JOB READINESS

for

IT & ITES

A Placement and Career Companion

About the Author

R. Anand, Senior Vice President — HR at HCL Technologies, an IT & ITES firm with more than 1 lakh employees operating from 32 countries, heads their global people practices. He is also a serving board member of the National HRD Network.

Mr. Anand brings over 18 years of industry experience to this book. In his career, he has assessed more than a lakh of graduates, integrated tens of thousands into his organization and is personally familiar with the career trajectories of over a thousand. He has helped line managers in the industry get a fresh graduate productive and faster, and also helped educational institutions get more industry ready graduates. He has advocated the need for the individuals to take charge of their job readiness by giving them frameworks, insights and experiences that are powerful and usable. His experiences in designing people processes and practices as well as his leadership roles in professional bodies have been harnessed to answer the question: what employers are looking for and how they look for it, in its vividness and nuance.

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R. ANAND

Sr. Vice President – HR, HCL Technologies Ltd
Member, National Executive Board,
National HRD Network (NHRDN)

Mc Graw Hill Education

McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited

NEW DELHI

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Job Readiness for IT & ITES

Dedicated To,

*All student readers for letting me participate
and value add to an important phase in their lives*

PREFACE

This work aims to help more graduates (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Commerce and English) become job ready for the IT & ITES industry. It should also help early career professionals master their initial jobs quickly and move ahead faster in their career tracks. Thus, it is a student companion for students wanting to secure an IT & ITES job and do well in the first few years of their career.

The motivation and source of this work is my desire to share what I have learnt about working in the IT & ITES sector over 18 years. In my role as Senior Vice President and Global Head of People Practices at HCL Technologies – a large IT & ITES firm with over 1 lakh employees, I had a chance to observe who makes it and who does not in very close proximity. I have had the chance to evaluate first hand tens of thousands of students through our selection processes, and induct tens of thousands into being successful. Often, I would go back to whom I had hired 10 years ago, 5 years ago, 2 years ago and who made it to high performing and high potential lists and converse with them. I would then compare notes with industry colleagues to see if this was true of their organisations too.

Over the last so many years, I have been myself fascinated by the transition from student life to professional life and attempted to study it in detail. I have also had the family background to understand the academic world in close quarters. In the pursuit of making a difference to colleges wanting to create industry-ready students, I have contributed my small mite by being in board of studies, running faculty orientations, student programs and helping the educational institutions define both the curriculum, i.e. what is taught and curriculum transaction, i.e. how it is taught.

I feel the need to treat the subject of employment and job readiness in a slightly different manner. It should *neither* be narrow that focuses on what questions do IT interviewers ask *nor* too generic with do's and don'ts in a personal interview. Hence, the work treats employment readiness of graduates and post graduates in the IT & ITES industry as an integrative body of knowledge and practice. The main premise of the work is that one can become employment ready for the IT & ITES industry, just as one can become proficient in science or engineering and be called a graduate.

There are core aspects of job readiness that cut across industries and job profiles. There is an application aspect of job readiness at the operational level. This is job specific and industry specific. They help obtain immediate entry into the industry. As a student companion, the work targets a clearly identifiable group of those wanting to enter the IT & ITES industry. Those students wanting to enter other industries will still find 60-70% of the work interesting; however, I would recommend that they fill the 30% industry-specific content through other sources.

The work addresses all the dimensions of employability such as, understanding the context of the professional (*versus* student), the critical competencies, job market awareness, job hunting skills, readiness to clear the different stages of the selection process, fine-tuning oneself into the nuances of jobs, and encountering, negotiating and assimilating early career 'moments of truth'.

The attempt is to make the work:

- **Comprehensive:** All aspects of getting hired in IT & ITES are covered.
- **Well Founded:** Based on a sound theoretical model of employment readiness, and corroborated by extensive observations. Since content rests on strong foundation, it helps orient the reader for the process of the selection cycle. It re-orients the personality and presentation at a more fundamental level and is not limited by the interview questions an author or reader is able to anticipate. The work seeks to provide a compass than a checklist!
- **Application Oriented:** Exercises make it a constant companion for graduates towards job readiness.
- **Calibrated:** The material can be engaged with for a general orientation or a deeper application or even evalution of one's proficiency. The material also provides opportunity for realistic self-assessments.
- **Well-tuned:** Major industry players' process of selection, major reference standards for IT & ITES jobs globally and major intermediary content have been referred to in the material. It can hence resonate with 70% of the hiring that happens in the industry.
- **User-friendly:** The narrative style is through the eyes of the reader. The content is organized around each stage of getting hired from market awareness, to hunting, to presenting oneself to the opportunity and hence can be referenced at the context. Stories, case-lets and exercises improve retention of learning.

Some of the standards that the work references are:

- **Entry level hiring methods of companies** like HCL, Infosys, TCS, Wipro, CTS, Accenture, IBM, Mahindra Satyam, Samsung, CSC, Dell, HP, Cadence, Ramco Systems, Bristlecone, and Genpact.
- **Occupational Standards**
  - NSDC – IT & ITES sector skills council & NASSCOM, US Immigration – "O-Net Center", Australian Immigration – ANSCO, International Standard Classification of Occupations from the ILO.
  - Reports of salary benchmarking companies: Mercer, Aon-Hewitt.

The work also references the hiring, testing, learning & certification content of intermediaries like Aspiring Minds, Meritrack, GNIIT and third party suppliers of talent to IT sector.

I hope more industry specific student companions will be created in the future, thus, giving the subject of employment and job readiness the depth, focus, application orientation and systematic approach that it deserves!

I would be keen to receive your questions and feedback at *anand.rajaganesan73@gmail.com* with the book title as subject line. Please also visit the Online Learning Center of this book (www.mhhe.com/anand) for additional resources and updates. It is by this process that we will make progress in this important area.

Disclaimer:

This work is a result of my study, observation, practice and reflection in the industry. It is based purely on my independent professional and personal convictions. The views, opinions and suggestions expressed in this book are mine and not of my employers and organizations – present and past.

R. Anand

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

ON YOUR MARK

The questions and exercises in the following pages are taken from real selection and testing instances in the industry. They provide you inputs on your readiness to enter the IT industry. As you attempt them without doing much or any systematic preparation, you will become aware of your strength and focus areas.

At this starting block as we say,

"*On your mark, get set, go!*"

Use this section to assess your job readiness. Do write down your answers in the space provided for the same. If you are unsure of answers to any question, make the best attempt and move on, mindful of the time limits for each section. Once you have finished answering each section, refer to the answer key sections to verify your answer and interpret your scores.

Do not lose heart if you are not confident of your answers to many questions. As you work through this student companion systematically, you will realise that you are making steady progress from this starting block. You are everyday moving towards greater readiness to enter this exciting industry. This industry has lifted the economic and social well-being of many Indians in the last two decades and with systematic preparation, you can enter it too!

Sections 1, 2 and 3 together need to be attempted within 30 minutes.

Section 1: Job Market Awareness: Landscape: Industries, Jobs, Quantities

a. Name the top 7 companies that recruit the maximum from college campuses.

Answer:

b. The IT industry also does a lot of off-campus recruitment, i.e., trying to select freshers from a location through company specific hiring events – Name the top 7 companies that have a high off-campus entry level (fresher) intake.

Answer:

c. What are the Top 5 BPO employers for graduates?

Answer:

d. What are the Top 10 IT cities in India? List them based on the number of IT personnel working in the city.

Answer:

Section 2: Awareness of Selection Process

e. Write down the selection steps for top 5 campus employers for software profiles?

Answer:

f. List their application eligibility criteria.

Answer:

g. What is their typical applicant to written test cleared ratio?

Answer:

h. Name the different sections of the written test for a software profile?

Answer:

i. In a typical Group Discussion, what is the group size range?

Answer:

j. What is the time duration range for technical interview in software and BPO profiles?

Answer:

k. What is the time duration range for HR interview in software and BPO profiles?

Answer:

Section 3: Job Prospect Awareness

l. What is the annual intake of the IT industry from campuses?

Answer:

m. How many engineers pass out every year in India?

Answer:

n. How many arts and science graduates pass out every year in India?

Answer:

o. How many job applicants from the fresh graduate pool apply to the ITES or BPO industry?

Answer:

p. Estimate the number of engineers who meet the applicant cut-off criteria for IT industry?

Answer:

q. Estimate the number of engineers who have access to the campus selection channel of the IT industry

Answer:

Section 4: Written Test

Do not take more than 10 minutes to answer any section of the written ability test. Underline the correct option.

Analytical & Logical Reasoning Section

1. Each question has an underlined word followed by four answer choices. You will choose the word that is a necessary part of the underlined word.

   Harvest

   A. Autumn   B. Stockpile   C. Tractor   D. Crop

2. Each problem consists of three statements. Based on the first two statements, the third statement may be true, false or uncertain.

   Tanya is older than Eric.

   Cliff is older than Tanya.

   Eric is older than Cliff.

   If the first two statements are true, the third statement is

   A. True   B. False   C. Uncertain

3. Each of the following questions contains a small paragraph followed by a question about it. Read each paragraph carefully and answer the question that follows.

   The attainment of individual and organisational goals is mutually interdependent and linked by a common denominator—employee work motivation. Organisational members are motivated to satisfy their personal goals, and they contribute their efforts to the attainment of organisational objectives as means of achieving these personal goals.

   The passage best supports the statement that motivation:

   A. Encourages an individual to give priority to personal goals over organisational goals.
   B. Is crucial for the survival of an individual and organisation.
   C. Is the product of an individual's physical and mental energy.
   D. Is the external force which induces an individual to contribute his efforts.
   E. Makes organisation and society inseparable.

4. First, you will be given a list of three "nonsense" words and their English word meanings. The question(s) that follow will ask you to reverse the process and translate an English word into the artificial language.

   Here are some words translated from an artificial language:

   gorblflur means fan belt

pixngorbl means ceiling fan

arthtusl means tile roof

Which word could mean "ceiling tile"?

A. Gorbltusl   B. Flurgorbl   C. Arthflur   D. Pixnarth

5. Read each definition and all four choices carefully, and find the answer that provides the best example of the given definition.

Applying for seasonal employment occurs when a person requests to be considered for a job that is dependent on a particular season or time of year. Which situation from the following is the best example of Applying for Seasonal Employment?

A. The ski instructors at Top of the Peak Ski School work from December through March.

B. Matthew prefers jobs that allow him to work outdoors.

C. Lucinda makes an appointment with the beach resort restaurant manager to interview for the summer waitressing position that was advertised in the newspaper.

D. Doug's ice cream shop stays open until 11 p.m. during the summer months.

Verbal Ability Section

Correct the italicised part of the sentence with one of the given options.

1. I am tired *as I am working* since 7 o'clock in the morning.
   A. I was working   B. I have been working
   C. I had been working   D. I will be working

2. He suggested that, we should be bound by a code of conduct, *isn't it?*
   A. Shouldn't we   B. Is it
   C. Aren't we   D. None of above

Find the correct sequence of the given sentences (3 to 4)

3. P: among youngsters in the cities and the villages
   Q: The effect
   R: of the cinema
   S: on the school and college going is very bad
   A. PRQS   B. QRSP   C. QPSR   D. RQSP

4. P. I have not come to complain he said
   Q. even if it means some humiliation
   R. but the boy must learn to be honest
   S. and admit he broke it.
   A. PQRS   B. QRPS   C. QPRS   D. PRQS

5. Synonym of Abandon
   A. Try   B. Join   C. Keep with   D. Forsake

6. Synonym of Aggravate
   V. Decline   A. Acquire   B. Excited   C. Irritate

7. Antonym of Candid
    A. Bluff   B. Devious   C. Equal   D. Blunt

8. Paw: Cat then Hoof: _____?
    A. Lion   B. Horse   C. Lamb   D. Elephant

9. Sculptor: Statue then Poet: _____?
    A. Canvas   B. Pen   C. Verse   D. Chisel

Quantitative Ability Section

1. Father is aged three times more than his son Sunil. After 8 years, he would be two and a half times of Sunil's age. How many times would he have been of Sunil's age 8 years before?
    A. 4 times   B. 4 times   C. 2 times   D. 3 times

2. A boatman goes 2 km against the current of the stream in 2 hours and goes 1 km along the current in 20 minutes. How long will it take to go 5 km in stationary water?
    A. 2 h 30 min   B. 2 h   C. 4 h   D. 1 h 15 min

3. A train has a length of 150 metres. It is passing a man who is moving at 2 km/h in the same direction of the train, in 3 seconds. Find out the speed of the train.
    A. 182 km/h   B. 180 km/h   C. 152 km/h   D. 169 km/h

4. Today is Monday. After 61 days, it will be
    A. Thursday   B. Sunday   C. Monday   D. Saturday

5. Out of 7 consonants and 4 vowels, how many words of 3 consonants and 2 vowels can be formed?
    A. 24400   B. 21300   C. 210   D. 25200

6. John buys an old scooter for Rs 4700 and spends Rs 800 on its repairs. If he sells the scooter for Rs 5800, what is his gain percent?
    A. 12%   B. 10%   C. (4 + 4/7)%   D. (5 + 5/11)%

7. Three coins are tossed. What is the probability of getting at most two tails?
    A. 7/8   B. 1/8   C. 1/2   D. 1/7

Section 5: Interview readiness: Appropriate Skills & Attitude

i. Give 3 ice-breaking questions that also test your personality and communication.

ii. Narrate about a challenge as you tried to pursue something and how you responded to it?

iii. Provide an example of how you were able to convince others on a course of action?

Key to the ON YOUR MARK Quiz

Section 1: Job Market Awareness: Landscape: Industries, Jobs, Quantities

Score yourself "correct" if your answers are among the range of numbers/names indicated in this key

a. Top 7 campus employers

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Cognizant Technologies (CTS), Wipro, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Accenture, IBM, Mahindra Satyam, L&T Infotech, Mphasis, Oracle.

b. Top 7 off-campus employers

TCS, CTS, Wipro, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Mahindra Satyam, L&T Infotech, Hexaware, MindTree.

c. What are the Top 5 BPO employers for graduates

Genpact, TCS, Wipro, Infosys, HCL Technologies, IBM, American Express, Sutherland, Accenture, WNS, EXL, Dell.

d. What are the Top 10 IT cities in terms of personnel employed?

Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, National Capital Region, Mumbai, Pune, Coimbatore, Trivandrum, Jaipur, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Madurai, Indore.

Section 2: Awareness of Selection: Process, people, degree of filtration

e. Write down the selection steps for top 5 campus employers for software profiles?

Resume Shortlisting -> Written Test -> Group Discussion (sometimes) -> Technical Interview -> HR Interview

f. List their application eligibility criteria.

60% and above scores, no arrears at the time of appearance in the selection process, successful completion of course requirements before data of joining

g. What is their typical applicant to written test cleared ratio?

3% to 15%

Name the different sections of the written test for a software profile?

1. Logical and Analytical Reasoning
2. Verbal Ability
3. Quantitative Ability

h. In a typical Group Discussion, what is the group size range?

7 to 18

i. What is the time duration range for technical interview in software and BPO profiles?

15 to 40 minutes

j. What is the time duration range for HR interview in software and BPO profiles?

4 to 15 minutes

Section 3: Relative Analysis of Job Prospects

k. What is the annual intake of the IT industry from campuses?

1.75 Lakhs to 2.25 Lakh in total both on-campus and off-campus recruitments, includes both software and BPO.

l. How many engineers pass out every year in India?

5 to 6 Lakh

m. How many arts and science graduates pass out every year in India?

33 to 36 Lakh (this includes about 8-10 Lakh of commerce and management graduates).

n. How many job applicants from the fresh graduate pool apply to the ITES or bpo industry?

20% to 30%

o. Estimate the number of engineers who meet the applicant cut off criteria for IT industry?

30% to 40%

p. Estimate the number of engineers who have access to the campus selection channel of the IT industry

5% to 10%

Section 4: Ability to Succeed in the Written Test

The right answer has been made "bold and underlined".

Analytical & Logical Reasoning

1. Each question has an underlined word followed by four answer choices. You will choose the word that is a necessary part of the underlined word.

   <u>harvest</u>

   A. autumn   B. stockpile   C. tractpr   D. **<u>crop</u>**

2. Each problem consists of three statements. Based on the first two statements, the third statement may be true, false, or uncertain.

   Tanya is older than Eric.

   Cliff is older than Tanya.

