



Applicant _____
Interviewer _____
Date _____

Topgrading® Interview Guide (Formerly CIDS Guide)

Bradford D. Smart, Ph.D.

"There's something rare, something finer far,
something much more scarce than ability.
It's the ability to recognize ability."

Elbert Hubbard

This Guide seeks to provide you with *the* most accurate, most valid, insights when assessing internal talent and candidates to hire. Companies have achieved a record of 90% success hiring high performers when a tandem Topgrading Interview (two interviewers) is conducted, interviewers have been trained in the Topgrading Interview techniques, and this guide is used.

Maximum benefits in using this Topgrading Interview Guide® can be achieved through applying the principles stated in the book:

Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win By Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping A Players (Dr. Bradford D. Smart, author; Portfolio Penguin Putnam, 2005)

This Guide is intended to make the interviewer's job easier. It is a comprehensive, chronological "road map," providing plenty of space to record responses. In case you need more space, have a pad of paper handy. Experience has shown the following guidelines to be helpful when interviewing selection candidates:

1. Review the candidate's **Topgrading Career History Form** (or **Self-Administered Topgrading Interview Guide**) and **résumé**.
2. Be sure that the **Job Scorecard, including accountabilities and other competencies**, are clear to you and the team the successful candidate will work with.
3. **Review this Guide** prior to the interview, in order to refresh your memory regarding the sequence and wording of questions, for a smoother interview.
4. Use a **tandem** (two-interviewer) approach.

A tandem interview is more valid than a solo interview, unless the Topgrading interviewer is highly experienced.

5. After a couple of minutes building rapport, give the interviewee an idea of the expected time frame (3 hours?) and then **sell** the person on being open and honest. For an external candidate for hire, you might state **purposes** such as to:
 - "Review your **background, interests, and goals** to see if there is a good fit with the position and opportunities here."
 - "Determine some ways to assure **smooth onboarding**, should you join us."
 - "Get some ideas regarding what you and we can do to maximize your **long-range fulfillment and contributions**."
 - "Tell you more about the **career opportunities** we have to offer and answer any questions you have."
 - "**Understand your career history**, which will be thoroughly verified in **reference checks** we'll ask *you* to arrange with a minimum of all bosses you've had in the past ten years."
6. Following the Topgrading Interview:
 - **Review** the completed Guide.
 - **Write comments** about each competency on the last three pages of this Guide, or on a Candidate Assessment Scorecard.
 - **Make ratings** of the competencies.
7. **Ask candidates to arrange reference calls** with bosses in the past decade. Knowing this requirement in advance of interviews, candidates will be more honest in responding to questions.
8. **Write a brief report**—an Executive Summary, followed by a list of Strengths, Weak Points, and Developmental Recommendations. High performers hired or promoted will want feedback and development recommendations from the interviewers.

COLLEGE

So that I can get a good feel for your background, first your education and then work experience, let's *briefly* go back to your college days and come forward chronologically, up to the present. Then we'll talk about your plans and goals for the future.

Note to Interviewers: Start with college or first full-time job, whichever came first. Experienced topgrading interviewers start with high school (similar questions to college). If you feel comfortable starting with high school do it, but if you are not comfortable with it, don't.

1. I see from the Career History Form (or Self-Administered Topgrading Interview Guide) that you **attended** _____ (college). Would you please expand on the information provided and give me a **brief rundown** on your college years, particularly events that might have affected later career decisions. We'd be interested in knowing about **work experiences**, what the school was like, what you were like back then, the curriculum, activities, how you did in school, high and low points, and so forth. (Ask the following questions to obtain complete information not included in responses to the general "smorgasbord" question.)
2. Give us a feel for what kind of **school** it was (if necessary, specify large/small, rural/urban, cliquish, etc.), and generally, what your college years were like.

3. What was your **major**? (change majors?) _____
4. What school **activities** did you take part in? (Note activities listed on Topgrading Career History Form, and get elaboration.)

5. What **grades** did you receive, what was your class standing, and what were your study habits like? (Confirm data on Topgrading Career History Form.)

