MANSSA - Ab (Management Skills and Styles Assessment - Abridged)

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Completion: April 23, 2016 at 9:54 am

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Interview Guidelines

This introduction will provide information on:

1) How to use the interview questions that are provided to you in this document
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How to use the interview questions

The interview questions provided for each candidate are tailored to their scores on the assessment they were assigned. These interview questions can be asked directly, word for word, or used as a suggestion on the direction an interview should take. When deciding which interview questions to ask, we recommend that you:

- Complete a job analysis and job description that highlights exactly what you are looking for in a job candidate and a particular position. This will make the interviewing process much more efficient.
- Focus on traits and skills that were evaluated on the assessment that you consider very important and relevant to the job you are interviewing for. So, for example, if you are interviewing a sales candidate, you may feel that perhaps interview questions related to communication ability and confidence will provide more useful information than those related to a person's ability to be neat and meticulous.
- Use interview questions that will probe for more information, especially for candidates whose scores are in the extreme (either very high or very low). More information will follow about this particular aspect.

What to do for traits or skills where a candidate scores poorly

- DIG - If someone scores poorly, try to probe and learn more about why this is the case. You don't need to necessarily come right out and mention that the person scored poorly on conscientiousness, for example, and you want to know why. However, you may want to find out whether the person is aware of his or her limitation, whether he or she is working to improve it and what methods he or she is using to do so. The goal of the interview questions that have been tailored to poorer results is to determine if the person is proactively moving up the learning curve, rather than simply accepting the status quo.
- EMPATHIZE - Realize that there may be underlying reasons behind a person's poor score that may not necessarily reflect his or her actual aptitude or attitude. This is why you need to probe for more information. For example, a candidate may have been nervous while taking the assessment and wasn't paying close attention. He or she may be too modest about his/her skills, or has been told by others that they are not skilled in a certain area, and have therefore accepted this as a fact. Remember, pre-employment assessments mostly use a self-report method, which means that a person's perception of themselves, whether good or bad, may not be 100% accurate.
- DECIDE - Is the trait the person scored poorly on one that you feel can be developed or is it a deal breaker? If, after conducting a job analysis, you feel that there are certain key traits that you wont compromise on, and that a certain limitation will likely affect a person's performance overall, then he or she may not be the right candidate for the job.
- MIND THE GAP - You need to assess and evaluate the gap between the candidate's natural self and the requirements of the position. If the gap is too wide in too many areas, the candidate may be able to do the job in the short term, but adapting to a job that doesn't fit on a daily basis may be exhausting and frustrating, and can ultimately lead to higher turnover.

What to do for traits or skills where a candidate scores well

- CONFIRM - A person can be really good at talking the talk, as they say, but can they walk the walk? Don't take anything at face value. If a person claims to be really skilled in a certain area and to possess the noblest of traits, use the interview questions that ask them to provide real-life examples. This is where youll be able to separate the posers from the real stars.
- FIT - Look critically at your company's needs and the candidate's traits, needs, and preferences. Can you satisfy them? For example, if a person is highly motivated by mobility and traveling for work, can your company provide this perk? If your candidate is highly extroverted and loves working with people, does this work for the position he or she is applying for? Remember, aside from having the right skills for a job, a person has to have the right personality to fit with other workers, supervisors, and the department as a whole.
- LOOK FOR DISCREPANCIES - Some candidates will answer one way in an assessment, but be the total opposite in an interview in order to impress the interviewer. For example, if a candidate's test results reveal that he or she is highly motivated by money, status and recognition, but tells you in the interview that he/she is "so inspired by the idea of helping others and making the world a better place", don't be afraid to question this mismatch and find out what his or her real deal is.

General Interview Tips

The candidate...

- Don't be influenced by a person's nervousness. Interviews can be tough, especially for people who have been out of work for a while, or who have dealt with a lot of job rejections. A person may be very good with pressure and stress on the job - just not when it comes to interviews!
- Be aware of cultural differences. Some cultures don't "interview well"; certain people may not be comfortable bragging about their skills and will discount certain achievements, or simply won't show any emotion during the interview, which can be mistaken for aloofness and indifference.
- Beware of "yes" people. Better yet, avoid 'yes or no' questions altogether unless you are specifically asking about a person's competency level (for example, "Do you have a Cisco certification for expert level in Service Provider Operations?"). If a person tends to answer "yes" to all your interview questions, probe deeper with follow-up questions, such as "Why?", "Please elaborate." or "Can you give me an example?"
- Sometimes, people respond in a certain way based on a single memorable (and typically unpleasant) past experience. For instance, when asked about their willingness to do overtime, the candidate may balk and answer that they prefer not to, without elaborating. Upon probing, you might find out that in a previous job, employees were asked to do overtime several times per week and it nearly resulted in the candidates burnout. The candidate might have given a knee-jerk response to a touchy issue, even though he or she might be perfectly ok doing overtime occasionally. Probing for the candidate's point of reference is often revealing.