   Eric is older than Cliff.

   If the first two statements are true, the third statement is

   A. true   B. **<u>false</u>**   C. uncertain

3. Each of the following questions contains a small paragraph followed by a question on it. Read each paragraph carefully and answer the question given below it.

   The attainment of individual and organisational goals is mutually interdependent and linked by a common denominator – employee work motivation. Organisational members are motivated to satisfy their personal goals, and they contribute their efforts to the attainment of organisational objectives as means of achieving these personal goals.

   The passage best supports the statement that motivation:

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   E. Makes organisation and society inseparable.

4. First, you will be given a list of three "nonsense" words and their English word meanings. The question(s) that follow will ask you to reverse the process and translate an English word into the artificial language.

   Here are some words translated from an artificial language.

   gorblflur means fan belt

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   arthtusl means tile roof

   Which word could mean "ceiling tile"?

   A. gorbltusl   B. flurgorbl   C. arthflur   D. **<u>pixnarth</u>**

5. Read each definition and all four choices carefully, and find the answer that provides the best example of the given definition.

   Applying for Seasonal Employment occurs when a person requests to be considered for a job that is dependent on a particular season or time of year. Which situation below is the best example of Applying for Seasonal Employment?

A. <u>**The ski instructors at Top of the Peak Ski School work from December through March.**</u>
B. Matthew prefers jobs that allow him to work outdoors.
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Verbal Ability

Correct the italicised part of the sentence with one of the given options:

1. I am tired *as I am working* since 7 O'clock in the morning.
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   B. <u>**I have been working**</u>
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   A. <u>**Shouldn't we**</u>
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   D. None of the above

3. Find the correct sequence of the given sentences
   P: among youngsters in the cities and the villages
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   R: of the cinema
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   A. PRQS
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   D. RQSP

4. Statements
   P. I have not come to complain he said
   Q. even if it means some humiliation
   R. but the boy must learn to be honest
   S. and admit he broke it.
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   A. 12% B. 10% C. 4 + 4/7% D. **5 + 5/11%**

7. Three coins are tossed. What is the probability of getting at most two tails?
   A. **7/8** B. 1/8 C. 1/2 D. 1/7

Section 5: Interview Readiness: Appropriate Skills & Attitude

i. Give 3 ice-breaking questions that also test your personality and communication

Score yourself successful if you wrote any 3 of the following questions. If you wrote any other question that was mild and a conversation starter and generally positive, and at the same time reveals something about the interviewee as a person, test their self-awareness and communication skills, such questions are fine too.

1. Tell me something about yourself.
2. How would your friends, colleagues describe you?
3. What has been a memorable moment in your life? Could you talk about it?
4. Could you describe what life was like at college? Which aspects you liked the most?
5. What are some of your long term goals? How are you preparing yourself to reach them?
6. What environment brings the best in you? Why do you say so?
7. Describe your strengths and weaknesses as a person and as a professional?
8. What were your favourite subjects at school, at college? How did you come to like them?
9. If you had all the freedom in the world, how would you lead your life?

ii. Narrate about a challenge as you tried to pursue something and how you responded to it?

Here is a sample answer and how to score them. The factor being scored are essentially two – aspects like goal focus, perseverance, resilience and aspects like ability to work in a dynamic environment, make judgments and trying to progress. The portions of the story have been underlined and a judgment made on score to be given in a 10 point scale.

When I was doing my post-graduation, I found it very difficult to complete my MSc Mathematics and my diploma in computer applications simultaneously. I was in a dilemma whether to take a break from the diploma in computer applications. With encouragement from my friends, I decided <u>not to take a break</u> and completed both the courses successfully. I got a first class in Mathematics and a distinction in my computer applications diploma.

I achieved this by splitting my time and concentrated <u>more on practicals in the computer diploma</u> as I felt that it will yield more scores than the theory part. I tried to figure <u>if it will work by talking to my seniors</u> and realised that it will work. In my post-graduation, as it was a non-semester pattern, and hence I could focus on my diploma in the middle of the year and ignored lower scores in my class tests in my Mathematics course. I knew that <u>I was deliberately not focusing and hence did not let the low scores affect my morale</u>. I made sure I did <u>not miss a single class in my college to make sure I was current</u> on the awareness level of different portions of the syllabi.

Scoring
The 5 portions underlined indicate the interviewee's abilities in the two aspects. Since the same aspect has not been highlighted twice, each underline is scored once. Since the overall outcome was also positive and the complexity of outcome is moderate, we will give this interviewee (6 to 7) on a scale of 10.

iii. Provide an example of how you were able to convince others on a course of action.
What is being tested here is the savviness of the candidate to relate to others in a complex environment. Aspects like interpersonal savviness by figuring out the motivations of the other individual, organizational agility by looking at how dynamics between individuals can affect outcomes and political savviness in terms of how whole groups would behave in a situation and what are the interests involved. If a person has been able to achieve it by noiselessly moving the needle and creating an optimum amount of conflict in the process of convincing others such that business with the same individuals can be done in the future, the scoring is high. Now let us read one interviewee's answer to this question

When I was in my final year, we decided to take our lecturers out for a movie. Culturally, <u>this is not a done thing in South India</u> where you take your lecturers for a movie. One lecturer was conservative by nature and she did not like the choice of movie. I spoke to my friends and then we <u>decided to go and talk to the lecturer</u> and convince her that this particular movie is fit for view together. When we went to the staff room, I realised, the lecturers themselves were discussing the very same topic. I found that the entire faculty, save this one, was ready to move, and at this turn of events, <u>she was quite unhappy</u>, as she felt she was the odd one out. I spoke to <u>her in person and in private</u> and realised that the <u>core issue was</u> that she wanted to bring her 12–year-old daughter

too for the movie and felt it was not appropriate for her. I persuaded her that after the movie, we would be going to the beach and a restaurant <u>and worked out how her daughter can be picked up</u> post movie. This calmed her down and she particularly liked how I went out of the way to accommodate her interests and made sure her daughter was not left out.

Scoring

Again, each underlined phrase is non-repetitive and has all the elements that we wanted to score. The nature of the persuasion is significant as it is not a cultural norm, taking the initiative to persuade, realising the gravity of the emotion, figuring it out in a safe environment, finding the core issue and finding the solution are all visible here.

Again this interviewee can be scored about 7 on a scale of 10.

Interpretation of your scores

For sections 1, 2 & 3

If you scored

- 75% or above: Kudos to your employability awareness, way to go.
- 50% to 75%: Focus on the specific section and this will anchor your selection preparations.
- Less than 50%: Read the "Introduction" and the "Job hunting" chapter in detail and do the exercises.

For Section 4

If you kept to the time limits and scored

- > 80% in all sub-sections: with less than a month of practice, you are likely to clear the written tests of companies.
- Between 50 to 80% in sub-sections: work through the chapter "IT/ITES selection process and preparation tips" in detail and ensure you score > 75%.
- Less than 50% in sub-sections: would recommend at least 4 to 6 months of rigorous preparation and ensure you understand the concepts behind the questions in IT/ITES selection process and preparation tips.

For Section 5

If you…

- Were extremely comfortable answering the 3 questions – practice mock interviews for about 4 to 5 weeks, and focus on questions in your major subject of study and in IT, and go through the "Job Literacy" chapter.
- Somehow managed to answer the 3 questions – Go through the different concepts and exercises in this book thoroughly, especially on "Employability competencies", "IT/ITES selection process and preparation tips", "Job Literacy", "Building the institutional framework" in addition to focusing on your major subject of study and IT specific questions.

  Got it substantially wrong – Would recommend you read this book twice, and perform all the exercises twice.

1 THE INDIAN EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT

"In India even the most mundane inquiries have a habit of ending this way. There may be two answers or there may be five, a dozen or a hundred; the only thing that is certain is that they all will be different."

—*Eric Newby,*
in his book, Slowly down the Ganges (January 2011), Harper Press

The working and the work-seeking out of the working age population define the supply side of employment in a country. The International Labor Organization (ILO), a wing of the United Nations, tracks the supply side numbers across countries. The Indian Government's National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) tracks these supply side numbers at even more minute levels in our country.

Employment comprises a demand side too. Demand is the net effect of jobs that are being subtracted and added from the previous month or year. The citizens can view this net effect on the basis of sector and level. Industry bodies like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) or the government in some countries itself track the demand side. Self-employed individuals throw a new spin to the definition of demand. Do they fulfill a job demand? Are they merely trying to find some source of income for themselves? These are difficult questions to answer. The self-employed people form a bulk of the employed section in our country.

The policy makers and industrial bodies hence struggle to define the employment context of our country. We are definitely improving the granularity and accuracy of demand and supply side tracking. We still have miles to go before we reach the maturity levels like that of United States or any other European country. The policy makers and the market constantly try to map the demand and supply specific to sector and to level.

As an Indian citizen, you have to do a lot more homework to become aware of the employment context and plan your job readiness and search strategies.

In this chapter, you will get a bird's eye view of the Indian employment context and the IT/ITES industries as a job destination. We will also discuss the organisation of material in subsequent chapters. I hope this will be a useful companion to you in your journey to being a professional in the IT/ITES industry.

1.1   OUR PROBLEM AND OUR OPPORTUNITY

As per the 2011 census of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) on the age structure or population pyramid of India, we are a country of 1,211 million people with 13.6% of this population below six years.
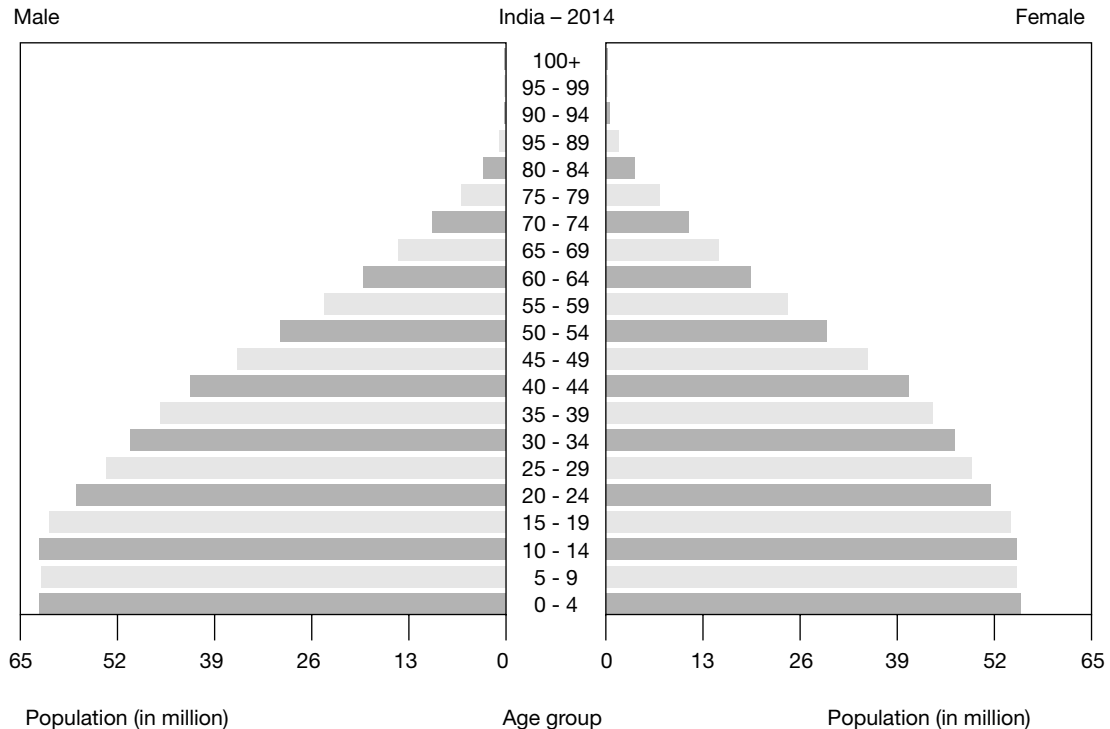
Fig. 1.1   The Indian population pyramid

Figure 1.1 presents an image from CIA world fact book which is an update or extrapolation of the Indian population pyramid for June 2014. This again reinforces important aspects of our population pyramid. Every year, around 2.4 crore of us are turning 15 which is the threshold age for working.

This is an opportunity where we have a productive workforce for the next 15 years. This is also a challenge because this workforce needs to be job ready and find suitable employment.

Table 1.1 presents the employment summary of India (i.e., how many are seeking work, how many are working and where?)

Around 8 million or 80 lakh people in India pass the secondary school system. Approximately 33 lakh people pass the tertiary (college) system and are looking for jobs every year.

Out of this 33 lakh people looking for job, we have 8 lakh of engineers; 22 lakh of arts, science and commerce graduates; 2 lakh of management and other post-graduates and about a lakh of diploma holders and other professionals.

Table 1.1 Indian workforce supply at a glance

Total population of India	129 crore
Population that is 14 & below	37.5 crore
Population between 15 to 65 years	84.9 crore
Population seeking employment	49 crore
Employed	44 crore (primary – 22, industry – 9.2, services – 12.8)
Entering workforce every year and looking for work	85 lakh (author estimates this figure to be 1 crore)
Graduate entering workforce every year and looking for work (Authors' Estimates)	33 lakh

Source: International Labor Organization (ILO) – KILM (Key Indicators of the Labor Market)

Nearly 20% of those looking for a job get employment within six months of graduation. It is largely an unassisted process in terms of bringing corporate and colleges together. At the college, there is lack of infrastructure and awareness to be able to correctly prepare and present the students. Equally, there exists a lack of awareness and infrastructure at the corporate level to reach the vast number of potential employees in these institutions. A few elite institutions (like IITs), have got this act together, but the majority have not.

For an individual seeking employment, it is even more of an unaided trial and error process. In case a graduate of a median college in our country wants to be more prepared for the corporate world, there is little starting point of a concrete kind. But yes, there are books, more like self-helps, which are motivating as well. These are still generic advice to the graduating students and do not give a direct utility to increase their employability. Some nascent graduates, but not all have access to quality guidance. The new graduates, most of them, start searching for employment too late and often in an inappropriate manner.

The corporates constantly wish that the graduates entering the gates of the office must be prepared and ready. The corporates believe that they spend vast amounts of time and money to get a new graduate off the ground and productive.

In our country, the number of "qualified resources" that are unproductive is quite large. A virtuous loop of jobs for the new workforce can easily become a vicious loop of low output and competitiveness because of this umemployable workforce. This in turn can reduce the jobs available for the future.

1.2   EMPLOYABILITY

Employability is the ability to obtain and keep an employment. There are 3 dimensions to it, namely

1. Ability to access a job opportunity
2. Readiness to perform a job
3. Ability to present oneself for job opportunity

Different stakeholders like policy makers, educational institutions and individuals need to work together to uplift the employability of our graduates.

1.3 TO YOU, THE INDIVIDUAL

I have focused myself on the individual wanting to become employable. I believe that this is the best starting point as it solves a personal, immediate and meaningful problem. This approach will help first time job seekers find jobs. These first time jobholders will become more valuable to their organizations tertiary by adopting this approach. It is an attempt to make the individual, the organisation and our nation successful.

Each country in the world has a different economic dynamic. Each economy has a different mix of jobs in the primary sector like agriculture, secondary sector like manufacturing and tertiary sector like banking or IT. Similarly, the job destinations of graduates in different economies are also varied.

So, this chapter should be directly applicable to the Indian graduates who are seeking job or to the ones who have recently been employed. It could be of interest to other economies and citizens as well, for the principles discussed here can be transferred and adapted to other countries especially in the context of liberalisation and globalisation of these economies.

Being a human resources professional, IT industry-experienced corporate executive and a keen student of employability for more than 17 years, I have also created preparation templates for the most encountered job opportunities in the Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled services (IT/ITES) sector.

The IT sector has been a major hope for our graduates in the last 18 years. It is a $150 billion industry, growing at least 12% annually for the last five years and it is expected to keep this momentum. It employs 35 lakh graduates and absorbs 3.5 lakh people every year. It takes 6 months, on an average for a new joinee in this sector to be productive.

1.4 WHAT WILL YOU GET IN THIS STUDENT COMPANION?

The student companion should help you get hired into the IT/ITES sector and help you navigate your first years successfully.

There are two tiers in this book:

1. The first tier focuses on employability of graduates in general and helps to understand what employers look *for*, look *at* and look *from* the graduates.
2. The second tier applies these concepts to the IT and ITES sector specifically, trying to help you hunt for employment, prepare for employment, present yourself for employment and succeed in your early career.

