

# Professional Development Through Assessment Center Preparation

This is a brief overview of the material in my book, "A Preparation Guide for the Assessment Center Method." You will benefit greatly by reading the book—but this will get you started.

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**Every day is an  
assessment center.**

# The Complete Picture



# **Two Components that are necessary for ratings above low to mid-range.**

## **Verbal skills**

The skill and ability of speaking and presenting in an excellent manner.

## **Knowledge and Judgment**

Know the work of the rank and know how to do the work in the most effective way.

If you understand  
assessment center concepts  
and the mechanics of producing one,  
you will automatically do better than you  
would have otherwise.

If you combine that with job knowledge  
and verbal skills you can do  
far better than otherwise.

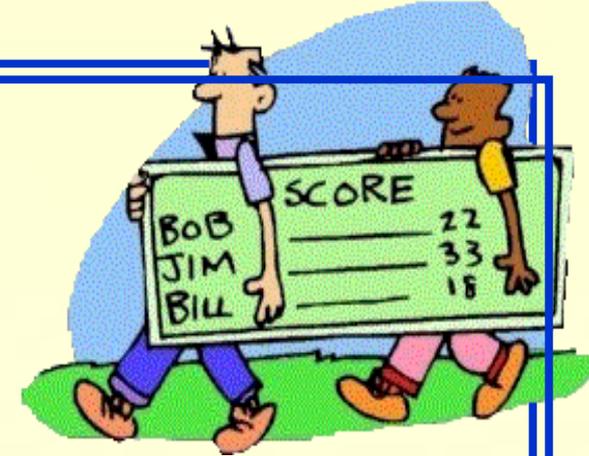
# **Definition of an Assessment Center**

**An assessment center is a process employing multiple techniques and multiple assessors to produce judgments regarding the extent to which a participant displays selected competencies.**

## The Assessment Center Method

An assessment center is a process employing multiple techniques (exercises) and multiple assessors (3-5) to produce judgments (ratings) regarding the extent (1-5, 1-7 or 1-10) to indicate the quality and quantity of behaviors to which a participant displays (Demonstrates through words, actions and writing) selected competencies. (Competencies, Traits, KSA areas, Dimensions that are required for effectiveness in the rank).

## How you obtain your Assessment Center score when there is a panel:



1. Assessors observe you and your work in an exercise.
2. They take notes about your key behaviors—both positive and negative.
3. They link the behaviors to the competency areas on the scoring sheet.

4. They decide in each area, the *degree to which the candidate demonstrated* each competency, based on the quantity and quality of positive and negative behaviors.

None or a very small amount: 0-2

A small amount: 3-4

A moderate (average) amount: 5-6

A better than average (very good) amount: 7-8

A high amount (excellent): 9

An exceptionally high amount—almost flawless: 10

## **The most frequently used exercises:**

1. Role-Play (Subordinate Counseling or Citizen Complaint/Citizen Concern).
2. Work Sample (In-Basket) with or without Verbal Justification.
3. Critical or Tactical Incident.
4. Structured Interview.
5. Resume Presentation.
6. Written Exercise.
6. Group Meeting (Leaderless Group).
7. Verbal Presentation.

## Stay focused on demonstrating competencies

- Each exercise or interview is designed to focus on 5-7 competency areas. You must provide observable behavior about those areas. Fortunately, it's the right way to do things! Also fortunately, whether you are told the competencies ahead of time or not...you can figure out what they are.

# The primary KSAA Areas (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, Attitudes)

Verbal and Written Communication

Interpersonal and Group Skills

Job Knowledge (Professional and Task Knowledge)

Mission-Orientation/Community Orientation

Composure/Command Presence

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

Planning/Organizing

Tactical Skills

Management and Supervisory Skills

Initiative/Proactivity

Development of Self and Others

Role-Readiness/Leadership

**5 of these to an exercise.  
What would be appropriate  
for your exercises?**

**These are where you get  
your ratings, so put your  
focus on gaining strong  
knowledge and skills.**

Final scores are the result of more than one or two good or bad behaviors in an exercise.