The interviewer…

- Clarify your perspective on what you're looking for in a candidate and what your pet peeves are from a strictly job related angle. Set aside personal perspectives and pet peeves. Yes, it would be great to have someone who is really sweet and friendly and reminds you of your best friend, but does she have the right skills, personality and attitudes for this particular job? Yes, it would be awful to have someone who hates

your favorite sports team and uses the word "dude" a lot, but is he a good fit for the job? Your own personal biases about what you like about a person in, say, a social context should not have an impact on your views in the professional world.

- Listen and pay attention. If you're too busy being the one doing the talking, you will miss out on some very important information, like subtle changes in body language when a person answers a question.
- Take charge of the direction of the interview. Some candidates are either so adept at redirecting a conversation and going on a tangent (perhaps to avoid answering something or to show off), or are simply clueless as to how talkative they are. While the candidate should be the one who is doing most of the talking, it is up to you to keep things on track and relevant.

The context...

- If you're hiring because of an immediate, short-term need (e.g. you need people with specific skills for a project that will last a few months), it may be better to focus on finding a candidate who can hit the ground running. Basically someone who has the skill criteria requirement, and who will require very little if any training. Less emphasis should be placed on finding someone who is the perfect personality match. This doesn't mean however, that you should ignore the fact that a highly skilled candidate also happens to have a really awful attitude. Find someone whose personality fits without getting too specific.
- If you're hiring for the long-term or as part of succession planning and have the time, resources and budget to train a person, you may want to place more focus on finding someone whose personality melds well with the people he or she will be working with, his or her supervisor, and the company's overall culture. Remember, skills can be developed through effective training - although you should look for someone who at least has the basic skill requirements and the underlying aptitudes for the job so that you have a good knowledge base to build on.
- If you're hiring someone who will be part of an existing team, make sure the team role he or she typically assumes fits the group. Hire for different team roles and according to the type of project they will work on. You don't want an entire group of devil's-advocate-type employees, for example. They'll keep things real but probably won't get anything done.

The references...

- References are a touchy issue. Some managers give them, some managers don't, some managers plead the 5th. If a manager simply states that he/she cannot provide references, probe a little deeper. Is it because of the company's policy, or is he/she simply not comfortable talking about this particular candidate? If its the latter, this in and of itself could be valuable information about someone.
- Remember, checking references should be done after an interview, so that you have a clearer idea of what the candidate is like. Use it as an opportunity to validate (or challenge) certain scores on a candidate's pre-employment assessment, especially when it comes to very high scores. And make sure to ask specific questions - you can get much more information from them (e.g. "Did he miss any deadlines?" "Has she ever had a conflict with a colleague?").
- Have your questions ready before calling a reference, and at most, take no more than 15 minutes of a person's time. Remember, really listen, approach the discussion with an open mind, and don't be afraid to ask for negative information or undesirable behavior about a candidate. Always ask whether the person would hire the candidate again.
- Be ready to reconsider your perception of the candidate. If you have almost made up your mind about the candidate (i.e. you really feel good about the hire), you may subconsciously pay selective attention to things that confirm your impression, and miss subtle cues about potential problems.

Avoid certain types of questions:

Illegal questions - These include:

- Age/Date of birth - Legal alternative: Are you over the age of 18?
- Place of birth/Citizenship - Legal alternative: Are you authorized to work in _____?
- Mother tongue - Legal alternative: Are you fluent in _____ ? (Remember, the language must be relevant to the job).
- Religious affiliation - If you are concerned about which holidays a person will likely need to take off as it relates to his or her religion, you can ask: What days are you available to work? Can you work all scheduled days?
- Relationship status - Legal alternative: Are you able to work overtime or to travel for work?
- Physical health or disabilities - unless it could affect a person's performance on the job - in which case you can only ask if a person is capable of doing certain tasks, like lifting 20lbs or more.
- Asking if the person has ever been arrested - Legal alternative: Have you ever been convicted of _____ ?
- Ethnicity.
- Sexual Orientation.
- Physical measurements, like weight and height.
- Social affiliation, club membership, or military service.