In the upcoming Chapter 2, we will examine why a good student is not necessarily a good professional? We examine this not only conceptually, but also through several real life stories and snippets. We will understand the employability clusters of skills and competencies.

In Chapter 3, the employability clusters of skills and competencies are expanded into specific competencies. Each competency is illustrated with popular and historical stories as well as contemporary sector-specific incidents in the lives of graduates and their first managers. As you provide advice to the characters in the exercises, you will get to reflect, apply and internalise the core employability competencies.

In Chapter 4, we approach hunting for a job as a systematic activity, which is at once disciplined as well as creative. Through various exercises, you can create a job hunting journal and feel equipped and

confident to hunt for your own job. We will focus on the IT/ITES landscape in the exercises. We will see artifacts which are right or wrong and make your own list of dos and don'ts . You should hopefully make a CV that will get you shortlisted at the end of this chapter.

In Chapter 5, we will understand that job literacy is the employment equivalent of literacy and numeracy. Grasping the secret of the job helps one to prepare, present oneself for it and after getting the job, excel at it. We will apply the concepts of job literacy to entry level IT/ITES jobs in subsectors like BPO, application development and maintenance, product engineering and infrastructure administration areas.

In Chapter 6, we will prepare for the IT/ITES selection processes. We will cover the written tests (both technical and aptitude), group discussions, technical interviews and the HR interviews through extensive exercises. These exercises are drawn from real-life industry scenarios. We will thus focus on concepts, tips, exercises and an overall orientation to ace the industry selection process for different entry-level profiles.

In Chapter 7, we help you navigate the first year on the job. Early career moments of truth covers pre-joining, first week (orientation), first assignment, de-brief on first assignment (or end of job cycle), first appraisal and terms and conditions' review. We will focus on the establishment and achievement phases of the first year. You understand the "moments of truth" that can make or spoil your first year on the job. We cross-refer Chapter 2, i.e., the difference between student and professional life to equip you to deal with your first year.

In Chapter 8, we will discuss how you can scale these efforts at the institutional level. We will study what different stakeholders can do in "here and now" to increase employment readiness. Students, student committee members, training and placement cells as well as faculty can adopt several practices recommended to build more employable graduates from the institution.

In Appendix 1, we help you introspect on your career interests. This is then matched to jobs in general and IT/ITES jobs in specific.

In Appendix 2, we help you introspect on your strengths. Based on your performance in different exercises throughout the book, you choose the best fit jobs in IT/ITES for yourself.

This book will give you the confidence to hunt, present yourself for and do well in your first job. You will extract the maximum value by doing the exercises diligently. Feel free to brainstorm with friends who are also going through this book and exchange your notes and views.

Let us take each step, one at a time, in the upcoming chapters.

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, you have learnt:
1. The Indian students must do their own research on their employment context.
2. While India has a young workforce and potential to be a source of talent supply, the number of fresh graduates who are willing to work and the ones who are employed in work after graduating is very low.
3. IT and ITES sector is a big employer for graduates and is growing twice as fast as our GDP. It is and will continue to be a sought after job destination.
4. In this book, we will discuss aspects of employment readiness for any job as well as specifically to entry-level openings in IT and ITES sector.

Points to Ponder

1. Does being an academically good student automatically mean being an employable professional? Discuss with your friends and write down in the space below – why or why not?
2. Why are a large number of fresh graduates still unemployed, 6 months after they have graduated?
3. How do you think a large number of graduates are preparing to find suitable work while in college?

Try This Activity

Attempt Table 1.1 for your native state by doing internet research.

2

WHAT CHANGES FROM STUDENT LIFE TO WORKING LIFE?

"What got you here won't get you there"

—*Marshall Goldsmith,*
pre-eminent executive coach of corporate America in his book
by the same title (January, 2007), Hachette books

There are some specific 'competencies' that are neither tested nor exercised as a student. They are central to professional life. Companies evaluate on the basis of these competencies. Companies and those who are already professionals, know that there are core differences between student and professional life.

Read the two stories below to get an intuitive understanding of these differences.

Story 1: I have a bright MBA holder. Let us call her, Priya. She came and asked, 'How am I doing? It is 90 days since I joined the team'. I told her that I was impressed with her diligence and efforts, her grasp of problems as evinced in her statements, and the meaningful first analysis that she gave. 'I am however unsure about how much of the informal channels do you tap into. I also do not know if your colleagues of today will report to you tomorrow. Are you provoking hostility or do they think they can pick up something from a colleague who has gone to a better business school?'

I asked her these questions because she was not doing well in this area. I told her establishing oneself has 70% priority, while achievements hold 30% priority in the first year. Within a few days, she committed an error, tried to run away from it, disown it, and got everyone pouncing on her. To avoid complete breakdown of relationships, and to give her a clean chance, she was transferred to another team with explicit counseling. However, instead of respecting the turn of events and the verdict of results, she became more paranoid, more disjointed and more determined in her attitude, 'I am right, you're wrong'. A few months later, the new manager said, "I would want to release her from my team." I persuaded the new manager, saying she does not have budget for a replacement this financial year. The new manager said, "I would rather go without a staff than have this person." This new MBA got the message and resigned 3 weeks later.

Story 2: In the same year, Vidya went to a mid-sized IT company. It had one major client and the company was in the recovery phase post-recession. She came in the middle of her training in terms of score, and had lesser choice in terms of projects she would be allocated to. Her counselor asked her to make a choice – wait a few weeks for a client about to be won or take up documentation for her team (one of the 40 teams) for this large client. She did not want to pass the opportunity for real time exposure. She took the documentation job and used it to understand what was going on with the client. With every senior team member she met, she asked them what she could do for them, how soon she can learn the ropes.

Once a certain documentation, which was to go to client, was given to her. She started by figuring out how much time she had and guessed the depth of work expected. She quickly created a prototype and showed one of the project leads if she was in the right track. She changed her output based on inputs, and soon she became familiar with all the nooks and corners of her project.

An opportunity to do testing came when one of the test engineers had to rush home for a personal emergency, and she took this job easily. Fortunately, the client also expanded business with her organisation and soon she was counted as one of the critical engineers in the list that was compiled by HR on the eve of the increment cycle.

2.1 THREE DIFFERENCES

There are three kinds of differences between student and professional life. These differences are simply not of degree (less *vs* more) but of kind (tested in work, not tested at all as a student). If you did not pay attention to them, you may fall into the large group of *good students, but unsuccessful professionals*. While if you pay attention, you could well be the happy and successful professional you want to be.

The three kinds of differences are as follows:

1. Setup: It consists of physical, social and cultural set-up at college versus enterprise.
2. Demand: It consists of core demands in a college versus enterprise.
3. Evaluation: It consists of different criteria for being called successful in an enterprise vis-a-vis a college.

Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 summarise the above stated differences.

2.1.1 Set-up Differences

Table 2.1   Set-up

Campus Set-up	Corporate Set-up
1. Full control over your time	1. No control over your time
2. Well-structured, clear and stable rules	2. Ill-structured, changing and dynamic Rules
3. Clarity in instructions	3. Vague instructions
4. Clarity in expectations	4. Ambiguity in expectations
5. Ready and right answers for your questions	5. Even if the answers exist, you don't know who has them

2.1.2 Demands

Table 2.2   Different Demands

Campus Demands	Corporate Demands
1. Can get along very well without personal initiative. 2. Some 'A' grades and some 'C' grades will do for survival 3. Your success depends on your individual effort 4. Your professors are paid to solve your problems	1. Initiative is critical for success 2. You have to get 'A' in all aspects for progress and promotion 3. Your success depends much on your team 4. You are paid to solve your boss's problems.

2.1.3 Evaluation Differences

Table 2.3   Evaluation

Campus Evaluation	Corporate Evaluation
1. Easy to know the measure of your success—by your grades and marks 2. Homogeneous peers 3. Transparent criteria for assessment 4. You know when you are being assessed 5. Regular feedback on performance	1. Difficult to quantify your contribution to the organisation 2. Heterogeneous peers 3. Opaque assessment criteria 4. Even your boss does not know when he is forming his impressions about you 5. Seldom feedback is regular

2.2   EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills are the skills required to navigate and adapt to the three differences.

This means that the following competencies will be tested *for* a new professional and hence tested *at* the selection process. These competencies that I have chosen to describe employability skills in this book are a part of the competency dictionary, product of several years of research by the center for creative leadership and Lominger International.

Just to clarify definitions, competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes to successfully perform a job. Since the phrase 'employability skills' has gained greater currency, we are using it interchangeably with the word 'competencies'. It is not limited to technical know-how. It is a set of attributes which are specific knowledge, skills and attitude that make one person with the same amount of technical know-how employable as compared to another person.

To make it more practical, we would cover not only job performance related employability factors, but also for job hunting and presentation of one's credentials for the job opportunity. After one gets the job, we will cover how to establish yourself in that work context and launch on a successful career.

Job hunting and presenting oneself for the opportunity are as critical to employability as performing a job successfully. The world of work has become a busier place. There are numerous channels to find a job opportunity and present oneself for the same. Unless you stand out, you would not get the opportunity to perform.

Three competency clusters emerge at the center of employability or job readiness. These three clusters get tested in all the three dimensions of job hunting, presenting and performing, i.e., all facets of employability.

The competency clusters are as follows:

1. Savviness Cluster: This deals with the interfaces with boss, others, and groups.
2. Ability to Operate in Dynamic Environment Cluster : Having (timely) decision making, reporting and informing, as well as dealing with ambiguity.
3. Vigorous Pursuit Cluster: This deals with drive for results and perseverance.

These three clusters help you navigate the turn or transition from being a student to a professional.

We would deal with each cluster in detail and elaborate the competencies in the cluster in the upcoming sections. We will also discuss how to identify these competencies, how to develop these competencies and why some people are not strong in these competencies.

2.3   MAKING THE TRANSITION

After all, we have adapted from school to college and must be able to adapt from college to work life. Other than the differences between the world of work and the student, there are two human reasons why we do not make the transition.

Firstly, we may not be aware that these are the new competencies required, i.e., it is an awareness problem. Secondly, there could be deeply held beliefs that lead us to behave inappropriately in work setting, i.e., it is a misaligned belief and value system. Whatever the cause – awareness or misalignment – these inappropriate behaviours in turn diminish how much we can be employed in work settings. By presenting the mirror of your own beliefs and current behaviour, we hope you can break away from destructive behaviours and become more employable or job ready.

Let us discuss them in detail in the forthcoming sections.

2.3.1   Savviness

The savviness cluster talks about how you deal with others.

This term 'other' could be either your boss, your interfaces in the course of performing your duties or whole groups. Savviness comprises the ability to deal with political situations where people have taken positions out of self-interest. Acting crudely in such instances may cause a loss of face for those who have taken positions and can also provoke direct or subtle resistance. It could simply be about the different groups in organisation and conflicting priorities. The ability to decipher why the other person or group behaves in a certain way and influence an individual or a group to work for your objectives is savviness.

Suppose take the example of a boss. What are your attitudes towards him or her? Do you resist being told what and what not to do? Are you a rebel? Do you by nature, try to harmonise and gel in or are you the type who would like to challenge?

Please recollect the differences between the professional and the student context. The professor is paid to solve your problems and answer your questions. You are paid in the professional context to solve your boss' problems. So, if you do not care about how you come across to your boss, you are not being savvy.

To become employable, you need to understand your boss' goal and priorities. Sometimes the boss' priorities may conflict with organisational priorities. It is important to know these priorities. Only the

awareness of the congruence and the dissimilarities can make you deliberate choices on how to influence your boss.

It is essential, but not enough to be savvy with the boss. Do you similarly understand where your colleagues or teams are coming from? Do you understand how they work? What are the dynamics within? Can you use formal and informal channels? Or do you sulk or jar whenever you encounter a group? Do you observe group norms? Do you understand what is acceptable and what is not?

Equally, savviness is required with your peers and interfaces to discharge your responsibilities. Can you get someone else to go an extra-mile for you? Would you go an extra mile yourself for others? These acts can build relationships and trust. Can you relate to someone from another function? Can you bond with them, inspire them about your cause? Can you explain the connection between the thing you are pursuing and the benefit – both personal and professional – to colleagues you are dealing with?

2.3.2   Operating in a Dynamic Environment

One of the major changes in the campus to corporate transition is the set-up difference itself. It is essential to learn how to deal with imperfect, incomplete information at work and still make meaningful preparations and progress. Even to hunt for a job effectively, you need to deal with inadequate information, make guesses and progress. Once in the job, the need to operate in a fluid environment and still pursue a mandate is critical to being employable.

A major factor that is responsible for the poor correlation between success in the academia   and success on the job is the structural ambiguity of the corporate environment. The world of work is replete with ambiguity and so the nascent job holder feels uncomfortable in the face of unpredictability inherent in an ambiguous situation. Personally, in my first employability conversation with my boss' boss I said, "I come from a college to an organisation; something here must be more organised!" The world of work is not designed to frustrate you. It is just that it is a confluence and conflict of many priorities and dynamics that it ends up being unpredictable. Each person in the organisation is pursuing their agenda at their pace as per their capacity. This can sometimes result in your pulling something when others have not seen the need. At these times, one feels that I am pulling this whole thing alone and nobody seems to care.

Take a typical situation. Usually marketing tells R&D to work on something, but R&D, not having pulse cannot feel the same urgency as they don't check the market directly. If you are a new Executive Assistant to a business head to whom R&D and marketing report, you are going to wonder, who is right? Why does R&D want to stabilise the existing product? Why is marketing asking R&D to invest in a new concept altogether? To deal with this ambiguity of who is right and to deal with the unpredictable reaction, it is essential for you to take a stance. This is a typical dilemma you could face as the new Executive Assistant.

Suppose you are being asked for data and proof, you would frustrate marketing and they would say that you are not being quick enough. Suppose, you did persuade R&D to initiate a new concept investment, you could be accused of not being thorough enough. May be you should ask for a pilot that reasonably proves the need for the investment and attention from R&D.

Surely, you must deal with this situation with savviness as well.

One of the biggest consequences of maladjustment to such dynamism is procrastination, getting caught in the not-ready-yet trap. When new professionals experience this loss of control, they tend to postpone decision making and are no longer timely about the actions they must take. Since the new professional is not evaluated in a structured manner like the student, the new professional could slowly

acquire a bad reputation of not "moving the needle" (making progress) on things. Being not used to subtle feedback, the new professional may miss this image about him or her. He or she will progressively become less effective, not being able to relate to others or be seen as pursuing a common cause.

The other casualty of this maladjustment to the dynamic nature of work is irrelevant or inadequate reporting. Having been confounded by ambiguity, the new professional does not know what is important and what is not. Increasingly, the new professional does not feel compelled to resolve this "out of syllabus" situation.

The expectation from an employable professional is to still make that call on what needs to be reported or not. The expectation is that you will swiftly test your decision well enough and course correct. Usually, a good thumb rule is to report all the surprise developments. Alas! What is surprising is often ill-defined. So, still the expectation is that you will act from the gut, surface all the surprises and understand how to bring enough certainty to be able to operate as a group. These are quite a lot of expectations indeed!

2.3.3   Vigorous Pursuit

The third Cluster is an action cluster – it is, how often and how much, do you pursue things with vigor.

As professionals, we need to get the work done. This can be getting work done from ourselves or from others. So, results must become the central pre-occupation for us. We will be judged by the results. We must evaluate ourselves by results. Behaviours that promote results like a drive to reach a goal, increase employability. Similarly, behaviours that guarantee results, for example keeping at it (perseverance), following up with others effectively increase employability.

Whereas, in student life, the emphasis is on knowing and learning, while in work life it is upon doing and getting it done. At campus, you follow a method and apprise yourself on whether you were able to follow a method. The rules at campus are well defined. The right method leads to the right results. A successful student in the world of work can feel being unfairly judged if no one pays attention to the methods he or she follows or how sincerely they follow it. It is not that means need to be circumvented to reach the ends. However, the idea is that the methods are for the results and if things change, the idea is to be resourceful, creative and pursue results.

Exercise 1: What explains the success and failure?
Refer the stories in the beginning of this chapter and in the given space, highlight why Vidya was successful but Priya was not.

Vidya	Priya

Evidence of understanding the differences
Set-up
  1.
 	
  2.
 	
  3.
	Evidence of understanding the differences
	Set-up
	  1.
	
	  2.
	