GPA: _____ / _____ (scale)

Study Habits _____

6. What **people** or events during college might have had an influence on your career? _____

7. Were there any class **offices, awards, honors, or special achievements** during your college years? (Note Topgrading Career History Form or Self-Administered Topgrading Interview Guide responses, and get elaboration.) _____

8. What were **high points** during your college years? (Look for leadership, resourcefulness, and particularly what competencies the interviewee exhibits *now* while discussing those years.) _____

9. What were **low points, or least enjoyable occurrences**, during your college years? (Again, what happened back then is only important in relation to what is revealed about the interviewee *now*.) _____

10. Give us a feel for any **jobs** you held during college—the types of jobs, whether they were during the school year or summer, hours worked, and any high or low points associated with them. (Don't spend much time on these jobs, but look for indications of extraordinary resourcefulness, motivation, etc.; if the person did not work during the summer, ask how the summer months were spent.) _____

11. (TRANSITION QUESTION) What were your **career thoughts** toward the end of college? _____

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Note: If graduate school occurred later in the interviewee's life, complete this section later. Stay in chronological order.

1. _____ 2. _____
School Degree

3. **Why pursue this school** and degree _____

4. **High Points** _____

5. **Low Points** _____

6. **Work Experiences:**
a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

7. **Career Thoughts/Opportunities** _____

WORK HISTORY

Now we would like you to tell us about your work history. There are a lot of things we would like to know about each position. Let me tell you what these things are now, so we won't have to interrupt you so often. We already have some of this information from your Topgrading Career History Form (or Self-Administered Topgrading Interview Guide) and previous discussions. Of course we need to know the **employer, location, dates** of employment, your **titles**, and **salary** history. We would also be interested in knowing what your **expectations** were for each job, your **responsibilities/accountabilities**, what you **found** upon entering the job, what major **challenges** you faced and how they were handled. What were your most significant **accomplishments** as well as **mistakes**, and what were the **most enjoyable** and **least enjoyable** aspects of each job? What was each **supervisor** like and what would you **guess** each really felt were your strengths and weak points? Finally, we would like to know the circumstances under which you **left** each position. Please go back and start with your **first full time job** and come forward chronologically.

Note: If the person worked for a single employer six years and had, say, three jobs of two years each with that employer, consider each one of those a *separate* position and complete a Work History Form on it. Add as many Work History Forms as needed so you can complete one for every full time job. The following is suggested wording for information requested on the Work History Form:

1. What was the name of the **employer, location**, and **dates** of employment? (Get a "feel" for the organization by asking about revenues, products/services, number of employees, etc.)
2. What was your job **title**?
3. What were the starting and final levels of **compensation**?
4. What were your **expectations** for the job?
5. What were your **responsibilities** and **accountabilities**?
6. What did you **find** when you arrived? What shape was the job in—talent, performance, resources, problems? What major **challenges** did you face?
7. What results were achieved in terms of **successes** and **accomplishments**? How were they achieved? (As time permits, get specifics, such as individual vs. shared accomplishments, barriers overcome, "bottom line" results, and impact on career—bonus, promotability, performance review.)
8. We all make **mistakes**—what would you say were mistakes or failures experienced in this job? If you could wind the clock back, what would you do differently? (As time permits, get specifics.)
9. All jobs seem to have their pluses and minuses; what were the **most enjoyable** or rewarding aspects of this job?
10. What were the **least enjoyable** aspects of the job?
11. (For management jobs) What sort of **talent** did you inherit (how many As, Bs, Cs)? What changes did you make, how, and how many As, Bs, and Cs did you end up with? (For most recent two jobs, get A, B, C ratings and strengths/weak points of each subordinate.) See pages 14-15 for Topgrading questions.
12. What **circumstances** contributed to your leaving? (Always probe for initially unstated reasons.)
13. What was your **supervisor's name** and title? **Where** is that person now? Would you be willing to arrange for us to talk with him/her? (Say you will want to talk with all supervisors in the past ten years.)
14. What is/was it like working for him/her and what were his/her **strengths** and **shortcomings** as a supervisor, from your point of view?
15. What is your **best guess** as to what (supervisor's name) honestly felt were/are your **strengths, weak points**, and **overall performance**?

NOTE: An easy transition to the next job can occur by simply determining employer/title/dates, and then asking **WHAT DID YOU DO, HOW DID YOU LIKE IT, AND HOW DID YOU DO?**

WORK HISTORY FORM 1

This form is for the first full time job (usually following college).

1. _____
Employer Starting date (mo./yr.) Final (mo./yr.)

Location Type of business

Description of company _____

2. Title _____
3. Salary (Starting) _____

Base	\$ _____
Bonus	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____

 Salary (Final) _____

Base	\$ _____
Bonus	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____

4. Expectations _____

5. Responsibilities/Accountabilities _____

6. "Found" (Major Challenges) _____

7. Successes/Accomplishments (How achieved?) _____

8. Failures/Mistakes (Why?) (Do differently?) _____

9. Most Enjoyable _____

10. Least Enjoyable _____

11. Talent _____

12. Reasons for Leaving _____

SUPERVISOR

13. _____
Supervisor's Name Title

Where Now Permission to Contact?