Leading questions - For example:

- "We consider punctuality extremely important. How often are you late?"
- "Here at XYZ Company, we believe strongly in such and such. Do you?"
- "Some people here really hate that they have to work overtime, even though it's part of the job. Do you mind working overtime?"

  In essence, don't tell your candidate what you want to hear. You're basically nudging them to answer a certain way, which may not reflect how they really feel, think, or behave.

Offbeat/Quirky questions - For example:

- "If you could be any animal, which one would you be?"
- "What's your favorite color?"
- "If you were chosen as the ambassador of Earth and sent to an alien planet, what is the first thing you'd say to the inhabitants?"

  While these questions could provide insight into how creative a candidate is and whether he or she can think on the spot, make sure that if you do ask these types of questions, know what youre looking for and what type of information you can glean from them.

Cliché questions - For example:

- "Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?"
- "What would you consider your biggest limitation?"
- "Why do you think we should hire you?"

Unless you plan to add a creative twist to these questions ("What would you consider your 3 biggest limitations?"), be prepared for some cliché answers. Remember, these are the most common questions, so candidates will likely be prepared for them and will give you a really well-rehearsed answer. Think about it - how often have your received answers like "I am a perfectionist/workaholic" when asking people to tell you about their greatest weakness?

Avoid cognitive biases:

- Primacy and recency effect - The first and last thing a person says in an interview are the statements that interviewers tend to remember the most and therefore, may place more weight on. This also extends to the first person you interview for a position and the last person.
- Similarity bias - Some interviewers may be drawn towards someone who is just like them, whether it's on a personal or professional level (although the former may be more likely). Strive to remain objective during an interview.
- Social comparison bias - In line with the Similarity bias above, some interviewers, whether consciously or not, may actually favor a candidate who doesnt compete with their own strengths. Perhaps there's an underlying fear that this person could take over their job, or outshine them in some way. Put biases and worries aside. It's your job to find the right person, and if this person is just like you, then you'll know exactly how well he or she will fit in. And you may well be praised for finding such a great candidate!
- Anchoring - This involves focusing on one piece of information to make a decision, rather than looking at the big picture. This can often happen when reviewing a person's results on a pre-employment test. Rather than focus on the one trait where a person did not score to your liking, look at his or her entire personality profile from a broader perspective. Overall, does this person have a strong potential to learn? Is this the type of person who can grow into a position? Look at the bigger picture.
- Negativity bias - It can be difficult to stay optimistic when every person you interview is just not up to snuff. Remember, you may have to evaluate many candidates before you find your best fit. Don't let a bad experience with one candidate color your attitude towards others.

Interview Questions

Comfort with Authority (score 100)

- Imagine that when you arrive to work one morning, there is a memo about inappropriate behavior on the part of one of your subordinates. You need to give him a formal reprimand. How do you feel about this?
- Provide an example of a time when you took charge of a difficult situation and were able to exercise your authority.
- Have you ever dealt with a particularly challenging employee who was difficult to work with? Describe the situation and how you resolved it.

Concentration (score 70)

- Can you describe a couple of situations in your current or most frequent positions where you faced a lot of distractions but were able to remain focused?
- What type of techniques do you use to keep your mind on a task despite the potential for distractions?

Coping Skills (score 70)

- Can you think of an example of a time when you were able to stay calm and collected even when under great pressure?
- Can you name some practical ways to manage a very heavy workload?
- Imagine that you have the opportunity to handle a new responsibility at work. The only catch is that it will add quite a bit of stress to your day. Would you take the opportunity, or choose not to accept it?

Decision-Making (score 90)

- Imagine that you are given three hours to make a major decision about how to proceed for a major project. How do you determine which path to take?
- Would your current or most recent employer be able to pinpoint examples when your decision-making ability allowed you to make a good decision when under pressure? If so, please share the situation.

Locus of Control (score 70)

- Describe some goals that you feel are in your power to achieve in the near future.
- What were some goals you thought you could achieve in your current or most recent position, but didn't. Why do you feel they were not achieved?
- Would you describe most of the mistakes you've made on the job as human error on your part, or a result of outside interference?