	  3.

Demand	Demand
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
Evaluation	Evaluation
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
Evidence of positive or negative behaviours on (please use "+" or "−") Savviness Operating in a dynamic environment Vigorous Pursuit	Evidence of positive or negative behaviours on (please use "+" or "−") Savviness Operating in a dynamic environment Vigorous Pursuit

Exercise 2: What do they look for in IT?

From the two stories above, write down the characteristics of the Information Technology industry.

Pick up the two most pronounced differences and reason why you have chosen them over the others? It will be a good idea to interview an existing professional in the industry for you to conclude the top two and document the reasons.

Top two set-up differences & reasons

-

-

Top two Demand differences & reasons

-

-

Top two Evaluation differences & reasons

-

-

Based on the Interview of – <Name, Designation, Year of Passing College>

-

2.4 REASONS BEHIND GRADUATES NOT INTERNALISING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS?

Table 2.4 Barriers to internalize employability skills

Self-evaluate yourself on the following questions – Give a number between 5 to 1 – "I am most like this (5)" to "I am least like this(1)"	
1. When someone objects to my proposal or idea, I tend to give up. 1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯	4. Usually, I would try a different approach to getting something done, if the first one did not work. 1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯
2. When someone objects to my proposal or idea, I tend to prove the other person wrong. 1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯	5. In a meeting or discussion, if the topic goes to areas where I have not done much preparation, I tend to keep quiet. 1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯
3. When someone objects to my proposal or idea, I tend to point out the need for a separate discussion and then speak to the person one - on-one. 1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯	6. I am usually able to spot emotional responses from others to my ideas because of positions that people have taken in the past. 1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

7. Compared to others, my suggestions go through without much acrimonious debate.

   1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

8. I tend to procrastinate when I am not sure.

   1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

9. I do not like to be told by others (especially elders or seniors) on what is to be done.

   1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

10. When two people are arguing, I can usually find out the reason for underlying tension.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

11. I do not like to be asked new questions, when we have agreed on what all will I update everyone on.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

12. I do not relate well to people other than in my own age or peer group.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

13. I am always able to judge how much effort to put into a project.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

14. I have pursued and done things when others have given up.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

15. When there is an overwhelming amount of work to be tackled, I tend to procrastinate.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

16. Sometimes, I lose my control.

    1. ◯ 2. ◯ 3. ◯ 4. ◯ 5. ◯

Reverse your score (do 6 minus your score) for questions –3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13 and 14. To this reversed score add your scores on the other questions and divide by 16.

Remember, if your average score is greater than 3, you need to re-orient yourself to be more employable.

The three clusters, namely, savviness; successfully operating in a dynamic environment or vigorously pursuing results should give an orientation on big expectations from the world of work. Graduates who possess these will be readily engaged and promoted.

In the next chapter we will deal with each element of the cluster and why do some people fail to measure up against these professional requirements? What are the underlying causes that make an aspiring professional not embrace these qualities? How can an employability coach or this book help a person acquire these qualities and internalise them? The next chapter will give you more insight on why and how you must re-orient yourself.

T a k e   A w a y s

After completing the chapter, you have learnt:
1. There are three types of differences, namely, set-up; demand and evaluation, between student and professional context.

2. In context of profession, the ability to operate in a dynamic environment, to pursue something vigorously and savviness are the employability clusters of competencies that are being tested.
3. Carrying over an inappropriate student reference frame into the professional context as well as shortcomings in the competency clusters lead a person to failure professionally despite being a successful student.

P o i n t s   t o   P o n d e r

1. What practices develop the employability cluster of competencies?
2. How much of this is natural versus learned?
3. Is there any way to incorporate the professional like environment in class?

T r y   T h i s   A c t i v i t y

Give an instance each for the last 5 years when you were called to display - operating in a dynamic environment, savviness, and vigorous pursuit.

3

EMPLOYABILITY COMPETENCIES EXPLAINED

"Those are fools however learned, who have not learned to walk with the world."

—*Thiruvalluvar,*
a celebrated Tamil poet and philosopher,
Second Century B.C. Kural is his work on living the good life

In Chapter 2, you understood how does campus life differ from that of work life. You also understood about the three clusters of competencies required to excel in the professional world. Chapter 2 also answered a set of questions on how to behave in different situations. These questions were based on real work-life situations and we were checking if you naturally display the employability competencies.

In this chapter, we will dive deep into each of the competency clusters, the specific competencies inside them and also understand why some people struggle to express these competencies.

You will understand these competencies not only by the help of concepts, but also through stories.

3.1   EXECUTING IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

The ability to deal with ambiguity, timeliness in decision making and knowing how to inform are the competencies in this cluster. They are detailed below.

3.1.1   Dealing with Ambiguity

Ambiguity is the ability to act without having the total picture. It is a comfort with risk, uncertainty, shifting gears and dealing with things in the air. In short, it is effectively a method of coping with changes and uncertainties.

People who cannot deal with ambiguity could want to avoid risk and criticism. They could be disorganised, easily overwhelmed, prefer structure, control excessively and may even be perfectionists. In the process of individual development, the employability coach has to unearth reasons for low levels of this competency from the above underlying causes and suggest suitable interventions.

Case Story 1: This is a folklore story about Ramu and Ramya who were employed by a merchant. Ramu was unable to understand why Ramya must be paid higher compensation and be called a manager. Frankly, he could find little difference between himself and Ramya, at least a difference that justifies their disparate earnings and status.

One day, he decided to convey his feelings to the merchant. The merchant said he was clear as to what talents separated them and offered to explain the same to Ramu at an appropriate time.

One morning, when they were inside the house, they heard the sound of a horse carriage and he asked Ramu to figure out what it was. Ramu at once rushed and came back to his master stating it was a bullock cart.

Who is it that is passing by this lane dotted with merchant houses at 11 a.m.?

Ramu, at once rushed back, said that they were two people and he had not seen them before in the town.

'What is it that they are carrying?', the merchant inquired again.

When Ramu was about to rush out for the third time, he directed Ramya instead to find out for him.

Ramya did not return for a full 10 minutes. As Ramu was congratulating himself at having been quick to do his masters' bidding, she entered to narrate a lot of details and had a proposal to make.

These are two brothers from the neighbouring town. They are carrying food grains from the recent harvest which they have sold all they can in their town, so they had come here to purchase stuff from the fair today. They want to see if they can sell the remaining grains here. They have combined the trips and are scheduled to leave for their town early the next day.

They must be finding it inconvenient to lounge this around, I thought. Since they must also be happy with a few bucks more to purchase in the fair, I have stuck a good deal with them. They will instantly offload all the grains they have at 3/4ths the price at which we purchase. Being new to the town, I have also offered to send one of our boys to guide them to the fair and show genuine shops.

Since, we are anticipating a peak demand this could be a good deal for us. If you do not see any problem in this, I can go ahead and get the grains to our godown and bring the cash here.

The merchant was mighty pleased to hear what he heard. He advised Ramya to go ahead and then looked at Ramu. Ramu understood the talent that separated Ramya from himself.

Do you, dear reader, also realise the talent that separates them? Why could Ramu not have done what Ramya did? Why could Ramya act in a fruitful way in an otherwise ill-defined context?

3.1.2 Timely Decision Making

Timely decision making is the ability to make decisions within the most appropriate time, often with incomplete information. However, it is not being impatient, jumping to conclusions and ignoring crucial factors or people who must be consulted.

People who are not able to make timely decisions may not be focused; may be procrastinating; disorganised or wanting to avoid conflict, risk or uncertainty; easily intimidated or too busy to make timely decisions. The employability coach has to find out the root cause as he or she observes an individual in different situations and counsels for corrective actions. It is important to counsel after observation as diametrically opposite factors can cause people not to make timely decisions.

Case Story 2: There were three paddy farmers in a village. They were scheduled to harvest their crops a few days later. They were also going to be busy visiting their friends from the neighbouring village.

The first farmer was astonished to notice dark clouds on the horizon. Usually, it does not rain at this time of the year. He asked his two fellow farmers to look at the horizon and wonder if they should harvest their crops a few days earlier, lest the rain play spoilsport.

'The risk is all our toil over the last few months can be completely wasted', said the first farmer.

The second farmer did not want to register this risk. He had already made his plans and did not feel like revisiting it. He said, 'Let me rush back should it begin to rain'.

The third one was too casual. 'It won't rain', he said.

The first one harvested ahead of plan and stored them safely for the off-season.

Soon enough, it began to rain and the second one, who was on the look-out for this risk, rushed to save a few of his grain. The third one lost it all.

The first farmer made a timely decision. The second one tried to avoid the risk and procrastinated. The third one was disorganised and unfocused.

3.1.3 Informing

Informing provides the necessary information to all the stakeholders so that they can do their job and not feel left out. A competent person understands the criticality of providing timely inputs and knows that this is critical for others to make accurate decisions in time. It is also the ability to understand the information requirements of others. The true test is when your boss or colleague does not tell you, 'Why you did not provide this information to me?' In a dynamic environment like workplace, it is difficult for others to exactly pinpoint what they need? An employable person is able to still anticipate these unstated requirements and provide timely information.

New professionals having relevance to this competency are hired because of several factors. It is important for the employability coach to unearth which of these can be considered as lacking factors. The factors could be underestimating the importance of informing others, not knowing what stakeholders need and using the inappropriate medium to inform. It can also be due to the inability of understanding formal reporting requirements and hence informing some people more than others.

Case Story 3: Informing or misinforming is very often the butt of jokes in everyday life. This often occurs, as individuals who are supposed to inform have no idea of the purpose of the information. Even when questions are posed to them, they do not give a straight answer, putting the boss and the organisation through anxious moments.

I do recall a comic scene from a movie. The protagonist is lazily chewing neem early in the morning near a hairpin bend of a mountain. An ambassador car has just made a wrong turn up. As the owner-driver realises this, he asks the protagonist for help.

'Hey, I am going to reverse my car…. tell me If I am banging on the side wall'.

As the car reverses, our friend encouragingly says, some more … some more … not yet … not yet. The anxious man in the car stops, 'are you sure?'

'Sure sir, some more!'

The car stops after banging against the sidewall. As the driver looks angry and perplexed, the protagonist says, 'Yes! Now it has hit the wall'.

Didn't I follow your instructions? Why are you looking at me angrily?

While we may laugh this away, you will be surprised how many times this story gets enacted in organisations. A common sense approach to information requirements of others is uncommon.

Case Story 4: The Positive Story on Informing

I do recall another instance of a very wise interviewee, who got both jobs he applied for. He understood the difference between the information requirements of the two jobs he applied for and hence got both of them.

He was a postgraduate in science who got interview calls for the post of scientist as well as administrator. Coincidentally, the interviews were in the morning and the evening of the same day and one of the interviewers was common to both panels.

He went for the scientist's interview in the morning and answered several questions fired at him. One of the panelists was engrossed in turning the paperweight on the table. He said, 'Gentleman, can you tell me its weight?'

'No Sir! I can't'.

The interview ended and later that afternoon he went to the interview for the administrator's job. The panelist greeted him and said to his colleagues that the candidate had done well in the other interview that morning.

He took the blue paperweight on the table and asked the same question, 'Gentleman, can you tell me its weight?'

'Yes Sir! Approximately 800 grams'.

How strange, the panelist quipped, 'You seem to be more familiar with the specifications of this blue paperweight. Did you find out all about paper-weights during lunch time?'

'No Sir! It is as much as I knew about the other paperweight you asked about this morning'.

'I was being interviewed to be a scientist and thought that my report and information must be accurate or not at all. Now, I have come to be interviewed for the position of an administrator, where I must learn to work with and report approximations that serve the purpose'.

Sure enough, he got both the jobs.

3.2   SAVVINESS – THE ABILITY TO RELATE

Savviness has been discussed in detail in the upcoming sub-sections. It can be how you interfere with your boss, others and groups.

3.2.1 Boss Relationship

It is the ability to respond and relate to authority figures comfortably. People who cannot strike good relationships with bosses may be having problems with all authority figures in the first place. They could also be having mismatch of pace, style and work values with their bosses and not know how to reconcile. Sometimes, this is because the person is unaware of the dynamics around the boss or measures of success of the boss.

Case Story 5: Two friends were talking at the beach.
'Hey, going to office is becoming painful'.
'Why?'
'I have an atrocious boss … have to give him an update every 5 minutes; he wants everything as of previous day. If I talk, laugh or smile, he thinks I am becoming less serious about work. I am worried it is not going in the right direction'.
'Let us do a reality check, who else is having problems?'
'All those who do not want to update every 5 minutes'.
'Hmm…'
'Of course, there is another colleague who does not like being nit-picked, and she has managed him well'.
'What does she do?'
'She, I guess, agrees with him about when she is going to update and that if in emergency, she would bother him in between or be available at all times'.
'Look, you got it. She works in a different style from her boss, but has managed to bring it to the surface and got concurrence that she would meet his reporting requirements without having to provide an update very frequently'.
'She tells me that her boss wants frequent updates during end of quarter as his seniors want to know if we are going to meet the target'.

There are plenty of others, who look at their bosses with a sense of rebellion. And as you can guess, they do not go very far. Wherever they go, they are less employable, as they provoke counter-resentment in the most important relationship to be employed – the boss – who keeps you employed!

If you, dear reader, felt that you should not be instructed, do re-examine your position. It is of no use playing 'cat and mouse' with your boss. It only makes you less employable.

3.2.2 Interpersonal Savvy

Interpersonal savviness is the ability to relate well to all kinds of people (in hierarchy) – up, down and sideways, inside and outside the organisation. Appropriate rapport, constructive and effective relationships characterise the interactions of highly employable people. They are able to diffuse even high tension situations comfortably with their diplomacy and tact.

The contributory factors to poor interpersonal savvy could be as following:

1. Inability to relax with others
2. Being shy and afraid of transacting with new people

3. Low self-confidence
4. Insensitivity, arrogance, lack of listening skills, rigid and judgmental orientation and defensiveness in the face of criticism
5. Poor repository of responses to various interpersonal situations or preoccupations
6. Lack of time

The best way to diagnose why a person is not interpersonally savvy is to ask people around you as to when and why there are ineffective in interpersonal interactions. Many organisations in fact make this an anonymous process so that the people around them can freely tell where and what is going wrong with them.

Case Story 6: Benjamin Franklin was a naive young man who wanted to become a writer. He worked for a meagre salary at his brother's printing press. His brother would not be persuaded to give him space to write his story in the large newspaper called The New England Courant. He decided to play a prank and wrote to his brother with a different identity. Soon these letters and stories became very popular and his brother would wait in anticipation for the next letter to come. One day, he told his brother about his other identity and expected to be praised. To his horror, his brother chastised him for not speaking the truth and Franklin was soon out of the job.

The 17-year-old Franklin wandered over to Philadelphia and got himself a job with one Mr. Samuel and worked his way up to popularity.

Hearing of this, the dynamic governor of the colony, William Keith, sought him and shared his vision for Philadelphia. He encouraged the young Franklin to start his own printing press. Jumping at it, Franklin set out for London to buy machines and equipment on the back of Keith's promise to send money and advise his contacts.

Again, to his horror, Franklin found there were no letters, no contacts and no money. A wealthy merchant from Philadelphia took pity on Franklin, revealed to him that Keith has the habit of talking big without following them through.

Alone, in a new place, with no money and no place to go, Franklin introspected deeply. How naive had he been? How he has repeatedly misunderstood the intentions of others. He was now determined to accept people as they are and see them realistically.

Thus started a transformation that made Franklin one of the most interpersonally savvy persons of his time. He was also known for his organisational agility and political savviness.

3.2.3 Organisational Agility

Competent individuals in this area are knowledgeable about how organisations work and consider it important to know them. They can get work done through both formal and informal channels, understand organisational cultures and the origin and reasoning behind key policies, practices and procedures. They explore creative strategies to get things done in an organisation without sounding jarring and in fact using several of the organisational devices to advance their cause.

The reasons why one would not be organisationally agile is if one does not accept the reality of the complexity, does not see things in systems, is too impatient or inexperienced or does not have interpersonal and negotiation skills.

Case Story 7: In Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin was the quintessential trustworthy merchant. Like the townsfolk, he dressed plainly, worked hard, focused on his work and was humble in manner. He was universally popular.