Example:

4 exercises X 5 dimensions each= 20 ratings

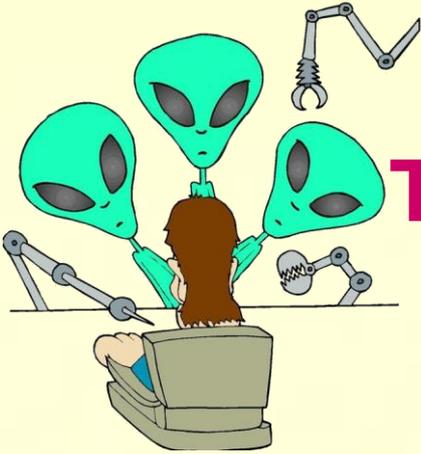
X 3 assessors= 60 “raw” KSA ratings for the entire assessment center.



# Your Assessors

Observers  
Evaluators  
Raters

They want you to be a star!



## **The human factor in assessing:**

1. Assessors vary in their knowledge and skills.
2. Assessors want to impress each other.
3. Assessors become alert when candidates are interesting and enjoyable.
4. Assessors appreciate inspiration.
5. Assessors are looking for note material (significant observable behaviors.)



**If you don't show it,  
they won't know it  
and they can't score it.**

**If you don't demonstrate it,  
the assessors can't evaluate it  
and rate it.**

To demonstrate competencies at a higher level and to gain higher ratings:

**Think expanded!**

# **1. Keep a micro and macro view in each exercise.**

What are the core issues?

What is the essential problem that must be handled?

What do you have to do first, next, next?

What details are important?

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What are contributing issues, surrounding issues, by-product issues, good-to-think-about issues?

## **2. Respond from high KSAA levels.**

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Attitudes.

**Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning**

The Knowledge domain (Includes ability)

The Skills domain

The Affective domain

# Higher level thinking

Create: Can develop a new item, approach, concept or response. Can adapt ideas of others.

Evaluate: Can critique it and identify strengths and need for improvement. Can teach others.

Analyze: Can break it down and compare and contrast it. Can help others understand it.

Apply: Use the knowledge appropriately.

Understand: Know and explain what it means.

Recall: Can state a fact or concept.

Consider each of those levels—do some research—and decide what would be above *the application level* for a wide range of topics you might encounter.

### **3. Give the sources of your KSAs**

How do you know how to handle this situation?

What resources have you/will you use?

What have you done to prepare yourself to handle issues such as this?

Let the assessors know you are not just making a lucky guess—you have knowledge and skills.

## **4. Make it real for the rank you seek and for your organization.**

### **BE THE RANK YOU SEEK!**

- Have your direct reports in your mind all the time and fulfill your role with them.
- Incorporate the reality of your organization and community: The mission statement, stats, people, problems, strengths, history, etc.

## **5. Use PACTSFID and the ACTION ARROWS**

Write your key thought organizers on your notes right away. Refer to them while preparing. Concentrate on the concepts on breaks.

Having structure will help you keep focused when an exercise might unnerve you for some reason. The two that follow are excellent in real-life and in an AC.

# ACTION ARROWS

Above in chain of command

Stats, Research,  
Budget, Technology.

Other govt.-All levels

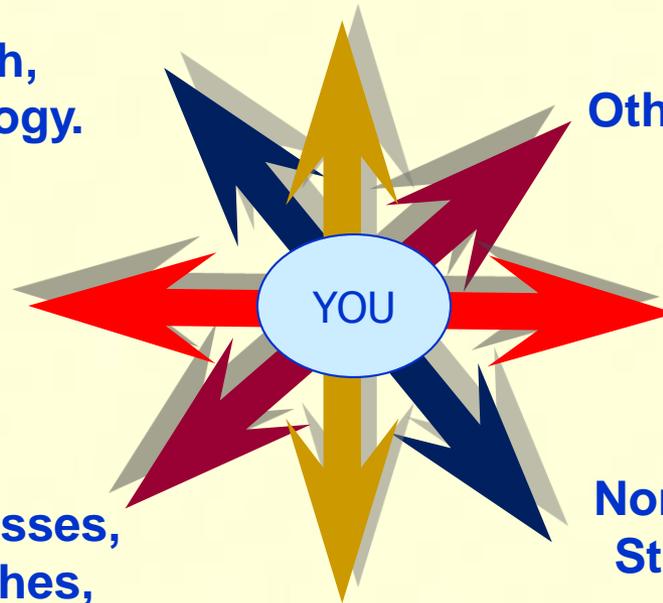
Peers outside  
section, other  
organizations

Peers  
on shift,  
unit,  
etc.