Optimism (score 93)

- Can you think of a few examples of when an optimistic attitude had a good impact on your performance at work?
- Can you pinpoint a few examples when you were perhaps too optimistic and failed to plan for the worst-case scenario?
- Imagine that you're waiting to hear about whether a major client is going to choose your company to provide a product or service. While waiting, would you most likely feel positive or have a more pessimistic attitude?

Perfectionism (Self-directed) (score 15)

- Describe your mindset when you make a serious mistake or fail. How do you feel? What are the thoughts running through your head?
- Do you feel that they standards you set for yourself are sufficiently high to challenge you?
- Do you think someone who is not a perfectionist should be a manager of other employees?

Self-Confidence (score 98)

- Do you think you are confident enough to instill confidence in subordinates? Why or why not?
- Can you think of an example of when strong self-confidence helped you achieve something you wanted to do, despite many obstacles?
- What steps will you take to ensure that your confidence as a manager stays solid, no matter what kind of obstacles you face?

Integrity (score 94)

- Describe an incident at work when you witnessed some questionable behavior on the part of a colleague. How did you deal with it? What were the consequences?
- Describe a time when you made a serious mistake at work. How did you go about resolving the issue?
- Have you ever experienced social pressure to ignore someone's questionable behavior on the job? If so, how did you deal with this situation?
- Have you ever experienced social pressure from colleagues to break a rule at work? If so, how did you deal with this situation?
- Do you feel that in some cases, dishonest acts at work can be rationalized (e.g. misreporting overtime hours in order to be able to pay bills)?
- Imagine a scenario where your boss is gone for the day, and your colleague needs to leave an hour early because his or her child is sick at school. Your colleague asks if you can punch out for him or her at the end of the day so that it looks like he/she did a full 8 hours. How would feel about this?
- Imagine that a colleague has managed to gain access to company personnel files. You would be able to find out how your performances have been rated, as well as how much other people in the company get paid. What would you do in this situation? What would you tell or do about your colleague?

Communication Skills (score 71)

- Can you pinpoint a few examples of when you were able to put yourself into someone else's shoes and really understand where he or she was coming from?
- Can you think of an example when good listening skills improved your performance at work?
- Think back to a situation when you had to communicate with someone very difficult, or had to deliver some very sensitive news. How did you go about doing so? How did your listener react?

Flexibility (score 83)

- Can you provide one or two examples of how being flexible helped you stand out in your current or most recent job?
- It is likely that as a manager, you will encounter differences in opinions from time to time with those you work with. How would you go about resolving such issues?
- Imagine that you have a really strong idea in mind about how to complete a major project. You've spent quite a bit of time deciding on how to proceed. Your manager comes in and suggests major changes be made. How do you feel about this, and how do you react?

Soft Skills (score 92)

- Imagine that your colleague needs help completing a project, and you are known to be talented in that area. Would he be comfortable approaching you for help? Do you find that people approach you frequently for help or ideas?
- Imagine that you are asked to work in a team for a major project, but normally, you work alone. How do you feel about having to work with others?
- We all face conflict at work sometimes - it is a fact of life. What steps do you take to ensure that conflicts are resolved effectively?
- Sometimes, people may take advantage of good-natured individuals. Can you think of examples in your work where others took advantage of you?

Perfectionism (Other directed) (score 21)

- Do you feel that you will be able to set the bar reasonably high for your employees? What would be the dangers of setting your expectations too low? What can you do to ensure that your workers are sufficiently challenged?
- Describe a situation when your subordinates greatly exceeded your expectations. Do you think it was because you set the bar too low, or were they simply exceptional?

Self-Monitoring (score 74)

- Can you share a time when you held yourself back from saying what was on your mind, when it simply was a better idea not to share?
- As a manager, it is essential to be able to handle employees with firmness but finesse as well, especially when offering criticism. What do you do to ensure that you get your point across to others in a tactful way?
- Imagine that you were hired to work for a new company which requires a great deal of socializing with clients and colleagues. Would you be willing to do what it takes to fit in with this group, even if they are very different from yourself?

Sensitivity to Social Cues (score 74)

- Can you identify a time when you prevented an unfortunate situation by successfully reading a client's emotions about a situation?
- Why should empathy be important for a manager to practice? In what types of work situations do you practice empathy?

Creativity (score 57)

- Do you feel it's essential for a manager to be innovative? Do you feel that you will able to keep your company fresh and come up with ideas to improve business? How will you do this?
- What are some of the dangers of a lack of creativity? What do you do to avoid them?
- Can you think of an example of a time when you faced a problem you had experienced before, but the regular solution you use didn't work? What did you do? If you've never experienced this, what would you do in this type of situation?
- In which type of situations do you feel it's best to stick with what you know rather than trying to do something original?