However, in 1776, after the American war of independence began, he was sent as special commissioner to obtain arms and finances from the stingy French king. People back home were quite disturbed about the stories that spread, as if corrupted by the French, he attended lavish parties, assumed a French spirit and way of life. His outward manner and style of interaction had completely changed. Soon, he became a beloved figure in France and was able to broker an important military alliance and financing from the king.

All this was possible because Franklin was socially rational. He could transform himself thus because he learnt the lesson early in life and in a hard way – that one needs to accept human beings with all their quirks and faults and only learn how to work with them.

3.2.4 Political Savvy

People who are politically savvy manoeuver through complex political situations effectively and quietly because they are sensitive to how people and organisations function. They know where the landmines are and factor that in their approach. They accept corporate politics as a necessary part of organisational life. They can navigate through mazes.

Underlying causes could first be personal orientation towards political dynamics – rejecting the necessity for being politically savvy and misunderstanding them to be immoral, unethical. Self or ego-centred persons or those who appear as advocates, action-oriented without the niceties in dealing with complex situations, are unlikely to be politically savvy. The other reasons could be impatience, poor interpersonal and negotiation skills.

Case Story 8: As a medical student in Italy, the Englishman William Harvey began to have doubts on the existing literature on the nature of the heart and how it functions as an organ. The prevailing view at that time, in 1602, was that blood was manufactured both in the heart and the liver, transported through the veins and absorbed by the body, supplying it with nutrition. So much liquid cannot be manufactured and consumed, Harvey mused. Just how much blood was there in the human body?

To challenge a prevailing notion is not wise, so Harvey decided to wait, accumulating more evidence, involving others, eliciting their opinions and winning them over to his side. Dissection was the only means to demonstrate the functioning of the heart; however, post dissection the heart of animals would behave erratically or stop.

He waited till he was appointed to the college of Physicians in an authoritative position, made sure he communicated well with King James I. After Charles I, ascended the throne in 1625, he studiously avoided aligning with any court faction and shared some of his exciting work with the King. A young man at that time had severely broken his ribs in a fall, and through a cavity, the functioning of his heart could be seen and demonstrated.

Only in 1628 did he publish the results of his years of work, making sure that he opened it with a dedication to Charles I: 'Most serene King! The animal's heart is the basis of its life, its chief member, the sun of its microcosm; on the heart all its activity depends, from the heart all its liveliness and strength arise. Equally is the king the basis of his kingdom, the sun of his microcosm, the heart of the state; from him all power arises and all grace stems.'

Still, the book created a stir from older physicians. When counter-publications came to discredit his ideas, Harvey was mostly silent. When some eminent physicians would critique him through a publication, he would patiently and personally write a letter to them, refuting their ideas in detail.

Harvey was certainly politically savvy.

3.3 VIGOROUS PURSUIT

The ability to drive results and persevere for them are the two aspects of vigorous pursuit.

3.3.1 Drive for Results

Professionals strong in this competency are dependable for results and outcomes and take responsibility for such results. They push themselves and other stakeholders constantly for results and display vigour and energy for pursuing results. They are willing to do what is not natural to them to pursue results and do not settle for what is personally convenient.

There could be three clusters of causes for a lack of drive for results. One set of causes could be due to burnout, personal disorganisation or lack of focus and commitment. The other set of causes could be due to procrastination, or not being bold or innovative. Also, one could be too much of a perfectionist, losing the results in excessive pre-occupation with the method or process.

3.3.2 Perseverance

Perseverance is the ability to pursue things with energy, drive and a *need to finish*. Being steadfast about completing/finishing in the face of resistance or setbacks is perseverance.

Not pushing hard enough, giving up too soon, impatience, short attention span, taking things personally, being uncomfortable with rejection, not taking charge and not being resourceful in approach—i.e. trying different methods—are some of the underlying causes. Employability counselling often involves making the individual realise the importance with examples. Asking the individual to calibrate the point at which they would give up makes one sensitive to this competency and want to take charge.

I feel there is no better tale to illustrate 'drive for results' and 'perseverance' than the famous essay of Elbert Hubbard titled 'A Message to Garcia'. This essay, written in 1899, has sold more than 40 million copies and has been translated into 37 languages. Even two motion pictures were made based on it.

The setting of the essay is the war between Spain and the United States. The objective of the United States is to liberate Cuba by supporting the leader of the insurgency. As the American army prepared to invade the Spanish colony of Cuba, they wished to contact the leader of the Cuban insurgents who controlled the plains of the Cauto to coordinate or at least prevent conflicting strategies. This was Calixto

García e Iñiguez, who had been fighting the Spanish for Cuban independence since the Ten Years' War of 1868–78, and sought the help of the United States. He was then residing in the city of Bayamo.

The essay celebrates the initiative of a soldier who was assigned with and who successfully accomplished a daunting mission. He asked no questions, made no objections, requested no help, but still managed to accomplish the mission. The essay exhorts the reader to apply this attitude to their own life as an important characteristic for success. The American officer was Andrew Summers Rowan.

I will let you read the original.

Case Story 9:

<div align="center">

1899
A Message to Garcia
By Elbert Hubbard

</div>

In all this Cuban business there is one man stands out on the horizon of my memory like Mars at perihelion. When war broke out between Spain and the United States, it was very necessary to communicate quickly with the leader of the insurgents. Garcia was somewhere in the mountain vastness of Cuba – no one knew where. Neither any mail nor telegraph message could reach him. The President must secure his cooperation.

What to do!

Someone said to the President, "There is a fellow by the name of Rowan will find Garcia for you, if anybody can."

Rowan was given a letter to be delivered to Garcia. How "the fellow by the name of Rowan" took the letter, sealed it up in an oil-skin pouch, strapped it over his heart, in four days landed by night off the coast of Cuba from an open boat, disappeared into the jungle and in three weeks came out on the other side of the Island, having traversed a hostile country on foot, and delivered his letter to Garcia, are things I have no special desire now to tell in detail.

The point I wish to make is this: McKinley gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia; Rowan took the letter and did not ask, "Where is he?" By the Eternal! There is a man whose form should be cast in deathless bronze and the statue placed in every college of the land. It is neither book-learning nor the instructions needed by young men, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust; act promptly; concentrate their energies – and do the desired thing – "Carry a message to Garcia!"

General Garcia is dead now, but there are other Garcias.

No man, who has endeavoured to carry out an enterprise where many hands were needed, but has been appalling at times by the imbecility of the average man – the inability or unwillingness to concentrate on a thing and do it. Slip-shod assistance, foolish inattention, dowdy indifference and half-hearted work seem to rule; and no man succeeds, unless by hook or crook, or threat, he forces or bribes other men to assist him; or mayhap, God in His goodness performs a miracle and sends him an *Angel of Light* for assistance. You, reader, put this matter to a test: You are sitting now in your office – six clerks are within call.

Summon any one and make this request: "Please look in the encyclopedia and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of Correggio".

Will the clerk quietly say, "Yes, sir," and go do the task?

On your life, he will not. He will look at you out of a fishy eye and ask one or more of the following questions:

Who was he?
Which encyclopedia?
Where is the encyclopedia?
Was I hired for that?
Don't you mean Bismarck?
What's the matter with Charlie doing it?
Is he dead?
Is there any hurry?
Shan't I bring you the book and let you look it up yourself?
What do you want to know for?

And I will lay you ten to one that after you have answered the questions, and explained how to find the information, and why you want it, the clerk will go off and get one of the other clerks to help him try to find Garcia and then come back and tell you there is no such man. Of course I may lose my bet, but according to the Law of Average, I will not.

Now if you are wise you will not bother to explain to your "assistant" that Correggio is indexed under the C's, not in the K's, but you will smile sweetly and say, "Never mind," and go look it up yourself.

And this incapacity for independent action, this moral stupidity, this infirmity of the will, this unwillingness to cheerfully catch hold and lift, are the things that put pure Socialism so far into the future. If men will not act for themselves, what will they do when the benefit of their effort is for all? A first-mate with knotted club seems necessary; and the dread of getting "the bounce" Saturday night, holds many a worker to his place.

Advertise for a stenographer, and nine out of ten who apply, can neither spell nor punctuate – and do not think it necessary to.

Can such a one write a letter to Garcia?

"You see that bookkeeper," said the foreman to me in a large factory.

"Yes, what about him?"

"Well he's a fine accountant, but if I'd send him up town on an errand, he might accomplish the errand all right, and on the other hand, might stop at four saloons on the way, and when he got to Main Street, would forget what he had been sent for."

Can such a man be entrusted to carry a message to Garcia?

We have recently been hearing much maudlin sympathy expressed for the "downtrodden denizen of the sweat-shop" and the "homeless wanderer searching for honest employment," and with it all often go many hard words for the men in power.

Nothing is said about the employer who grows old before his time in a vain attempt to get frowsy ne'er-do-wells to do intelligent work; and his long patient striving with "help" that does nothing but loaf when his back is turned. In every store and factory there is a constant weeding-out process going on. The employer is constantly sending away "help" that have shown their incapacity to further the interests of the business, and others are being taken on. No matter how good times are, this sorting continues, only if times are hard and work is scarce, the sorting is done finer – but out and forever out, the incompetent and unworthy go.

It is the survival of the fittest. Self-interest prompts every employer to keep the best – those who can carry a message to Garcia.

I know one man of really brilliant parts who has not the ability to manage a business of his own, and yet who is absolutely worthless to anyone else, because he carries with him constantly the insane suspicion that his employer is oppressing, or intending to oppress him. He cannot give orders; and he will not receive them. Should a message be given him to take to Garcia, his answer would probably be, "Take it yourself."

Tonight this man walks the streets looking for work, the wind whistling through his threadbare coat. No one who knows him dare employ him, for he is a regular fire-brand of discontent. He is impervious to reason, and the only thing that can impress him is the toe of a thick-soled No. 9 boot.

Of course I know that one so morally deformed is no less to be pitied than a physical cripple; but in our pitying, let us drop a tear, too, for the men who are striving to carry on a great enterprise, whose working hours are not limited by the whistle and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to hold in line dowdy indifference, slip-shod imbecility, and the heartless ingratitude, which, but for their enterprise, would be both hungry & homeless.

Have I put the matter too strongly? Possibly I have; but when the entire world has gone a-slumming I wish to speak a word of sympathy for the man who succeeds – the man who, against great odds has directed the efforts of others, and having succeeded, finds there's nothing in it: nothing but bare board and clothes.

I have carried a dinner pail & worked for day's wages, and I have also been an employer of labor, and I know there is something to be said on both sides. There is no excellence, per se, in poverty; rags are no recommendation; & all employers are not rapacious and high-handed, any more than all poor men are virtuous.

My heart goes out to the man who does his work when the "boss" is away, as well as when he is at home. And the man who, when given a letter for Garcia, quietly take the missive, without asking any idiotic questions, and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or of doing aught else but deliver it, never gets "laid off," nor has to go on a strike for higher wages. Civilization is one long anxious search for just such individuals. Anything such a man asks shall be granted; his kind is so rare that no employer can afford to let him go. He is wanted in every city, town and village – in every office, shop, store and factory. The world cries out for such: he is needed, & needed badly – the man who can carry a message to Garcia.

3.4   FROM THE IT INDUSTRY

Story 1: Sophia's Dilemma

Sophia joined a critical project for her company and client. The project dealt with emergency responses and hence the client was particular about timeliness and accuracy in all aspects of the project. Sophia was bright and hence her project manager entrusted her with lots of responsibilities. She was proud

of her accomplishments and hence the little murmurs that she heard from senior project team members were dismissed by her as natural jealousy. Charu was a 5-years experienced IT professional, who recently had a child. Charu allocated tasks and updated status for her project manager. These updates were presented in weekly conference calls to the client team. Sophia once heard Charu talking at the water cooler that how come Sophia was asked to make a demo to the client when she herself was not asked. Client personnel were visiting the offshore development centre.

The Project Manager, Ankit had good reasons to do this – ask Sophia, in place of Charu. Charu, while being experienced was not very punctual. Considering her years with the company, the project manager, while he pointed out to Charu the importance of being punctual to her, she did not press the case too intensely. Instead, he thought it was too risky to give Charu the task of doing the client demonstration as it would be a disaster if she did not turn up or turned up late that day. The demo was scheduled at 9.30 am sharp.

The demo went well and later the statuses of different modules were presented. While Sophia's module was ahead of time and already in good shape, there was another module which was delayed. Charu, to Sophia's horror had also shown that delayed module as belonging to Sophia. Sophia thought it unwise to protest in front of the client. When she later asked Charu about it, Charu said it was an error and she 'cut and pasted' her name twice, even for the module that is delayed. She also quickly added that it will not be a good idea to resend status reports to the client as they will be worried about the accuracy of reports being presented thus far. Sophia's contribution in the clients' eyes had 'averaged out' – one good module and one bad module, even though the demo went well, she felt it was unfair. All the other project members agreed, we shouldn't be resending things to the client.

She wondered what she should be doing then.
Can you help her with your advice in the given space?

Story 2: Ram was Perplexed

Ram was a good student in college. The quality of his work was always well-appreciated by his professors. As a new project team member, he felt he was asked too many times for updates. What was originally amusing is now turning out to be irritating. When will they give him time to work?

It was no use arguing, he discovered rather painfully. After last week's argument, not one but everyone was now asking for updates. Perhaps, the first person who was receiving his reports felt

that it was not accurate and was asking everyone to check for consistency. The requesters are only multiplying.

He recalled how he and his friends told the economics professor that they are at a crucial phase in the assignment and if he waited for one more week, he will get good output. The professor, a gentleman readily agreed with a smile.

He did the same to his project lead recently, and was yelled at. He will give it within two days, probably that's all they care about, not the quality of stuff that gets produced in the 2 days. How sad, time is so important compared to quality, he sighed to himself.

Was he wrong?

Give your views in the given space:

Story 3: Vasudha was Asked to Wait

Vasudha was working on a data warehousing project using a new platform. While she was familiar with query writing in traditional platforms – something she mastered in the first 2 months on the job, she had unresolved doubts on the new platform. She was keen to catch the metro at 7 pm; else she was going to be very late that day.

She asked one of her senior colleagues about her code segment and whether her interpretation of it was right. Her colleague was relatively free, she was waiting for a test bench creation and it was due only at 4 pm. Vasudha approached her at 2 pm and expected a few minutes of help. For someone who has written queries on this platform, it is just a matter of looking and clarifying for 5 minutes. However, her senior colleague asked her to wait. She would finish her work, which would happen after 4 pm, to provide this 5-minute clarification.

What perplexed Vasudha was that her colleague appeared very normal about this. Does she not understand that this 5 minute clarification on time from her would help her reach home early tonight? Is she worried that I would finish my work and turn it to our common manager faster?

Anyway, she had no option but to wait.

Do you think Vasudha can change her senior colleague's attitude towards her? What should she do?

Provide your advice to her in the given space:

Story 4: Ram Makes a Choice of the Best Fresher in the Project

Ram had joined a large IT MNC and he found he had four freshers from the same XYZ engineering college in his project. As a project manager, he was taking stock of the talent in his team, their backgrounds, experience and skill. He remembers vividly how he thought Sravan who qualified as a computer science engineer from this prestigious college would be the best fresher in the team. Vibhor was another fresher from the same college, but who qualified in mechanical engineering. He remembered enquiring if Vibhor had gotten on top of basic programming concepts in the training imparted and his lead told him that he was a curious learner.

One month into the new project with a client that was digitising its lease contracts, Sravan sought his time and insisted that he wants to work only on implementation projects. Ram was taken aback and was also amused, and he asked Sravan how much development and release he thought was happening in the project. Ram was in fact going to recommend to his unit head to call it an upgrade project as the client was making many change requests to the underlying functionality and implementation. Sravan would not answer the question and he insisted that he be transferred to another implementation project. Ram counselled him and sent him away.

To his pleasant surprise, he found Vibhor staying after 4.30 pm, going to the gym for an hour and then coming back to explore stuff on functionality. He asked his lead if he could help in any way and he was asked to create high level scenario test cases for the proposed functionality being implemented.

This familiarity with the needs of the project led more and more of such change realisation requests going to Vibhor, which irritated Sravan all the more. Sravan once again went to Ram stating that he was a computer science engineer and would like to only code or implement. Ram had already spoken to the leads and they told him that lack of context understanding meant that Sravan had to be spoon-fed on both the algorithm and the syntax. With Vibhor, he came with stuff worked out and minor review needed for them to be fit for use.