14. Appraisal of Supervisor

His/Her Strengths _____

His/Her Shortcomings _____

15. Best guess as to what he/she really felt at that time were **your** strengths, weak points, and overall performance rating:

STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

Overall Performance Rating _____

WORK HISTORY FORM 2

1. _____
 Employer Starting date (mo./yr.) Final (mo./yr.)

 Location Type of business

 Description of company _____

2. Title _____

3. Salary (Starting) _____ <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle; border: none;"> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Base</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Bonus</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Other</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> </table>	Base	\$		Bonus	\$		Other	\$		Salary (Final) _____	<table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle; border: none;"> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Base</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Bonus</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Other</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> </table>	Base	\$		Bonus	\$		Other	\$	
Base	\$																			
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Base	\$																			
Bonus	\$																			
Other	\$																			

4. Expectations _____

5. Responsibilities/Accountabilities _____

6. "Found" (Major Challenges) _____

7. Successes/Accomplishments (How achieved?) _____

8. Failures/Mistakes (Why?) (Do differently?) _____

9. Most Enjoyable _____

10. Least Enjoyable _____

11. Talent _____

12. Reasons for Leaving _____

SUPERVISOR

13. _____
 Supervisor's Name Title

_____ Where Now Permission to Contact?

14. Appraisal of Supervisor

His/Her Strengths _____

His/Her Shortcomings _____

15. Best guess as to what he/she really felt at that time were **your** strengths, weak points, and overall performance rating:

STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

Overall Performance Rating _____

WORK HISTORY FORM 3

1. _____
 Employer Starting date (mo./yr.) Final (mo./yr.)

 Location Type of business

 Description of company _____

2. Title _____

3. Salary (Starting) _____ [Base \$ _____ Bonus \$ _____ Other \$ _____]	Salary (Final) _____	[Base \$ _____ Bonus \$ _____ Other \$ _____]
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4. Expectations _____

5. Responsibilities/Accountabilities _____

6. "Found" (Major Challenges) _____

7. Successes/Accomplishments (How achieved?) _____

8. Failures/Mistakes (Why?) (Do differently?) _____

9. Most Enjoyable _____

10. Least Enjoyable _____

11. Talent _____

12. Reasons for Leaving _____

SUPERVISOR

13. _____
 Supervisor's Name Title

 Where Now Permission to Contact?

14. Appraisal of Supervisor
 His/Her Strengths _____
 His/Her Shortcomings _____

15. Best guess as to what he/she really felt at that time were **your** strengths, weak points, and overall performance rating:

STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

Overall Performance Rating _____

WORK HISTORY FORM 4

1. _____
 Employer Starting date (mo./yr.) Final (mo./yr.)

 Location Type of business

 Description of company _____

2. Title _____

3. Salary (Starting) _____ <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle; border: none;"> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Base</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Bonus</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Other</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> </table>	Base	\$		Bonus	\$		Other	\$		Salary (Final) _____	<table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle; border: none;"> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Base</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Bonus</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">Other</td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">\$</td><td style="border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></td></tr> </table>	Base	\$		Bonus	\$		Other	\$	
Base	\$																			
Bonus	\$																			
Other	\$																			
Base	\$																			
Bonus	\$																			
Other	\$																			

4. Expectations _____

5. Responsibilities/Accountabilities _____

6. "Found" (Major Challenges) _____

7. Successes/Accomplishments (How achieved?) _____

8. Failures/Mistakes (Why?) (Do differently?) _____

9. Most Enjoyable _____

10. Least Enjoyable _____

11. Talent _____

12. Reasons for Leaving _____

SUPERVISOR

13. _____
 Supervisor's Name Title

_____ Where Now Permission to Contact?

14. Appraisal of Supervisor

His/Her Strengths _____

His/Her Shortcomings _____

15. Best guess as to what he/she really felt at that time were **your** strengths, weak points, and overall performance rating:

STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

Overall Performance Rating _____

WORK HISTORY FORM 5

1. _____
 Employer Starting date (mo./yr.) Final (mo./yr.)