Drive (score 88)

- Would your past supervisors be able to think of a time when you set a good example for subordinates by working hard? If so, please elaborate.
- What are you short and long term goals, and how do you plan to achieve these objectives?
- How many hours a week do you usually put in at work?

Goal-Setting (score 86)

- Can you think of an example in your current or most recent position when you set a goal for your employees that was both challenging yet realistically achievable?
- Pinpoint some examples for us of some goals you set for yourself and how you achieved them.

Time Management (score 87)

- Share some examples of how your time management skills helped you juggle many tasks at work.
- Can you describe to us some of your time management techniques?
- How often do you complete assignments on or before the deadline?
- (Follow-up) Would your past supervisors agree with this assessment?

Vision (score 78)

- How important is it to you to have an overarching idea about the future plans for a department or organization? Why?
- Do you generally have long-term plans and goals in mind at work? Can you share some examples of these with us?
- Can you think of an example in your current or most recent position when you had a great idea, and other employees were excited to get on board with you?
- Why do you feel it's important to share your vision with employees?

Risk-Taking (score 73)

- Imagine that you are at work, and your colleagues are acting recklessly - to the extent that they are putting themselves and others in danger. How would you react in this situation?
- Imagine that you are in a meeting at work, and your boss asks for someone to take on a new task that none of you have done before. Do you volunteer, and why or why not?
- Share two examples from your past jobs when you took a risk and failed. Why do you think it didn't work out? What traits do you feel a manager requires in order to take smart, calculated risks?

Organizational Skills (score 94)

- Please share your strategies for staying organized.
- Imagine that you are asked to organize a multi-faceted project with many deadlines and important details. How would you handle all of these details?

Delegating (score 86)

- Describe an example of when you were able to overcome a huge workload and empower others by delegating.
- How do you determine which tasks to delegate and who to assign them to?

Giving Feedback (score 95)

- Can you describe a situation when you were able to help someone achieve his or her best work using constructive criticism?
- Can you describe the difference between constructive feedback and pure criticism?
- Not everyone takes feedback very well. What do you do, or would you do, in a situation where an employee really isn't taking your criticism well?

Rewarding Performance (score 90)

- When an employee completes a difficult task and does it well, how do you think management should respond?
- What type of rewards do you (or would you) use to reward employees?
- Why do you feel it's important to reward good performance?
- What do you feel are the disadvantages of rewarding employees? What are the advantages?

Coaching (score 87)

- Have you ever mentored a colleague or employee? Do you feel the results were fruitful? Why or why not?
- What do you think a manager requires in order to mentor others? Do you feel you possess these qualities? Can you give us examples of when you displayed these qualities?
- Why do you think it's important to act as a mentor to your employees?
- What type of employee do you think would benefit most from your mentoring?

Motivating (score 94)

- Imagine that you are managing a group of people who have been assigned a difficult long-term project. Do you feel that it's up to the team leader to keep everyone motivated? Why? If it fell upon you to motivate your team, how would go about doing so?
- Can you describe a time in your current or most recent position when you were able to motivate the people around you to complete a difficult task? What did you do to keep them motivated?
- What do you think a leader requires in order to motivate others? Do you feel you possess these qualities? Can you give us examples that show this?

Problem-Solving (score 78)

- Imagine that you are asked to complete a project at work with another colleague. The person you are working with wants to try a completely different tactic that you have never used before. How do you go about resolving this difference in opinion?
- What do you normally do when faced with a problem at work that you have never tackled before? Walk us through your problem-solving process.
- If there was one piece of advice about problem solving that you'd like to pass down to employees, what would it be?

Communicating Vision (score 84)

- When sharing your ideas for the company's future, what do you do to get people excited about your vision?
- What do you feel are the main reasons why employees just don't want to get on board with management's ideas? What would you do differently?

Collaboration (score 79)

- What do you do when an employee comes to you with suggestions on how to improve the company? For example, how to complete a certain task more efficiently?
- How do you feel about taking suggestions from your workers when it comes to how you complete your own tasks and projects?
- Can you describe a situation when you took the opinion of a colleague or subordinate into account and really benefited from it?
- Do you think it is a good idea for management to work closely with subordinates, or is it better for them to have separate tasks that rarely overlap? Support your opinion with examples.