In the annual appraisal, Sravan was rated as having partially met expectations with comments such as inflexible and Vibhor was rated as fully met expectations with very positive comments.

In the given space, could you list the mistakes that Sravan made?

In the given space, could you list some of the major expectations for freshers from the project leadership?

Story 5: An Interview Transcript – Why Abhinav was Hired?

Abhinav was referred to me by his placement officer. We had gone to the campus but had not met Abhinav. The letter he carried in his hand said that he was unable to sit for placements due to a personal emergency at home. We got talking.

Me: You have come all the way from Chennai. Is this the first company you are approaching?

Abhinav: Yes Sir. My hometown is here and hence I have a strong reason to explore in this part of the country. My father had a health scare after some downturn in his business. Even though everyone in family advised me to go back to campus at least for the placement week, I thought otherwise.

Me: What gave you the confidence that you would get a good deal through this route of soliciting companies one by one, when they are finished with their campus hiring. I assume you need a job with good career and financial prospects at this stage.

Abhinav: I have gone into situations, explored opportunities and come out strong, Sir. Yes, I understand this is a risk. At that time, I felt I needed to be close to my father.

Me: Give me an example of how you explored opportunities.

Abhinav: It was New Years' Eve. I was riding back home after partying at a friends' place. I was caught by the police in front of Sarita Vihar on my bike. Initially, the policeman suspected I was drunk. I was not. So, he asked me for my driver's license. The original was at home, and the Xerox I had was not easily readable. So, I was booked and challanned. I told the cop that I was willing to pay the fine. They made me wait. Minutes turned into hours and being curious, I asked him what the matter was and why this delay? After a few minutes, I once again asked him why he looked worried, and the cops narrated their tale of woe.

'Especially during these times, when the volume is high, the challans and the amounts do not tally. Someone forgets to enter the amounts or misplaces the money and we spend hours tallying this.'

I saw he was pacifying his children on the phone stating he is going to start from his duty soon.

The time I am talking about is early 2000, and I told him that a simple IT program will prevent all this mess. I offered to come up with a solution.

'Are you serious?' the cop asked

'Yes, I am. It will also serve as my engineering project and if you do not like it, throw it away.'

Soon, I developed an application that allows the cops to enter this online. I had heard of the simputer (the computer that was made for less than Rs 10,000/-). I uploaded this application on the simputer and persuaded the sub-inspector to take a look. The sub-inspector was soon transferred to another police station and he and the inspector asked me to do the same thing for that place as well.

'I asked them to get me an appointment to the Delhi Police Commissioner and tried to demonstrate this to him too. He appreciated me but did not think I had the resources or scale to deploy this widely. Nevertheless, it was an interesting experience,' he finished.

Me: How did it occur to you that the cops were in some kind of anxiety? Did you not feel anxious yourself? After all, you had just been fined.

Abhinav: Yes Sir, I felt anxious. Then, I thought to myself, I have not committed a heinous crime. I did not have the original license, and the photocopy was not legible. Surely, the cops would want to complete the formalities and get on with life. After all, it was New Year for them also. I saw a glimpse of a lot of money on the table and they trying to count and re-count. This is when I thought, no harm in taking a chance and stuck a friendly and helpful conversation to ask if I could be of any help.

From the employability competencies illustrated in this chapter, could you summarise why Abhinav was hired?

Story 6: Slice of an Interview Dialogue

Interviewer: Hi

Candidate: Good Morning, Sir.

Interviewer: I see you have majored in civil engineering and want to join the IT industry. Why?

Candidate: My brother is in an IT company, Sir, and he told me that life is cool out there. I thought why work in field jobs in non-AC environment, so I became interested in IT.

Interviewer: So, you found this out after you joined the course? Don't you think you have wasted a seat?

Candidate: ??

Interviewer: Alright, let me see if you have gone through your subjects well. Could you tell how one calculates the load on the different rungs of a staircase? Feel free to use these sheets to draw and illustrate your explanation.

Candidate: I was expecting programming related questions or puzzles, but sorry Sir, I am currently blank.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about any project you have done in college?

Candidate: I have coded an application for library management.

Interviewer: Good, could you tell me how you will go about creating a test plan once such an application is built. I would like you to think aloud, as I am interested in knowing your approach.

Candidate: I am wondering where to start.

Interviewer: Start with the process of issue of books to members.

Candidate: We have member IDs, book names and other book properties like author and publisher names. Once a member issues a book, we test for whether the book can be issued or is it only for reference. If it is for issue, we note down the issue date, the due date of return and that's all.

Interviewer: What could be the other scenarios around it?

Candidate: No other scenarios.

Interviewer: Can there be two or three copies of the same book in the library?

Candidate: Yes.

Interviewer: You did not talk about this in the scenarios. What other sub-scenarios can be thought of?

Candidate: Hmmm, does the person have previous books due? If yes, there must be a prompt for collecting a fine.

Interviewer: Good, what else?

Candidate: Nothing else.

Interviewer: Don't we want to test if the member can borrow any more books? Has he or she reached the maximum borrowing limit?

Candidate: Yes, I missed that.

Interviewer: When you wrote the specifications for your library management application, what did you list as the specification heads and sub-heads?

Candidate: Unable to remember this, Sir.

Exercise Questions

As an organisational representative, will you hire this candidate? – Yes / No / Maybe.

Provide reasons for your decision.

If you have to counsel this candidate, how would you advice he/she prepare for the next interview?

Content – (Assuming the next interviewer will also ask about his project)

Representation – Dos and Don'ts

Overall Attitude re-orientation

Hopefully, the concepts, the stories and the exercises gave you a good idea on what the world of work expects, vis-à-vis the world of the student. As you reflect on these stories, do recall parallel incidents in your life and how exactly you had reacted to them. While these clusters of competencies are required of you, how exactly are they assessed is a subject of subsequent chapters. Before we get assessed, you have to find the job one wants to apply for and make an application. This will be the focus of the next chapter. In fact, job hunting itself will call for the employability cluster of competencies.

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, you have learnt:
1. Dealing with ambiguity, making timely decisions and judging what and how to inform stakeholders is essential for executing in a dynamic environment, i.e., the workplace.
2. Driving and persevering for results vigorously is a much sought after ability at the workplace.
3. Knowing how to manage your boss, combined with interpersonal, organisational and political savviness will help you avoid failure at the workplace.

Points to Ponder

1. Are competencies of knowing how to manage your boss with interpersonal, organisational and political savviness required in every job at the workplace? Could some of the competencies be more important than the others?
2. How could one compare people over these competencies life experiences differ for every individual?

Try This Activity

Talk to a friend or senior in the IT & ITES industry and document a story each for any two of the employability competencies. Explain to your friend the reason why you are doing this exercise.

4 JOB-HUNTING

"It will never rain roses: when we want roses, we must plant more roses."

—George Eliot (pen name),
19th Century English Novelist and Poet

Being ready for work is not good enough to land an employment. Firstly, you need to hunt for a job and reach its doorstep.

It is surprising how many students do not have a 'job-hunting' strategy. Even if your college has a campus selection program patronised by many companies, you still must hunt your way into the selection process. Thanks to the internet, finding a job opportunity and reaching one is vastly simpler now than it was before.

To be an effective hunter of a job, one needs to:

(a) Stay away from the fault-lines
(b) Know the terrain
(c) Know how the game is played
(d) Know the competition
(e) Create the best possible first move

Often, I have come across some fault-lines in the job-hunting process. The first one is the attitude (of the student) to job-hunting.

4.1 FAULT-LINE 1: ATTITUDE: THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS NOT CONSPIRING TO GIVE YOU A JOB!

You might have heard that if you want something badly, then the whole universe will conspire to make it happen for you. As a thought, it might be comforting and reduce your stress levels in the job-hunting phase, but I would not recommend that you stretch it too far. The more realistic attitude to adapt is that nobody cares if you land a job or not. The recruiter who is now processing the 10,000th case if not more cannot be expected to have empathetic feelings on your anxiety and overlook your mistakes.

The good thing, however, is that the process has not been created to deny you a job. The folks running the recruitment process have little stake over individual outcomes. It is often indifference rather than bias that you have to overcome to be successful. For example, fully realising that the other party is not

all ears, you could more carefully check if the interviewer read your resume before you walked in. If you take for granted that the interviewer is all ears, you would be imagining that the interviewer is doing 2 + 2 between what he or she has deeply analysed about you already and what you are saying now.

The successful candidate will pay attention to how well he or she is being understood, and would graciously repeat any key points if not registered. He or she would reinforce suitability by creating the right mental picture of an eligible candidate.

Many candidates can find this casual approach rather demeaning and get depressed about it. The right attitude is to feel calmer because you are mentally prepared and have a good hang of the process, with all its looseness and pitfalls.

At the first stage of selection processes, the recruiter deals with large volumes. His or her only concern is how to put some useful filters to eliminate the unsuitable lot so that the hiring managers can spend quality time in selecting from a much shorter list. This automatically means that at early stages no one is going to read anything elaborate. They must get information for the filters pretty quickly. For example, if they are going to look for academic grades, they should be there prominently. If you have directly studied a relevant subject, this must also have a prominent mention. What you must aim for is that at this stage your application gets bunched in the right pile.

4.2   FAULT LINE 2: LACK OF SYSTEMATIC PREPARATION – A FEW BASICS APPLIED WELL

Following are the stuff about the job-hunting phase that surprises a new job hunter, and equally the recruiter on the other side. The student is:

1. Unprepared with basic information that could have been easily obtained and hence goes through the selection steps without the confidence of familiarity.
2. Unable to utilise the selection process know-how to advance one's candidature – whether the step is selection or elimination, ranking or rating.
3. Surprised at the amount of follow-up and the skill required to follow-up – both to get invited to the process and to seek closure on the process they participated in.

These systematic preparations have been designed in the following pages in an exercise intensive manner. It will give you an indication of your preparedness to be a job hunter as well as improve upon it.

If you are unable to fill the cells in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 , do not lose heart, finding these answers systematically will improve your confidence and odds of finding the job. Revisit your answers based on most recent developments in your terrain.

Create a job-hunting journal in physical or digital form.

4.3   KNOWING THE TERRAIN

Table 4.1   Terrain Map

S.No	Name of Organisation	Size (Revenue) - $ Mn	Total Head count	India Head count (est)	Employment locations	List 3 job titles they select for	Approx. entry level hires last year
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							

How easily were you able to name the 15 organisations?

From the chapter on 'The Indian employment context', we know that there are more than 35 lakh workforce in the IT and ITES sector in India. What is the sum of the headcounts of the 15 organisations on the date of your exercise? Did you realise that there are many more employment destinations that you are not aware of?

Advanced Questions

1. Where are the others employed?
2. How fast do you think this head count is growing?

4.4 KNOW HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED: HOW DO THEY SELECT?

Table 4.2 Selection Steps Map

S. No	Organisation Name	Job Profile/ Title	Step1: CV Shortlist	Step 2: Test	Step 3: Tech Interview	Step 4: HR Interview	Step 5: Ref. Check	Any Other Steps	Remarks – Start and Finish Cycle Time
			Elimination filters	(A) Duration (B) Nature: 1 – Depth or Speed 2 – Skills or Aptitude 3 – Knock-out or weighted	(A) Duration (B) Nature: 1 – Depth or Speed 2 – Skills or Aptitude 3 – Knock-out or weighted	(A) Duration (B) Nature: 1 – Depth or Speed 2 – Skills or Aptitude 3 – Knock-out or weighted	Ideal referee & typical relation-ship	Mention sequence, e.g. call it 3.1 if between tech interview and hr interview	

Once you fill Table by organisation, you would realise that for the same job profiles, across multiple organisations, the selection process tends to be similar.

Advanced Questions

Try and give real artefacts from real selection processes in this table. For example, give 2 questions in each test section under the column on tests for an organisation and for a job profile.

Use your network to unearth such real artefacts.

Subsequent exercises help you utilise your network to:

- Reach the gate keepers of the organisation, to cold call or to follow-up.
- Do analysis of your competitors.

4.5   THE ACTUAL REACH AND FOLLOW-UP

Table 4.3   Follow-up self-reference

S.No	Name of Organisation	2 Gatekeeper details Name Designation Email Contact	How Connected? Direct 2nd Level – Name, Designation	Estimated Applicant to Offer	Key News that has implications for hiring	Best way to cold call	Peak hiring Quarter	Any Don'ts

If your campus selection process is not patronised by companies of your interest, then you have to find a way to reach the doorstep of the organisation. Out of the thousands of requests that come to the recruiter, yours must draw attention and get you a chance to participate in their selection process.

Filling Table 4.3 and improving your connections to the organisation of interest will give you a good shot at getting invited.

Such initial requests or cold calls should strictly be professional and must merely ask for a chance to prove rather than show any extraordinary consideration. It must emphasise that any expenses for travel, etc., will be borne by you and that you won't take much of their valuable time. Such requests must be sent with 'read receipts' for you to track if the email was open and read.

You can also use your network to compare and estimate your probability of success using the exercise in Table 4.4.

4.6 MY COMPETITION AND MY ODDS

Table 4.4 Comparing Oneself with Successful Candidates

Far better – If self-rate better than all 5, better – if self-rate better than 4/5, Catch up – if better than 2/5, Significant catch up – if better than 1/5 or None; Otherwise - Call yourself Similar								
Job Profile Name	Names of 5 incumbents (Organisation names in brackets)	On Campus and Pedigree	In my ability to reach	On Academic scores	On Key CV filters	On Test Areas	In a Tech Interview	In an HR interview

The exercise above will help you prioritise areas of preparation. If you cannot find 5 incumbents for job profiles of interest, rely on your friend and together you might have a better database of job profile incumbents.

If you do an honest assessment and even reach the similar state compared to the 5 incumbents, feel good. If your assessment is below similar, then write the precise difference between you and them. You can do precious little with some of the differences – like campus and pedigree, quite a lot about others – like academic scores (if you are reading this book early on in your course) or test and interview performance.

Compare this with the applicant to offer an estimate you have done by organisation in Table 4.3. You would get a fair estimate of your chance of success at this point.

Why should you be motivated to do these exercises?

The value of the Prize – If getting a job is of prime importance, it should help you to mobilise yourself to plough through this book and use it to improve your chances.

If the Effort pays off – In my several years of experience and guiding, I have noticed such systematic preparations doubling or even trebling the chance of success of candidates.

4.7   CAPABILITY AND ORIENTATION TO HUNT

Few individuals are innate hunters. If there ever was such a hunter gene and one were to observe its markers just like there are markers for blood groups or diseases, it will be like the following:

(a) In a few hours, they can recall at least two ways to reach selection gatekeepers of at least three prospective organisations. This means not only getting the contacts and sending emails but using proper networking skills for responses and processes.

(b) They would have utilised persuasion and their knowledge of exception management processes to be considered for opportunities that they were not eligible for, prima facie. They can recall one such instance in the previous six months!

(c) They have asked for a favour of significance in the last one month. The other party may not have obliged, but would have certainly listened to them.

(d) Above all, they are action-oriented, risk-taking and can anticipate/see around the corners.

If your description does not fit the hunter, never mind; it is never too late to imbibe these orientations. You must first value these behaviours. You may not change completely but can make decent progress.

Did you notice that the four markers above are simply another way of stating that you should be good at the competency clusters in Chapter 4? If you can operate in a dynamic environment, you will be able

to figure out how to reach selection gatekeepers by charting a route from you to them. If you have a drive for results, you would be able to utilise your knowledge of exception management and persuade to be considered for an opportunity that you were otherwise not going to be considered for. Similarly, only savvy individuals can ask for favours or persuade others in a noiseless and effective manner. They would make it easy for others to do favours to them.

In reality, by becoming a successful hunter, you are also getting ready to be a successful professional. You are becoming savvy, acquiring a drive for results and the ability to comfortably operate in a dynamic environment.

We will end this chapter by looking at the first move of the job hunter – making the CV and the cover letter.

4.8   BEST POSSIBLE FIRST MOVE: CV AND COVER LETTER

The CV along with the cover letter is often the first step in the selection process. As we mentioned earlier, the purpose of this step is to eliminate and not to select. The task of the recruiter is to produce a short list, so hiring managers can spend quality time judging the suitability of the shorter list.

It is hence logical that we approach this first move in terms of why your CV would not be shortlisted.

The key questions to be answered here are as follows:

(a) What recruiters are looking for? How does the recruiter make the semi-automatic snap judgment?
(b) What are the common resume errors that need to be minimised? What are the typical filters applied in the industry?
(c) What is the specific approach for the IT/ITES sectors?