 Location Type of business

 Description of company _____

2. Title _____

3. Salary (Starting) _____	<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Base \$ _____ Bonus \$ _____ Other \$ _____ </div>	Salary (Final) _____	<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Base \$ _____ Bonus \$ _____ Other \$ _____ </div>	
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4. Expectations _____

5. Responsibilities/Accountabilities _____

6. "Found" (Major Challenges) _____

7. Successes/Accomplishments (How achieved?) _____

8. Failures/Mistakes (Why?) (Do differently?) _____

9. Most Enjoyable _____

10. Least Enjoyable _____

11. Talent _____

12. Reasons for Leaving _____

SUPERVISOR

13. _____
 Supervisor's Name Title

_____ Where Now Permission to Contact?

14. Appraisal of Supervisor

His/Her Strengths _____

His/Her Shortcomings _____

15. Best guess as to what he/she really felt at that time were **your** strengths, weak points, and overall performance rating:

STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

Overall Performance Rating _____

WORK HISTORY FORM 6

1. _____
Employer Starting date (mo./yr.) Final (mo./yr.)

Location Type of business

Description of company

2. Title _____
3. Salary (Starting) _____ Salary (Final) _____
 Base \$ _____ Base \$ _____
 Bonus \$ _____ Bonus \$ _____
 Other \$ _____ Other \$ _____

4. Expectations _____

5. Responsibilities/Accountabilities _____

6. "Found" (Major Challenges) _____

7. Successes/Accomplishments (How achieved?) _____

8. Failures/Mistakes (Why?) (Do differently?) _____

9. Most Enjoyable _____

10. Least Enjoyable _____

11. Talent _____

12. Reasons for Leaving _____

SUPERVISOR

13. _____
Supervisor's Name Title

Where Now Permission to Contact?

14. Appraisal of Supervisor

His/Her Strengths _____

His/Her Shortcomings _____

15. Best guess as to what he/she really felt at that time were **your** strengths, weak points, and overall performance rating:

STRENGTHS

WEAK POINTS

Overall Performance Rating _____

PLANS AND GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Let's discuss what you are looking for in your **next job**. (Note "Career Needs" section of Topgrading Career History Form.)

2. What are **other job possibilities**, and how do you feel about each one?

3. Describe your **ideal position** and what makes it ideal.

4. How does **this opportunity** square with your ideal position? What do you view as opportunities and advantages as well as risks and disadvantages in joining us?

Advantages _____

Disadvantages _____

SELF-APPRAISAL

1. We would like you to give us a thorough **self-appraisal**, beginning with what you consider your **strengths, assets**, things you **like about yourself**, and things you **do well**.

(Ask follow-up questions, and urge the person to continue. For example, you might say such things as “good,” “keep going,” “oh,” nod and ask questions such as: “What other strengths come to mind?” “What are some other things you do well?”

Obtain a list of strengths and then go back and ask the person to elaborate on what was meant by each strength listed—“conscientious,” “hard working,” or whatever.)

2. OK, let’s look at the other side of the ledger for a moment. What would you say are your **shortcomings, weak points, or areas for improvement?**

Be generous in your use of the pregnant pause here. Urge the person to list more shortcomings by saying such things as, “What else comes to mind?” “Keep going, you are doing fine,” or just smile, nod your head and wait. When the person has run out of shortcomings, you might ask questions such as: “What three things could you do that would most improve your overall effectiveness in the future?”

Obtain as long a list of negatives as you can with minimal interruptions on your part, and then go back and request clarification. (If you interrupt the individual for clarification on one, there might be so much time spent on that one negative that the individual will be very hesitant to acknowledge another one.)

SELF-APPRAISAL	
STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

1. How would you describe your **leadership philosophy** and **style**? _____

2. What would you suppose your **subordinates** feel are your strengths and shortcomings, from their points of view? What have 360 degree feedback surveys shown?

STRENGTHS	WEAK POINTS

3. In what ways might you want to **modify** your approach to dealing with subordinates? _____

TOPGRADING

4. Question 11 in each Work History Form addresses Topgrading. Ask question 11 for every management position, but ask the more complete topgrading questions in this section for the most **two** recent management jobs.

