that competence

**Firstly** - get as much supporting information about the post – including the Job Description and Person Specification, and if the competences are not clearly defined then analyse them in detail. As yourself, “How the job will be performed from a skills perspective”.

**Then** – show how you *match* what is required. You should outline how your skills/knowledge/experience meet the requirements of the Job Description and Person Specification. You may draw on past employment and/or out of work activities but give *specific* examples of times when you have demonstrated the competences required through succinct achievement statements. If you need extra space for relevant information then continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Many competences are common across organisations – though they may be worded slightly differently. Here is a list of some of the most common:

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Customer Focus</b>                     | <b>Decision-making</b>    |
| <b>Results Orientation</b>                | <b>Problem Solving</b>    |
| <b>Team Working &amp; Team Leadership</b> | <b>Commercial Acumen</b>  |
| <b>Interpersonal Sensitivity</b>          | <b>Flexibility</b>        |
| <b>Diversity</b>                          | <b>Initiative</b>         |
| <b>Drive and Resilience</b>               | <b>Strategic Thinking</b> |

Behavioural Indicators often describe the underpinning activities in more detail and are usually expressed as positive and negative indicators as in the example below:

Effective(+)	Ineffective (-)
Demonstrates concern for the needs and expectations by asking probing questions to obtain a full understanding of these	Shows a lack of awareness or concern for the needs and expectations of customers
Uses information about the customer’s needs as the basis for problem solving and decision making	Fails to take into account customer needs as the basis for problem solving and making decisions
Gives high priority to addressing customer complaints	Fails to identify or successfully resolve customer complaints
Monitors service delivery and feedback and acts promptly on findings	Does not monitor service delivery
Consistently and proactively seeks ways to exceed customer needs and expectations, achieving a realistic solution and win/win situation	Fails to look beyond existing service provision

## Achievement Statements

Achievement statements clearly demonstrate your competences and how you have contributed to productivity and/or profitability of the organisation. They provide quantifiable and measurable evidence. They also suggest potential for the future.

Achievement statements *substantiate* what you say are your key skills and experience and these are critical to completing a competence-based application form.

### A structure for writing achievement statements – CAR

The components of a well-written achievement include:

- C**hallenge → What was the specific situation or problem?
- A**ctions → What did you do? How did you go about it?
- R**esults → What was the outcome?

Alternatively, you can use the **STAR** Model (Situation, Task, Action, Result).

Begin each achievement with a strong action word. For example '**Achieved...**', '**Delivered...**', '**Exceeded...**', etc. **Avoid weak words** and phrases such as: 'Helped to...', 'Was involved in...', 'Responsible for...'

Achievements should be presented in the past tense to demonstrate your track record and they describe what you have done with a quantifiable and measurable result.

- **Installed** new communication equipment in 20 vehicles as part of a team within a 2 week period. **Prepared** the vehicles by safely removing all the old equipment, **installed** the new equipment and **performed** fault finding diagnostics. **Mentored** less experienced members of the team to develop their skills and confidence. This resulted in the successful installation of the equipment in to all 20 vehicles 3 days ahead of schedule.
- **Identified** the need for new procedures in the tender and risk assessment processes. **Managed** and **produced** the project brief, project approach, the business case and risks assessment and **controlled** the tender selection process for the provision of 8000 all terrain vehicles. This was completed within timescale and resulted in a 5% saving against budget.
- **Reviewed** inventory control system and **identified** the need for revision to the existing procedures. **Devised, implemented** and **monitored** new procedures. This ensured the system was able to support high levels of short term demand by the use of intelligent provisioning.

Alternatively you can express the result/outcome first. For example:

Ensured the inventory control system was able to support high levels of short term demand by the use of intelligent provisioning. **Reviewed** inventory control system and **identified** the need for revision to the existing procedures. **Devised, implemented** and **monitored** new procedures.

**Achievements usually boil down to some key things:**



**Money:**

Employers are always looking for people who know how to **save** or **make** money.

Can you think of a time when you did this?

- What was the situation?
- How did you do it?
- What was the outcome?



**Time:**

Second only to money, time is important to every organisation. Was there an action you took that increased efficiency or saved time?

- What was the situation?
- How did you do it?
- What was the outcome?