In the IT/ITES sector, the following can get you eliminated at the CV shortlisting stage:

1. Less than first class (60%) or equivalent.
2. Failed a paper, even if later cleared in arrears.
3. Not majoring in the discipline of interest to the company.

The above can sometimes be overcome if the cover letter is convincing. A typical such cover letter is produced here.

Subject – Please consider my candidature for written test

Respected < Name >

Greetings! Thank you for the time to read this short letter.

You will notice that I had failed a couple of papers in the first semester of college and hence run the risk of my CV not getting shortlisted. I did go through some adjustment issues when I transitioned from a rural environment to the college. I soon collected myself and you will also notice that my scores thereafter have been improving.

May I make a humble request to consider my candidature for the written test?

Sir, you have standardised the testing process only to bring on the same page the diverse profiles you are processing. Other than this opportunity, I seek no other consideration. I would even gladly

submit myself for more stringent criteria once given the opportunity to appear for your selection process. While this is a small exception for you, it is an opportunity of a lifetime for me.

Having said this, I would humbly accept any decision you may take on this request. I only want to make sure that you read this letter and make the choice.

Yours Sincerely

Find below another cover letter sample, where the candidate runs the risk of elimination because he or she has studied civil engineering. Notice how he or she is highlighting the relevant extra education that he or she has done which will help reduce the time for being productive.

Subject Line – Permission to appear in <company name> selection process due to additional credentials.

Respected <Name>

I am a civil engineering student of <college name>. I understand you have instructed the placement office to accept applications only from the computer science, electronics and electrical streams.

I fully respect your intent to look at a more shortlistable pool considering the programming exposure as well as the fact that generally higher scoring students tend to prefer these disciplines.

My choice of civil engineering was guided by my then understanding of different disciplines. Kindly also note that I chose Civil over Mechanical that I was eligible for based on my scores. I have picked up on programming based on interest in the area and also done a few projects for small companies to solve real world problems. They also appear as my references in the application.

I am confident that I will be productive on the job much faster than my peers.

May I humbly request you to let me appear for your selection test?

Yours Sincerely

There are usually four other reasons for your CV not getting shortlisted. These are as follows:

1. Not being Mobile.
2. Not being flexible – Choosy about work profiles.
3. Not making the CV self-contained.
4. Poorly drafted CV with grammatical, spelling, optics and other 'cut and paste' errors.

4.8.1 Mobility

The very essence of the IT sector is project work. Projects can be decided to be executed in different locations based on multiple considerations. Hence, these companies frown upon any candidate who is not mobile. This lack of mobility imposes constraints on how their firm can execute or grow. This consideration is less pronounced in the ITES sector. However, here too, companies can view this as a sign of a lower commitment.

This can become a clear filter criteria if lots of such applications are received by email, compared to a campus selection process.

4.8.2 Flexibility

Again, for the IT/ITES sector, having specific preferences on work profiles is not a positive. In other sectors, it might connote understanding of different work profiles. In the IT/ITES sector, flexibility, like mobility represents a constraint in executing the project nature of work. Employees who are willing to work in varied areas are likely to be well-deployed in projects. Choosy employees are likely to be waiting for projects of their choice and hence may not even be working for most part of the year.

Candidates emailing their CV in a cold call-like attempt may get rejected if recruiters perceive that they are going to be very choosy about the work profile. The tendency will be to snap judge the candidate stating that there is no open demand for job profiles as per candidates' interest.

4.8.3 Make the CV Self-Contained

When companies run high transaction volumes in the selection process, mere logistical misses will create shortlist failures! I have seen two common ones.

1. How will they contact me?

   (a) Some candidates do not put their phone numbers and email IDs on their resume. They think that recruiters are going to reply to their application email, and hence they need only press 'reply'. This shows a poor understanding of how CVs are processed. It is much more likely that someone downloaded all the documents and sent at one go to the recruiter or hiring manager for shortlisting. So, once they shortlist your profile and want to invite you, they have no means to do so! No one is going to go to their inboxes and search and figure out your email. It is much likely that they will put such CVs in a pile and forget about it. You must ensure that when your file gets forwarded from person to person, it is fortified against all kinds of logistical complexities.

2. How many files should they go through before understanding your application?

   While the cover letter is a good idea, I would recommend that you make the cover letter as the first page of your CV file. Again, for the same reason that only one of the files could be forwarded. I have come across candidates indicating the job code applied for in the cover letter, which does not reach the person doing the shortlisting. It surely gets parked in a separate folder by the name 'unclear' and perhaps that is the last time it ever gets looked up.

   The big lesson is, hence, to

   (a) Keep the CV crisp
   (b) Keep it self-contained

4.8.4 Poorly Drafted CV

I. Cut and Paste Errors

1. This one takes the cake and is a sure recipe for instant rejection. We have received modified cover letters from another application and the candidate has forgotten to replace the other company name.

2. Other funny instances are where candidates have copied their friend's resume and copied their personal details too.

Instantly, such errors convey a lack of seriousness and application of mind.

II. *Grammar, Spellings and Other Optics*

Grammar and spelling errors show that you do not care enough for the job or that your language skills are much below par. Imagine (this is real) this name board on a juice shop 'BHOLA SHAKES and SNAKES'!

Of course, the shopkeeper wanted to write 'snacks'. Will you ever have your milkshake from this shop?

(a) Optics

These are errors that are not technically errors but convey a poor impression.

Just because you are Balaji and your nickname is Bals, your email id for contact in your job application cannot read: sweet.bals23@gmail.com

Technically, you can use any font to write your resume, but this font does not convey the right impression.

It surely does not, if you are applying for IT / ITES jobs.

III. *Non-Generic Acronyms*

You may be the cultural secretary of your college, fondly called 'madindigo' by your college friends, but stating 'displayed leadership in madindigo' just does not make sense to your potential employer. If at all, it could be construed as some kind of skit where people have to play-act as a lunatic!

Sample this – Provided analytics support to 'project santa'. Unless the project you worked on is widely known like the 'Apollo Mission' don't do this. If information cannot be shared about the project, it is safe to write as below:

'Provided analytics support to a strategic project directly overseen by the CEO and the chairman. Support involved turning around analysis and point of view for key decisions involving partnerships and acquisitions' certainly conveys the sense much better.

IV. *Signal to Noise Ratio*

One measure of noise is repetition – how many times the same information is repeated in your resume. Example: You have already mentioned your scores and college rank in the educational qualification table and repeated it in the list of achievements section.

Ask a neutral person to read your CV (preferably an outsider) to see if it conveys the essence or is there more 'noise than signal'.

The other form of noise is trite statements that are technically correct but do not provide any significant information. Sample this below

---

Career Objective – 'To become a software engineer' is just too trite, while there is nothing wrong with it.

Another form of noise is unsubstantiated and generic phrases. Sample this

'I am good at public speaking' without attaching some kind of fact or evidence to it.

V. *Use of Key Words*

Key words are important to register our suitability in semi-automated screening processes.

- Good to use words linked to or similar to the job advertisement.
- Rare but critical skills definitely need to be highlighted, examples are:

  – *ran a call centre for placement management or*
  – *used Matlab in my project work. The project was funded by industry-interface cell of our college or*
  – *Used SPSS to analyse record sales and advised stakeholders on release schedule.*

- Represent your college project experiences in the language of the industry.

  – *Example: Visited this Foundry and learnt about cleanroom maintenance. This will attract a semiconductor company.*

4.8.5 Use of Social Networks

It is great if you are able to reach recruiters through social media. It is also great if you get responded to. Message response rates in social networks that are of a one-to-one nature are fewer than you expect for email responses. Rarely, you can have two replies on the same subject in a platform like LinkedIn email. Fortunately, or unfortunately, this has become the convention. So, here are few dos and don'ts on the social network.

I. Do's

1. Make the message complete and avoid the need for an additional query. For example, when you write for being considered for an entry level opportunity, also ask for their official email id. Better still, if you have their official email, reconfirm that you have the right one.
2. Attach a link to your profile which can be forwarded if required.
3. If the person you are writing to is not expected to process the transaction, ask them to drop a line copying the relevant individual so you can take your candidature forward with designated channels.
4. Sometimes ask for guidance, for example ask which of the job profiles they would advise you to focus on, considering your background.

II. Don'ts

1. Try not to make a connection request and immediately follow it up with a favour.
2. Do not endorse the person for skills and immediately follow it up with a request for your candidature to be considered.
3. Make the request action-oriented rather than unspecific. Instead of 'I am looking for a suitable opportunity, please help me with your contacts', ask 'kindly indicate the approximate dates for the next drive for recruitment in this area and the point of contact, so I can make a request through the appropriate channel.'
4. Move the transaction of your candidature quickly to official email id and channels. Even if an offer was made through the social network, it is not valid.

Now that your hunting gear (your CV and cover letter) is ready, hopefully you can make the best first move!

4.9   GETTING READY TO PRESENT YOURSELF FOR THE JOB

Every job has its own secret. Once you understand it, you will know how to *hunt for it*. You will know *how to present yourself for it*. You will know *how to perform well on it*.

We will deliberately illustrate the characteristics of the job by first comparing across industries and later specifically deep-diving on high volume entry level jobs in the IT/ITES sectors.

This methodical way of looking at a job makes you job literate. This is what we will focus on in the next chapter. After you have understood the concept and application of job literacy, I would recommend you to revisit your journal and I am sure you will obtain new insights!

Happy hunting!

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, the readers have learnt:

1. Job-hunting is an art and it requires a systematic preparation.
2. This preparation involves knowing the landscape of opportunities, knowing how selection happens for them, knowing the relative chances with reference to other candidates and mentally readying yourself for the hunt.
3. Adopt the assumption that the recruiter is indifferent.
4. Get a good idea of the actual time your CV is being scanned. Often it is less than a minute.
    (a) The key items that make you pass the elimination filters or make you an interesting candidate must pop up within one minute. CVs, hence, must be crisp.
    (b) Their only function is to get you bunched in the right file of short-listed CVs.
    (c) Do not cram your entire life detail into the CV.
5. Highlight how you are flexible and mobile in your CV.
6. If you do not seem to pass the filters, request an opportunity to participate in the company specific selection process and without any other consideration.
    (a) Look at the spirit of the sample letters in this chapter and draft your own letter to make this request.
7. As the recruiter deals with huge number of CVs, please make sure your CV is self-contained and the document itself is easy to handle.
    (a) Ensure it looks professional by eliminating grammatical and spelling errors.
    (b) Never 'cut and paste' from another person's CV or from another application you have made.

8. Any erroneous retention of inappropriate segments in the cut and paste is sure to get you eliminated and irritate the recruiter.

9. Observe the do's and don'ts while pursuing your candidature through social networks.

Points to Ponder

- Do you think recruiters will look at your activities on the social network in addition to the CV in making a selection decision?
- How do you validate and weed out unreliable information that can come your way in the job-hunting process?

Try This Activity

Using your own resources (newspapers, internet), to find 5 entry level jobs in the IT & ITES sector in India, which you could have applied for in the last one month.

5

JOB LITERACY: CONCEPTS AND EXERCISES

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

—*A Chinese Proverb*

Every job comes with a distinct structure and characteristics. Certain competencies are required for the performance of any job. These competencies are clustered into the ability to operate in a dynamic environment, to vigorously pursue results along with savviness. These characteristics are common to all kinds of jobs. However, there are many significant ways in which jobs differ from each other. Our understanding of such unique characteristics of each job makes us job literate.

The knowledge of alphabets, words, grammar and dictionary makes a person literate; similarly as an individual seeking employment, should you not be job literate?

Being job literate helps you to present yourself as an appropriate choice for a particular job. It also helps you to craft the right hunting strategy. Further, being job-literate helps you to reflect the right competencies in the selection process. It is also essential for successful job performance.

Job literacy is thus an integrating and launching point to become employable. High job literacy means high employability quotient.

In this chapter, we will explain the concepts of job literacy by using examples from different industries and professions. These ready to relate examples of teachers, training coordinators, doctors, nurses, bank managers, sales persons, passport agents, etc., will help you assimilate the key concepts.

We will then proceed to apply the concepts specifically to the IT and ITES jobs at the entry level.

We will re-refer the contents of this chapter in the Appendices. Through this cross reference, we will answer the best fit job for you, both from a strengths and interests perspective.

5.1 JOB LITERACY

A job can be understood by answering 10 questions about it. Utilise this understanding to hunt for a job, prepare for the selection process, present yourself effectively and perform the job successfully.

The ten job related questions are as follows:

1. What is the title? What clues does it give on the content of the job?
2. What is the mandate or purpose?
3. Which function does the job belong to? As an individual, what are the basic threshold expectations to belong to this function?

4. What are the key responsibilities?
5. What are the core job functions?
6. How do you describe the job in the organizational context? How does the job map in the flow of business?
7. Who are the key stakeholders? What relationships do the job holder has with these stakeholders?
8. What are the key volumes and dimensions of the job?
9. What does a typical day look like?
10. What is the person-specification of the successful incumbent?
    (a) What challenges should they be able to overcome?
    (b) What knowledge and skills must the incumbent possess?
    (c) What kind of previous exposure and experience is an advantage?
    (d) Which of the competency clusters for employment readiness becomes more critical and why?

5.2   JOB TITLE

Every job has a title and a mandate. Ideally, the title of title of a job logically connotes what the job is all about. However, it is rarely so clear. The job title should give an idea of the content of the job.

For example, job title of an Associate-Customer Service tells that it is likely to be an individual contributor. The key responsibility is that of handling customer queries. It is most likely the person will directly interface with the customer. However, the job title of Training Co-ordinator instantly clarifies that the role involves coordinating in training area, informing potential learners about training events and scheduling the programme. It is unlikely either to involve need analysis of the learners or to prepare and control the training budget.

5.3   JOB MANDATE

Job mandate refers to describing the duties, in one or two sentences, to be accomplished by the job holder. Incidentally, the word "job" first originated in manufacturing. Even today, in engineering workshops, the piece that must be cut to specifications is called "a job".

Over a period of time, the word "job" has been replaced by the word "role" especially in services. A job is broken down into functions, tasks and activities, while a role is broken down into purpose, responsibilities and interfaces. For better understanding, we will use them interchangeably.

The real understanding of the mandate comes when you are able to notice subtle prioritisations.

For example, all the circle heads of telecom companies were chasing "gross adds", i.e., the number of subscribers they added when the industry was nascent and tele-density was low. Gross adds were the single-sentence mandate. Now tele-density (number of telephone connections per 100 people) in India is much higher. The circle heads are now measured on "share of gross adds" and "churn". Churn is the percentage of existing subscriber base leaving for other operators.

Do notice how their mandate has subtly changed in this more saturated telecom market. Their mandate now has shifted to how much of the first time telecom users they are garnering. And, more importantly they are penalized when subscribers leave the fold.

And, ever since the price war erupted in this space, again look at how the measurement has changed from subscriber market share or customer market share to revenue market share, i.e., how much share do you

have of all billing made by the service providers in a month. Customer market share is simply the percentage of total customers in this space that you have. It is by the people. Whereas revenue market share is the percentage of total sales in the industry that you have. Revenue market share can be higher, if you have larger number of high billing customers in your subscriber base. To maximise revenue market share, the share of total billing done by the telecom market, you need to price it intelligently. Higher the price, more the per-customer billing but at some point, the customers will move out to other operators. As per economics, this is being called price-elasticity of demand. So it does not matter if you have 1 million subscribers and 200 million rupees of billing to show per month, even if you have 8 lakh subscribers but can show 240 million rupees of billing per month, you have reached your job mandate.

The same title in two different contexts can have differences in mandate. Consider the job of professors.

Professors in India do not have the pressure to publish or to generate funds for research by training and consulting yet. In the United States and Europe, professors almost chase a publication target, so much so that "publish or perish" is a popular phrase in the academic community prevalent there. So watch out, the job title is professor, but the mandate is different as the key evaluation criteria and the expectations are different.

Progressive organisations have a formal mandate. They do update changes to the mandate and frequently communicate about the same to the job holders. However, it is in your interest to find out about the job mandate. It immensely increases their potential to be hired. More importantly, it helps them function effectively from the very first day of employment.

If a person can describe why the job exists, then he must understand the mandate as well.