Present (or Most Recent) Position

When you began your present (or most recent) position:

- How many subordinates do (did) you have direct _____, and indirect? _____
- Of the direct reports you inherited, how many were in each of the following categories? (Explain definitions of A, B, C.)
A player (or A potential) _____ B player (without A potential) _____ C player (without A potential) _____

Describe the Most Valuable Direct Reports You **Inherited**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Describe the Least Valuable Direct Reports You **Inherited**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	_____				
2.	_____				
3.	_____				

Describe the Most Valuable Direct Reports You **Ended Up With**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	_____				
2.	_____				
3.	_____				

Describe the Least Valuable Direct Reports You **Ended Up With**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	_____				
2.	_____				
3.	_____				

Ask about all management actions with direct reports, accounting for how the “inherited team” became the “at the end” team. Ask how many people were recruited and **selected**, what **approaches** were used, how the people were **trained** and developed, how each **worked out** in the job, and for those who did not work out well, what **happened** with them (transferred to a job where successful, fired, or simply tolerated?). Determine the hiring “**batting average**” (how many good hires/promotions vs. mis-hires/mis-promotions). Also look for indications of **diversity**, positive versus negative **feedback** given, **empowerment**, fostering **teamwork**, and how people were/are held **accountable**. Most of all, look for success in packing the team with high performers and redeploying chronic underperformers.

Next Most Recent Position

When you began your present (or most recent) position:

- How many subordinates do (did) you have direct _____, and indirect? _____
- Of the direct reports you inherited, how many were in each of the following categories? (Explain definitions of A, B, C.)
 A player (or A potential) _____ B player (without A potential) _____ C player (without A potential) _____

Describe the Most Valuable Direct Reports You **Inherited**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
4.	<hr/>				
5.	<hr/>				
6.	<hr/>				

Describe the Least Valuable Direct Reports You **Inherited**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	<hr/>				
2.	<hr/>				
3.	<hr/>				

Describe the Most Valuable Direct Reports You **Ended Up With**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	<hr/>				
2.	<hr/>				
3.	<hr/>				

Describe the Least Valuable Direct Reports You **Ended Up With**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>A,B,C</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weak Points</u>
1.	<hr/>				
2.	<hr/>				
3.	<hr/>				

Ask about all management actions with direct reports, accounting for how the “inherited team” became the “at the end” team. Ask how many people were recruited and **selected**, what **approaches** were used, how the people were **trained** and developed, how each **worked out** in the job, and for those who did not work out well, what **happened** with them (transferred to a job where successful, fired, or simply tolerated?). Determine the hiring “**batting average**” (how many good hires/promotions vs. mis-hires/mis-promotions). Also look for indications of **diversity**, positive versus negative **feedback** given, **empowerment**, fostering **teamwork**, and how people were/are held **accountable**. Most of all, look for success in packing the team with high performers and redeploying chronic underperformers.

SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

The following questions are optional in the Topgrading Interview. Those with an asterisk (*) are usually asked, unless they have been answered in the chronological portion of the Topgrading Interview. Get specific examples, not general responses.

A general item format, applicable to *all* the Specific Competencies, is: "Please describe _____ and what specific examples can you cite?" Or, "If a 360 degree survey included an item on _____ how were you rated?"

These questions can also be used by interviewers performing one-hour competency-based interviews.

INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCIES

1. INTELLIGENCE

- a. Please describe your **learning ability**. _____

- b. Describe a **complex situation** in which you had to learn a lot, quickly. How did you go about learning, and how successful were the outcomes? _____

2. ANALYSIS SKILLS

- a. Please describe your **problem analysis** skills. _____

- b. Do people generally regard you as one who diligently pursues every **detail** or do you tend to be more **broad brush**? Why? _____

- c. What will references indicate are your style and overall effectiveness in "**sorting**" the wheat from the chaff? _____

- d. What **analytic approaches** and tools do you use? _____

- e. Please give me an example of **digging** more **deeply** for facts than what was asked of you. _____

3. JUDGMENT/DECISION MAKING

- * a. Please describe how your **decision-making** approach, when you are faced with difficult situations, has changed in recent years. Are you more decisive and quick, but sometimes too quick, or are you more thorough but sometimes too slow? Are you more intuitive or less? Do you involve more or fewer people in decisions? _____

- b. What are a couple of the **most difficult** or **challenging** decisions you have made in recent years? _____

c. What are a couple of the **best** and **worst** decisions you have made in the past two years? _____

d. What **maxims** do you live by? _____

4. CONCEPTUAL ABILITY

Are you more comfortable dealing with concrete, tangible, short-term, or more abstract, **conceptual** long-term issues? Please explain. _____

5. CREATIVITY

* a. How **creative** are you? What are the best examples of your creativity in processes, systems, methods, products, structure, or services? _____

b. Do you consider yourself a better **visionary** or implementer, and why? _____

