

## SKILLS SET

Most civil service job advertisements require candidates to be good team-workers, have good interpersonal skills etc. But what does this mean in practice?

I am grateful to Nancy Holloway for offering the following definitions which others might find both helpful and thought-provoking.

Martin Stanley

[martin.stanley@civilservant.org.uk](mailto:martin.stanley@civilservant.org.uk)

### teamwork/flexibility

- Are you a friendly and approachable colleague and will you get on with the team you are in and the wider culture, including working with other teams without any problem, and freely sharing information?
- Will you be happy to have new bits of work thrown at you/work to a different boss from time to time/work in project management style in different teams with people from around office?

### communication/interpersonal skills

- Can you write well?
- Can you speak coherently and (for more senior posts) compellingly when briefing or presenting information?
- Can you organise your thoughts and present them in concise manner that you're your message across in plain English?
- Do you relate well to other humans (as opposed to machines etc) and are you able to strike the right note with external stakeholders in meetings/phone etc.?
- Can you read others well and respond appropriately?

### management skills/organisational skills

- Can you manage other people without either diving in too deeply and doing their work for them or leaving them without guidance?
- Are you selfish about claiming credit or can you coach and help others develop?
- Can you work in a no-blame culture but still get people to perform?
- Can you organise your own work/work to deadlines?
- Can you juggle conflicting priorities?
- Can you use IT well and manage paperwork?

### analytical skills/ability to deal with complex information and data/solution focused

- Are you able to stand back from an issue, pick out important issues in problem you're dealing with, find solutions/ways forward?
- Are you able to relate your issues to those others within the office are dealing with and to the bigger picture for the organisation as a whole including corporate aims and objectives?
- Are you able to sift through large quantities of information or data and quickly see problem areas?
- Are you able to present a coherent and well-argued solution/way forward?

### self starter/ability to work on own initiative/multi-tasker

- Are you the sort of person that doesn't sit and wait for someone to tell you what to do, has ideas, is quick to learn, make suggestions for improvements, and get on with work on your own without constant supervision and advice?
- Are you able to think on your feet and respond to changing situations?
- Are you able to juggle a number of things at once and be able to work out which is most important/urgent?
- Do you know when to ask for help and from whom?

### [if appropriate] representational skills

- Will you be able to represent the organisation in public fora or at meetings with stakeholders?
- Will you be able to demonstrate an understanding of issues around office and an ability to relate them coherently to others?
- Are you able to hold your own when briefing senior people?

### [if appropriate] regulatory aptitude

- Are you comfortable with both collaborating and confronting people/issues with external stakeholders, and do you know when to choose the correct one of these approaches?
- Do you feel comfortable with economic concepts and working with economists?
- Do you feel comfortable with working within a legal framework which controls the limits of what you can do and working with lawyers?
- Can you see around corners and anticipate trouble before it happens?
- Do you have a questioning mind that doesn't just accept things you're told at face value?
- Can you negotiate with difficult people?