



The Most Popular Selection Criteria Myths Busted

If you are currently employed in the Australian Public Service sector or are trying to secure employment in this area you will have faced job applications requiring responses to selection criteria.

Most government job applications will vary widely however they will also share some common elements you will need to consider when writing your selection criteria response. Each agency or department has differing needs and expectations so make sure that you are aware of these before you waste precious time on writing and submitting your application.

Below, I've outlined some of the common myths that I've come across and sought to provide facts and advice to shatter these myths. I hope that you find this useful!

Myth One: I can do this job blind-folded – the selection panel will see this from my resume and earlier experiences.

Fact: Unfortunately, the selection panel will ONLY be assessing your selection criteria statement as a means of determining your suitability for the role. This means that you will need to convince them through your written application that you are ideally qualified, experienced and knowledgeable to perform the role. In most cases, this will mean addressing ALL criteria – essential and desirable and taking note of any selection criteria weightings. Some agencies/government departments weight selection criteria as a means of placing importance on particular elements that will form the most critical parts of the role.

Myth Two: I've written numerous applications – I'll just cut and copy from older applications.

Fact: Whilst you may be able to adapt material from other job applications, you will need to ensure that your selection criteria examples and related evidence are suited to the role that you intend applying for. All selection criteria applications are unique, even those that require you to address similar competencies such as communication, interpersonal skills, knowledge in a particular area and your capacity to build productive relationships with others.

To ensure that you provide evidence of your suitability for the role you must consider the selection criteria within the context of the position description. For example – if you are applying for a role in customer service and are required to provide evidence of your ability to communicate with others you need to focus on selection criteria examples that relate to your ability to assist customers with queries over the phone, face-to-face and via email (when these are all elements that are required in the role that you are applying for.)

Myth Three: The more I write...the better my application will be – I'll just pad it with information and talk about my thoughts on the subject!

Fact: There is no better way to ensure that you make it to the top of the rejection pile! Each week thousands of roles are advertised via the APS gazette and online website www.apsjobs.gov.au and other state/territory government websites. Selection panel members receive many applications and have to read through lengthy applications in order to shortlist for roles. They are interested in quality and content and not length and opinions. Make sure that your application is succinct, engaging and meets the criteria by providing examples and evidence of how you meet the selection criteria. Think about the details that you provide, from the perspective of your reader – they will want to know what you are able to do for them and what sets you apart from other job-seekers. Remember, they have to read sometimes hundreds of applications before they even shortlist roles so stand out by writing a quality-focused application.

Myth Four: Engaging a selection criteria writer will ensure that I win an interview.

Fact: If only it were this easy! Working with a professional, credentialed selection criteria specialist with practical experience in recruitment and selection will definitely improve your chances of interview however there are many variables that fall beyond the scope of selection criteria writers.

These include (and are not limited to): the competitiveness for the role (number and quality of applications received), the experience of other job applicants, whether someone is acting in the role and has been for a while (remember, although there is supposed to be no favouritism in the public sector someone who has been performing a role is more likely to be able to provide concrete evidence for selection criteria that closely relate to that role) and what the panel are actually looking for from the incumbent.

Myth Five: Selection Criteria are easy!

Fact: Even simple criteria can be tough for the most intelligent, proactive and committed employee. Writing strong responses to selection criteria require time, skill, knowledge and understanding, experience within the industry and a capacity to interpret and articulate needs and wants in a marketing-oriented way.

Unfortunately, by the time that most clients come to me they are frustrated and overwhelmed by the selection criteria process, don't understand what they are being asked for, how to provide evidence in response to selection criteria and how to write a winning job application. They may even struggle to identify their unique contributions thinking that they just go into work every day to "just do their job".

Watch out for my next edition where I'll share practical tips and advice on writing a winning selection criteria response!