6. STRATEGIC SKILLS

* a. In the past year, what specifically have you done in order to remain **knowledgeable** about the competitive environment, market and trade dynamics, products/services and technology trends, innovations, and patterns of consumer behavior? _____

b. Please describe your experience in **strategic planning**, including successful and unsuccessful approaches. (Determine the individual's contribution in team strategic efforts.) _____

c. Where do you predict that your (**industry/competitors/function**) is **going** in the next three years? What is the "**conventional wisdom**," and what are your own thoughts? _____

7. PRAGMATISM

Do you consider yourself a more **visionary** or more **pragmatic** thinker, and why? _____

8. RISK TAKING

What are the **biggest risks** you have taken in recent years? Include ones that have worked out well and not so well.

9. LEADING EDGE

* a. How have you copied, created, or applied **best practices**? _____

- b. What are the most important **lessons** you have learned in your career? (Get specifics with respect to when, where, what, etc.) _____

12. "TRACK RECORD"

Looking back in your career, what were your **most and least successful** jobs? _____

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

13. INTEGRITY

- * a. Describe a situation or two in which the pressures to **compromise your integrity** were the strongest you have ever felt. _____

- b. What are a couple of the most **courageous actions** or unpopular stands you have ever taken? _____

- c. When have you confronted **unethical behavior** or chosen to not say anything, in order to not rock the boat? _____

- d. Under what circumstances have you found it justifiable to **break a confidence**? _____

14. RESOURCEFULNESS

- * a. What actions would you take in the **first weeks**, should you join our organization? _____

- * b. What sorts of **obstacles** have you faced in your present/most recent job, and what did you do? (Look for passion and effectiveness in figuring how to surmount barriers to success.) _____

- c. What are examples of circumstances in which you were expected to do a certain thing and, on your own, went **beyond the call of duty**? _____

- d. Who have been your major **career influences**, and why? _____

- e. Are you better at **initiating** a lot of things or hammering out results for fewer things? (Get specifics.) _____

15. ORGANIZATION/PLANNING

- * a. How well **organized** are you; what do you do to be organized and what, if anything, do you feel you ought to do to be better organized? _____

- b. When was the last time **you missed a significant deadline**? _____

- c. Describe a **complex challenge** you have had coordinating a project. _____

- d. Are you better at **juggling** a number of priorities or projects simultaneously, or attacking few projects, one at a time? _____

- e. Everyone **procrastinates** at times. What are the kinds of things that you procrastinate on? _____

- f. How would you describe your **work habits**? _____

- g. If I were to talk with **administrative assistants** you have had during the past several years, how would they describe your strengths and weak points with respect to personal organization, communications, attention to detail and planning? _____

- h. Describe a situation that did **not go as well** as planned. What would you have done differently? _____

16. EXCELLENCE

Have you significantly "**raised the bar**" for yourself or others? Explain how you did it -- your approach, the problems encountered, the outcomes. _____

17. INDEPENDENCE

- a. Do you believe in asking for **forgiveness** rather than permission, or are you inclined to be sure your bosses are in full agreement before you act? _____

- b. How much **supervision** do you want or need? _____

18. STRESS MANAGEMENT

- * a. What sort of **mood swings** do you experience -- how high are the highs, how low are the lows, and why? _____

- * b. What do you do when **stressed out**? (Look for exercise, quiet periods, etc.) _____

- c. Describe yourself in terms of **emotional control**; what sorts of things irritate you the most or get you down? _____

- d. How many times have you "**lost your cool**" in the past couple of months? (Get specifics). _____

- e. Describe a situation in which you were the **most angry** you have been in years. _____

19. SELF-AWARENESS

- * a. Have you gotten any sort of systematic or regular **feedback** (360 degree or otherwise) from direct reports, clients, peers, supervisors, etc., and if so, what did you learn? _____

- b. How much **feedback** do you like to get from people you report to, and in what form (written, face to face)? _____

- c. What are the **biggest mistakes** you've made in the past (10) years, and what have you learned from them? _____

- d. What are your principal **developmental needs** and what are your plans to deal with them? _____

- e. What have been the most difficult **criticisms** for you to accept? _____

20. ADAPTABILITY

- * a. How have you **changed** during recent years? _____

- b. What sorts of **organization changes** have you found easiest and most difficult to accept? _____

- c. When have you been so firm people considered you **stubborn** or inflexible? _____

21. FIRST IMPRESSION

(Judge directly in interview).