**Making Improvements:**

Just because something has always been done a certain way, doesn't mean it is the best way to do it. Employers want people who can recognise areas for improvement. When have you worked out a better way to do something?

- What was the old way?
- How did you improve it?
- What were the results?



**Teamwork:**

This is one of the most marketable strengths. Employers want to know that employees can work well with others. What team projects or activities have you been involved with?

- What was your position or function on the team?
- How did you and the team work to solve a particular problem?
- What were the results?



**Adaptability:**

Employers need to know that you can handle change situations. Think of a time when you were called on to be flexible or adapt to a new situation.

- What was the change situation?
- How did you handle it?
- What were the results?

### SOME GENERAL COMPLETION TIPS

Competence-based Application forms may be sent in hard copy or you may be required to complete an online form.

- Try to get any supporting information – job description, person specification, departmental objectives etc.
- Read the form and read it again – make sure you understand exactly what they want. Follow completion instructions to the letter. In the case of an online form, print it off as we often miss important detail when reading information on screen
- If it is a hard copy, photocopy it and fill in this before transferring details to the final copy
- Include relevant and recent achievements (CAR) and match their needs! If it's an online form these would be your 'keywords'
- If it is a hard copy, take care with legibility, grammar and spelling, but also think about filling the space well with white space around clear paragraphs or bullets. Use a good quality black pen
- Use bullets to facilitate easy reading
- If it is an online form take care with grammar and spelling. If the fields allow, change the size to accommodate your information
- Never say “see enclosed CV” and leave a box blank
- Draft and redraft until you are satisfied it sells what you offer and get a trusted colleague to proof read – then edit as necessary
- File a copy the completed form
- Unless their instructions forbid it, accompany the form with a covering letter (or email)
- As you have been asked to complete this style of application form be prepared to answer questions on everything you have included

EXAMPLE COMPETENCE STYLE APPLICATION FORM

Application Number .....

Vacancy applied for:

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Forename(s)</b>
<b>Home telephone number</b>	<b>Work telephone number (if applicable)</b>
<b>Mobile telephone number</b>	<b>Email address</b>

Part 1            General: Briefly tell us about:

**Your key skills and experience**

*Look at the job advert and person specification: The employer wants to see evidence that you match what they are looking for with "real life" (not hypothetical) examples of where you have demonstrated the skills they are seeking – if you have done it in the past, then you can do it again in the future.*

**Your experience**

Name of Company	Position Held	Reason for Leaving

**Your qualifications**

Qualification/Training	Grade (if applicable)
<p><i>List the qualifications that you have that are relevant to the post – think about the order of importance that you are listing them if not directed to give most recent first. Do you have qualifications and training (possible courses you have attended that you may not have got a certificate for) that would be useful to the job but that are not necessarily being asked for?</i></p>	

**Part 2 Evidence of competence**

Give a recent, relevant example of the following:

**Leadership and decision-making**

*Key words here for all answers are **recent** and **relevant**, so make sure that the examples you give reflect this – Use the CAR Model – (C)hallenge, set the scene, state the (A)ction that you took demonstrating your leadership style and how you took appropriate effective decisions, give the (R)esult – did you save time or money?, did you improve a situation significantly?*

**Commercial acumen**

*Have you worked in a commercial capacity with outside agencies – can you name them? Managed a budget? - If so state how much. Can you demonstrate using the CAR Model your knowledge and experience of commercial operations?*

**Teamwork**

*Have you worked in a team environment? What were the circumstances and can you show your effectiveness in achieving results as part of a team? Was it UK based or overseas, what did YOU specifically do as part of the team? – You have the opportunity to also perhaps demonstrate working to tight deadlines and under pressure*

**Administration**

*Can you give evidence of report writing or keeping accurate records that are audited? Do you use computerised accounting systems and software packages? Can you also demonstrate your administrative experience coupled with planning and organising systems and managing others?*

**Part 3 References (at least two)**

*Make sure you let the referees that you are nominating in this section know that you are nominating them and let them know what the job is that you are applying for – then when they come to give you a reference they will be able to tailor the reference to reflect the experience that you have demonstrated while they have known you that matches the job requirements.*

**Thank you for completing this application form.**

Please sign and date in the box below and complete the separate Equal Opportunities sheet.

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge, the information given on this form is correct.

Signature	Date
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