Businesses,  
churches,  
community groups.

Non-Sworn, Professional  
Staff, Specific Sections  
& Units. Network

Below in chain of  
command



# PACTSFID

**Problem Analysis** (Know what you're dealing with.)

**Considerations** (What will help you make your decision?

What are your requirements and limitations? What do you need to check or know about?)

**Training** (Opportunities, Requirements and Options.)

**Solution** (The best way and alternatives. Stay ready to change, adapt and be flexible.)

**Follow-up** (Wrap-up, make sure things stay OK, fulfill promises.)

**Inform** (Use Action Arrows to remind you)

**Document** (How must you/can you record this? Why?)

## NOTE:

PACTSFID can help you handle problems in an organized way, it is not a template for everything you do in your assessment center or work. However, it can be a reminder of several worthwhile activities in almost any situation—keep it in mind and use it if you can.

**Problem analysis: Demonstrating that you will work to understand a problem, question or scenario, rather than making assumptions or responding hastily.**

What is the significance of this for my rank and my organization?

Who or what could have caused it or contributed?

What issues are involved, in addition to the primary issues?

What are the potentials for this situation beyond the obvious?

What *exactly* am I being asked to do or decide about?

What more do I need to know to get started? What more will I need to know to make good decisions?

# Considerations

This is the Criteria you are using to help you decide. It shows thought and judgment.

What **MUST** you do?

What **CAN'T** you do?

What options do you have?

What are the potential results of your choices?

What are your reasons for the actions you are taking?

## **Other considerations:**

Effect on staffing, budget, other resources.

Interpersonal issues.

How it might be viewed by the community, either way.

Perception of others, the effect on others.

Precedent set by my actions.

Is this fair, appropriate, the best use of money, time, energy?

**Consider Training or lack of it as component of a problem, a future preventive measure, option or solution for every situation**

Training/Education comes at this point because it can be part of Problem Analysis and Considerations (although it is also often part of a solution.)

Consider every format: Briefings, written, classroom, informal, formal, one-on-one, etc.

Look for ways it could be beneficial to officers, you and other sergeants, other ranks, or citizens—children to adults.

Use your experiences as a trainer or teacher in any setting to discuss the value of training.

## **A Solution** doesn't have to be perfect or even likely to happen in real life...

But, it should:

- Be plausible and generally possible.
- Focus on taking care of core issues, problems, concerns or questions.
- Be realistic for your rank, your role in the hierarchy, organizational requirements, staffing, budget and time, etc.

**FOLLOW-UP** to ensure that:

The plan or the action is being implemented.

The problem is no longer occurring.

To inspect and commend or re-direct.

\*Say or write that you will follow up,  
and be specific about how, when and how  
you will remember. (Note to your planner,  
PDA or calendar.)

# Keep people **INFORMED!**

Think of informing as communicating, before, during and after situations.

Or, think about regular communications for each one of the **ACTION ARROWS**.

State how will you inform and when.

# **DOCUMENT** formally or informally-know the requirements.

Make a record

Document

Send an email

Write a memo

Save a copy

Create a file

Create a computer file



# **Make full use of the organizing and calendar methods you have available.**

Daily Planner (Paper or Electronic)

Outlook

Email

Computer files and folders

Hard copy files and folders

Technology

Charts and calendars posted in your workspace

Show that you have the ability to find information and use it quickly—and that you've planned ahead to ensure you DO have the information you need.

## **Think EXPANDED: Think beyond your first ideas**

- Gain and use experiences in varied and challenging environments.
- Read, discuss, observe, research, study.
- Introspective thinking to determine:
  - How your opinions are different or the same.
  - What your experiences and study indicate about the topic.
  - How your experiences and study will affect your organization and your work in your new role.
  - What you think others need to know or do about what you've learned.

# The Exercises Are Your Friends!

“What competencies and traits was this designed to let me demonstrate?”

Don't just *do* the exercises, *use* the exercises.

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Best wishes!

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