What sort of **first impression** do you think you make at different levels in an organization? _____

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES

22. LIKABILITY

* a. When were you so **frustrated** you did not treat someone with respect? _____

b. How would you describe your **sense of humor**? _____

c. Tell me about a situation in which you were expected to work with a person you **disliked**. _____

23. LISTENING

Are you familiar with the term **active listening**? How would you define it? What would coworkers say regarding how often and how effectively you use active listening? _____

24. CUSTOMER FOCUS

a. If you were to arrange confidential **reference calls with some of your major clients/customers**, what is your best guess as to what they would generally agree are your strengths and areas for improvement? _____

b. Relate an example of your **partnering** with a client/customer—helping the client/customer to achieve its goals and financial results? _____

c. Give examples of your **going beyond** what was normally expected to enhance your company’s reputation or image. _____

d. Describe your methods of **diagnosing client/customer needs**. _____

e. What is your “track record” in both acquiring and **retaining clients/customers**? _____

e. Tell me about the most **frustrated or disappointed client/customer** you have had in recent years. _____

25. TEAM PLAYER

- a. What will reference checks disclose to be the common perception among **peers** regarding how much of a **team player** you are (working cooperatively, building others' confidence and self-esteem)? _____

- b. Describe the most **difficult person** with whom you have had to work. _____

- c. When have you **stood up** to a boss? _____

- d. Tell me about a situation in which you felt **others were wrong** and you were right. _____

26. ASSERTIVENESS

- a. How would you describe your level of **assertiveness**? _____

- b. When there is a **difference of opinion**, do you tend to confront people directly, indirectly, or tend to let the situation resolve itself? (Get specifics.) _____

- c. Please give a couple of recent specific examples in which you were **highly assertive**, one in which the outcome was favorable, and one where it wasn't. _____

27. COMMUNICATIONS—ORAL

- * a. How would you rate yourself in **public speaking**? If we had a video tape of your most recent presentation, what would we see? _____

- b. Describe the last time you put your "**foot in your mouth.**" _____

- c. How do you **communicate** with your organization? _____

28. COMMUNICATIONS—WRITTEN

How would you describe your **writing style** and effectiveness in comparison with others'? _____

29. POLITICAL SAVVY

- * a. Describe a couple of the most difficult, challenging, or frustrating company **political situations** you have faced.

- b. How aware are you of company **political forces** that may affect your performance? Please give a couple of examples of the most difficult political situations in which you have been involved, internally and with clients. _____

30. NEGOTIATION

Describe situations in which your **negotiation skills** proved effective and ineffective. _____

31. PERSUASION

- a. Describe a situation in which you were **most effective selling** an idea or yourself. _____

- b. Describe situations in which your **persuasion skills** proved ineffective. _____

MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

32. SELECTING A PLAYERS

- * a. What have your most **recent two teams** looked like (how many A (or potential), B, C players) and what changes were made?

- b. Explain your **selection process** in terms of job analysis, job scorecard, behavioral competencies, amount of structure to interviews, if there is an in-depth chronological interview, and how reference checks are done?

33. TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT

How would subordinates you have had in recent years describe your approaches to **training and developing** them? (Look for coaching, challenging assignments.) _____

34. GOAL SETTING

- a. How do you go about **establishing goals** for performance (bottom up, top down, or what ... and are they easy or "stretch")? _____

- b. How are your **expectations** communicated? _____

35. EMPOWERMENT

How “**hands-on**” a manager are you? (Get specifics.) _____

36. ACCOUNTABILITY

- * a. Tell me about the **performance management** system you now use. _____

- b. How effective have been your methods for **following up** on delegated assignments? _____

- c. Tell me about **accountability**. What happens when people fail to perform? _____

- d. What do you say or do when someone reporting to you has made a significant (serious, costly) **mistake**? _____

- e. Cite examples of your giving **negative feedback** to someone. _____

37. REDEPLOYING B/C PLAYERS

- * How many nonperformers have you **removed** in recent years? What approaches were used? (Look for regular, honest feedback, sincere training and development efforts, B/C players more apt to ask for a different job or quit than to be fired, and redeployment in months, not years.) _____

38. TEAM BUILDING

- a. Describe the level of teamwork you have experienced in recent years, with your direct reports. (Look for success creating teamwork, removing silos, minimizing harmful politics.) _____

- b. Which of your teams has been the **biggest disappointment** in terms of cohesiveness or effectiveness? _____

39. DIVERSITY

- * a. When have you actively confronted indications of **discrimination** or prejudicial behavior? _____

- b. How have you added to **diversity** (ethnic, cultural, racial, gender) in a work place? _____

- c. Have there been any successful **employment charges** against you (EEOC, sexual harassment, etc.)? _____

40. RUNNING MEETINGS

- *a. How **productive** are meetings you run? How could they become more productive? _____

- b. How would you describe your role in **meetings**—ones which you have called and those in which you have been a participant? _____

LEADERSHIP (Additional Competencies)

41. VISION

What is (was) your **vision** for your present (most recent) job? How was the vision developed? _____

42. CHANGE LEADERSHIP

- a. In what specific ways have you **changed an organization** the most (in terms of direction, results, policies)? _____

- b. What has been your approach to **communications** in changes? (Look for communicating like mad!) _____

43. INSPIRING “FOLLOWERSHIP”

- a. Are you a “**natural leader**?” If so, cite indications. _____

- b. Give examples of when people might have readily **followed** your lead and when they did not. _____

44. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- a. Describe a situation in which you actively **tore down walls** or barriers to teamwork. _____

- b. Describe situations in which you prevented or **resolved conflicts**. _____

- c. If two subordinates are **fighting**, what do you do? (Look for bringing them together now to resolve it.) _____

MOTIVATIONAL COMPETENCIES

45. ENERGY

- *a. How many **hours per week** have you worked, on the average, during the past year? _____

- b. What **motivates** you? _____

46. PASSION

- a. How would you rate yourself (and why) in **enthusiasm** and charisma? _____

- b. Describe the **pace** at which you work—fast, slow or moderate—and the circumstances under which it varies. _____

47. AMBITION (see Plans and Goals for the Future, p. 11)

Who have been recent **career influences**, and why? _____

48. COMPATIBILITY OF NEEDS

Is there anything we can do to **help you** if there is a job change (relocation, housing, etc.)? _____

49. BALANCE IN LIFE

How satisfied are you with your **balance in life**—the balance among work, wellness, community involvement, professional associations, hobbies, etc.? _____

50. TENACITY

- a. What are examples of the biggest **challenges** you have faced and overcome? _____

- b. What will references say is your general level of **urgency**? _____

OTHER COMPETENCIES

- 51. a. Question: _____? _____

- b. Question: _____? _____

- c. Question: _____? _____

- d. Question: _____? _____

- e. Question: _____? _____

- f. Question: _____? _____

SUMMARY

RATING SCALE: 6 = Excellent 5 = Very Good 4 = Good 3 = Only Fair 2 = Poor 1 = Very Poor

COMPETENCIES	MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE RATING	YOUR RATING	COMMENTS
INTELLECTUAL			
1. Intelligence			
2. Analysis Skills			
3. Judgment/Decision Making			
4. Conceptual Ability			
5. Creativity			
6. Strategic Skills			
7. Pragmatism			
8. Risk Taking			
9. Leading Edge			
10. Education			
11. Experience			
12. "Track Record"			
PERSONAL			
13. Integrity			
14. Resourcefulness*			
15. Organization/Planning			
16. Excellence			
17. Independence			
18. Stress Management			
19. Self-Awareness			
20. Adaptability			
21. First Impression			

COMPETENCIES	MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE RATING	YOUR RATING	COMMENTS
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INTERPERSONAL

22. Likability			
23. Listening			
24. Customer Focus			
25. Team Player			
26. Assertiveness			
27. Communications—Oral			
28. Communications—Written			
29. Political Savvy			
30. Negotiation			
31. Persuasion			

MANAGEMENT

32. Selecting A Players**			
33. Coaching**			
34. Goal Setting			
35. Empowerment			
36. Accountability			
37. Redeploying B/C Players**			
38. Team Building			
39. Diversity			
40. Running Meetings			

LEADERSHIP (Additional Competencies)

41. Vision			
42. Change Leadership			
43. Inspiring “Followership”			
44. Conflict Management			

COMPETENCIES	MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE RATING	YOUR RATING	COMMENTS
MOTIVATIONAL			
45. Energy			
46. Passion			
47. Ambition			
48. Compatibility of Needs			
49. Balance in Life			
50. Tenacity			
OTHER COMPETENCIES			

*Resourcefulness is the most important competency. It involves passionately finding ways to get over, around, under, or through barriers. It is a combination of many Intellectual, Personal, Motivational, Management, and Leadership competencies.

**Topgrading competencies are Selecting A Players, Coaching, and Redeploying B/C Players.

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