- *A nurse exists to deliver care to the patients as instructed by the doctor. If the nurse is operating in an assembly line operating model (cited by Prof. C K Prahlad in his book, Fortune at the bottom of the pyramid), like the Arvind Eye Hospitals where there are high levels of standardisation process, a nurse needs to prepare a patient for surgery or deliver care after surgery as prescribed depending upon the roster assigned to her.*
- *A receptionist exists to route calls and in-person queries to the right person in the organisation.*
- *A project manager is there to deliver the projects on time, within budget and as per the standards or requirements of the customer.*
- *An architect exists to construct the right technical solution for the project manager.*
- *The scientific advisor to the Prime Minister exists to help the Prime Minister take the right decisions in matters involving science and technology. For example, it may involve the analysis of pros and cons of buying nuclear power or technology in exclusive arrangements with a country versus constructing an oil pipeline to be shared by multiple countries. Here, the thrust is advice to make the best of the multiple decision options available. Now, the scientific advisor to the Prime Minister may exist so that the right thrust areas for R&D investment may be identified. This is a different mandate compared to the earlier one. Here the incumbent is expected to actively search for emerging areas and then explore, pilot and scale investments. Such investments could also include tax breaks, public-private partnerships, incentives and awards or creating a new corporation to participate in the chosen sector. The thrust of exploration is higher in the latter case whereas the thrust of choice is the predominant one in the former case.*

5.4 FUNCTIONAL AFFILIATION

Functions are one of the most popular divisions in an organisation. Even when the organisation is divided into strategic business units that operate independently, the Strategic Business Unit in turn has

to be divided into functional teams or departments. This same concept at the macro level will also be referred beneath at the micro level of the job and will be called job functions.

The basic functions of any organisation include the following:

   I. Sales and Business Development
  II. Research and Development/Solution Development
 III. Production
 IV. Customer Service
  V. Commercial
 VI. Finance and Accounting
VII. Human Resources

It is important to understand the functional affiliation of the job under consideration. Hiring managers look for potential limitations in candidates from a functional standpoint. In the absence of certain threshold attitudes, skills and capabilities; candidates get rejected while applying for the position that is affiliated to the function. In the upcoming paragraphs, the threshold expectations are detailed according to the function and also certain tips are given on how to showcase their suitability.

5.4.1   Sales and Business Development

The key expectation in sales and business development is to persuade clients, make a sale and chase targets.

The hiring managers will eliminate anyone with the following traits:

(a) Shy or reticent nature
(b) Poor communication
(c) Poor listening skills
(d) Low interpersonal comfort
(e) Unable to take criticism
(f) Not being quick on one's feet

In the selection process of a sales and business development job, it will be helpful to:

(a) Showcase persuasion techniques
(b) Explain how failure was dealt in the past
(c) Be quick to react, but, be careful how to respond if not confident.

5.4.2   R&D or Solutions Development

In the function of R&D or solution development, one designs frameworks, solves complex problems and produces valuable intellectual property. A highly analytical approach characterizes R&D. Display of any of the following symptoms will concern the hiring managers on candidate suitability to all R&D positions:

(a) Poor logical or analytical rigor
(b) Anything negative that the candidate demonstrates while solving difficult problems
(c) Anything that shows lack of subject matter expertise, or failure to demonstrate high or adequate levels of expertise

Following are some of the tips for preparation:

(a) Highlight any case of complex problems solved in the past
(b) Draw attention to any long pursuit
(c) Showcase proof of subject matter expertise or analytical ability

5.4.3   Production

As its name suggests, predictable output, whether in the form of material, software or representation is produced by this function or department for given specifications.

For any position in production departments, the hiring managers are concerned with timeliness, quality, cost and incremental improvements.

Following are the traits that will be a matter of concern:

(a) Lack of attention to detail
(b) Lack of consistency and predictability
(c) Inability to coordinate projects
(d) Non-application of mind/common sense

Some of the tips for preparation are as follows:

(a) Showcase how you improved something
(b) Highlight what you did to be consistent
(c) Showcase comfort with routine
(d) Highlight anything done which involved significant planning and coordination

5.4.4   Customer Service

The customer service function focuses on responding to customers' queries or complaints and finds a reasonable resolution to them. The employee in this function should be able to enhance the customer experience.

Following indicators present in candidates will be a matter of concern to hiring managers:

(a) Poor listening skills
(b) Lack of empathy
(c) Rude demeanor
(d) Not being precise in communication or articulation
(e) Impatience

Some of the tips for preparation are as follows:

(a) Provide proof of diffusing a difficult situation
(b) Showcase how others reach out to you for help
(c) Showcase your motivations for solving other people's problems

5.4.5   Commercial

The function of commercials helps the company draw a contract with its customers and suppliers for business transactions. The goal is to minimise business risks while maximising profit potential.

There are some lack points that will disqualify candidates for positions in commercial which are as follows:

(a) Not being comfortable with numbers
(b) Unable to think on your feet
(c) Reluctant to negotiate or raise issues
(d) Unfamiliar with laws governing contracts
(e) Poor at documentation or following processes

Some of the tips for preparation are as follows:

(a) Showcase any successful negotiations you completed
(b) Highlight any achievement involving detail, focusing on high consequences for oversight
(c) Emphasise on how quickly you dealt with an emerging situation
(d) Showcase how you understand others' goals and motives

5.4.6   Finance and Accounts

The function of finance and accounts measures business performance for the shareholders and management. It also involves exercising control of investments and expenditures and optimising tax and cash flow in accordance with the relevant laws.

Following traits in an applicant will be a matter of concern for the hiring managers:

(a) Uncomfortable with numbers
(b) Being unclear about accounting fundamentals
(c) Lacking attention to detail

Some of the tips for preparation:

(a) Showcase any experience in budgeting and expense control
(b) Highlight how you tracked processes systematically
(c) Highlight anything done which shows comfort with accounting concepts

5.4.7   Human Resources

The human resource personnel define and deploy policies, processes and practices that govern decisions for employees in line with business contexts, laws and market environments.

Following traits will be a concern to the hiring managers when someone applies for human resources positions:

(a) Unable to emotionally relate to people
(b) Does not enjoy solving people's problems
(c) Unfamiliar with basic laws governing employment
(d) Uncomfortable being a number two partner, or support person

Some of the tips for preparation are as follows:

(a) Showcase any instance of counseling
(b) Prepare well on employment laws and any news regarding the same

(c) Showcase how you resolved a situation utilizing existing institutional framework

(d) Any instance of partnering with a colleague or senior in activities

5.5   KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND KEY RESULT AREAS

Key Result Areas (KRAs) are not merely an elaboration of the mandate. While mandate is directional, KRAs are more contractual. A mandate describes why the job exists, KRAs describe what must be delivered and to what standards.

KRAs get expanded to goals and targets and could form the basis for incentives or performance pay disbursements.

A Training co-coordinator can have the following key result areas:

1. *To empanel as per the laid out process and guidelines, the best providers of training services for the needs of the group. This might involve getting subject matter experts to evaluate providers and securing their go ahead for such empanelment.*
2. *To plan and execute a training schedule of programs as per the needs and the organisation's delivery commitments.*
3. *To notify and ensure the right employees attend the programs*
4. *To maintain training records for analysis, inspection and audit pertaining to planned and actual attendees, feedback on every program and faculty and expenses incurred for the year per program and otherwise under appropriate heads*
5. *To forward to the finance department after verification request to pay training providers as per agreed contractual terms based on the invoice raised by the providers*

In dynamic environments, the KRAs could change year on year or even more frequently. The KRAs, hence directly map to the job mandate.

Also the KRAs can be changed depending on the organizational structure and how it has divided its work. For example, in an organisation, the KRA number 5 of the training co-coordinator is to forward to the finance department after verification the request to pay training providers, may be done by an independent training auditor. The organisation could have found it right to separate the two jobs to prevent collusion between the co-coordinator and service provider in the interest of good governance. Alternatively, the organisation could decide this as a big overhead to have auditors in addition to co-coordinators, and hence may get the training feedback administered electronically and independently and pay the training providers only if the feedback is above a certain value.

Similarly in some organisations, collections are not the responsibility of sales, while in organiaations that are delivering services, it is usually the accountability if not the direct responsibility of sales personnel. The need to get a solution accepted as delivered is central to managing customer expectations and scope. Hence payment, once the customer has accepted the deliverable becomes central responsibility of the sales person. This is despite the fact that the solution is delivered by a technical person in the organisation.

So, to summarise, the organisational structure and the operating model determine the KRAs of the role or job. Very often, persons doing the same job in a competitor company become unsuitable or not qualified enough to perform the job in the new company for this reason. They have different structures and operating models and hence different KRAs. For the same reason, when organisational restructuring takes place, it upsets the employability quotient of the incumbents. This is because KRAs are added, changed, deleted in line with the new structure and operating model.

By comparing similar looking jobs for different mandates and emphasis, one becomes more job literate. Any employer will be delighted to know that individuals are aware of these differences and can articulate why they are suitable to deliver on the mandate.

5.6   JOB FUNCTIONS

A job function is usually the core of the job expressed in terms of functionalities.

Its articulation helps in determining the *prima facie* suitability of an applicant to the job. It is far more tightly tied to the mandate and is not affected by the changes in organisational structure or even the operating model. If any of the job functions go, the job itself goes. For example, if the organisation has decided to outsource its manufacturing, the role of production supervisor no longer exists in the parent organisation.

Job functions of a sales job comprise making sales calls to present organisational products and services, order booking and communicating details of the order to the right stakeholders. One cannot take away any of these job functions and still have the sales job.

Similar job functions of scheduling programs and communicating to potential participants are present for the training co-coordinator. No one can take away any of these two functions and still have the job of training co-coordinator.

Similarly, diagnosis of the disease based on symptoms observed and prescribing the course of medicines and additional tests are the job functions of a doctor. However making case study presentations to the peer group in the hospital is not a job function, but may be a KRA.

The job functions of a job across organisations in an industry and even across industries will be common. A job function helps create a core job archetype. When you are still a student, this job archetype anchors all your preparation and qualification efforts. But when you are applying for *a* job, the specific KRAs as moderated by organisational structure and operating model must anchor your *presentation* efforts. This is the time when a person can tailor his resume to the job he is applying for. A person can do this by superimposing the job KRAs over and above the job functions for which you have been qualifying yourself.

For example, if you are applying for a doctor's position and are likely to be be posted in rural areas, then you might have an additional responsibility to report patterns on communicable diseases. If for the same doctor's position in an urban setting, contributing to case documentation by patient racial profile would be a key responsibility. Both reporting patterns on contributing to case bank are not core functions of being a doctor. They exist because of the different settings. In the urban context, communicable disease pattern is probably analysed by a specialised cell that enters medical transcripts. In the rural context, there are not much divergent racial profiles to observe and add to the case bank. So, if you are going to apply for the doctor's position in the rural setting, then you need to highlight your taste for observing patterns and alerting relevant stakeholders. For the urban setting, you need to highlighten the research orientation that you would bring to the job.

5.7   JOB DESCRIPTION

The word job description (JD) is rather loosely used. It is used to connote all the things about a job that you want to know to prepare and present for the job. Hence it encompasses the mandate, the KRAs, the

functions, tasks, activities and the interfaces. A job specification (really person specification) contains the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform the job.

'Job description' for us, is a description of how the job is performed. It is a long paragraph that informs you how the mandate is to be realised in practice. JD also clarifies the hand-off points, i.e., where the job leaves and another job starts. A well-written job description also places the job in the context of the overall department or team. Since it is a communication to the individual, it is usually written in the form of second person.

For example, the description of the brand manager in a bank would be as following:

"As the brand manager of the company, you will review and suitably modify all external communication to customers, investors, partners and other external stakeholders. As far as internal communication is concerned, you would be the reference point for the human resources director in a consultative capacity. You would be taking several initiatives to build the desired brand of the bank in the minds of external stakeholders within the sanctioned brand-building budget. You would be directly accountable for brand recall as measured by the annual external surveys. (Brand recall is how many people are able to name your bank when asked about names of banks they know of). As the bank enters the rural markets and solicits rural customers, you would be developing specific brand delivery strategies and support brand promotion events in the rural territories in your jurisdiction. The execution of brand promotion and other brand delivery strategies defined by you would be done by the rural circle manager and the associated budget also controlled by the rural circle manager".

5.8 UNDERSTAND KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

It is important to understand with what other roles the job requires to interact with, both within company and external agencies. It is essential to grasp this for job success. During the hiring stage, if an applicant showcases that he or she can relate to the stakeholders, it increases the hiring managers' comfort.

One should give some thought to whom is he or she is expected to interact with, and for what reason. For example, one might have to work with others for the following reasons:

 (a) Understanding problem
 (b) status updating
 (c) Getting reviewed
 (d) Explaining solution
 (e) Negotiating
 (f) Persuading

To map stakeholders, it is required to think about the following people:

 (a) Team
 (b) Manager
 (c) Peer
 (d) Supplier
 (e) Customer

5.9   UNDERSTAND VOLUMES AND DIMENSIONS

It is important to understand the quantity of activity or transaction that is going to happen within the business. It is usually expressed in terms that can be understood and related by the organisation.

For example, these could include the following:

(a) Number of calls (customer service function)
(b) Number of people supported (in human resources)
(c) Number of processes supported (accounts posting)
(d) Number of sales calls (sales function)

Generally, it is not a good idea to ask about volumes during an interview as the hiring manager might feel that the candidate is hesitant or reluctant to work. If, however, handling volumes is someone's strength, then he or she should showcase this strength.

5.10   UNDERSTAND ACTIVITIES IN A WORKDAY

Regardless of the job applied for, one should try to visualise at least five major activities in which he or she will be involved during three different workdays. For example, what will be required at the beginning or end of a fiscal quarter, in the days before an important deadline or during a period of review?

Try to imagine how to cope with some of the physical requirements of these activities– including travelling for job, commuting to work every day, stretching to meet goals, etc. An applicant should highlight any similar situation he or she has been through.

Also, the candidate should take into consideration if he or she would be comfortable doing these activities day after day?

5.11   JOB AND PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

Job specifications are what the organisation believes are the attributes possessed by successful job holders. They usually encompass educational qualifications, experience levels, knowledge, skills, attitudes and key challenges.

These have been discussed in details in the upcoming sections.

5.11.1   Educational Qualification

The points under educational qualification can be as following:

(a) It would involve the level of qualification – diploma, graduate, post graduate, etc.
(b) It would certainly indicate the subject area – mechanical design, aeronautical engineering, medicine, etc.
(c) It could have grades, marks – Only first class and above need to apply.

5.11.2   Experience Levels (Especially in the Relevant Areas)

The points under experience levels can be as following:

(a) For example, for a regional sales manager, it would be specification of following experience range – say, between 7 and 11 years of work experience.

(b) It would also detail the area of experience – FMCG, White goods – understanding of distributor management, communication and training of distributor and direct sales personnel on company products and services. Experience in rural markets is preferable.

(c) The role or position in which one has worked – should have managed a sales team for at least 2 years and delivered on the targets set.

(d) It could specify other desired experience – experience in preparing a sales promotion budget is desirable.

5.11.3 Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes

For the same regional sales manager job, the following could be the other job-specifications:

(a) Successful job holders will know about standard channel partner review mechanisms and revenue recognition. (Channel partner review is how the sales persons from each distributor are doing. It helps the organisation decide to appoint a new distributor, recognise the existing distributor or incentivise the distributor for higher performance. Revenue recognition is when a sale is recognised as revenue in the books. For example, if there is a high return rate on goods sold from the distributor or if the contract with the distributor is such that some of the goods are being sent to the distributor on trial basis, revenue for the firm will not be recognised as soon as the goods are delivered to the distributor.)

(b) Successful job holders will be interpersonally skilled and can successfully resolve conflicts between one's sales team and distributors. They would also be skilled in using sales analytics software to do trend analysis, productivity analysis, etc.

(c) Successful job holders will be confident presenters of the company's value offerings to distributors, will be perseverant in the face of less than enthusiastic response from channel partners and be willing to handle the calls of tough people.

5.11.4 Key Challenges

The best way to learn about the challenges faced by a job holder is to have a discussion. The challenges can either be company or job specific. This is the point where most of the current employees go wrong in the job, as they fail to understand the challenges and gear themselves up. Surmounting these challenges lead to high performance. A nuanced understanding of key challenges and its presentation will delight any hiring manager, especially at the entry levels. At more experienced levels, one could expect to have questions on key challenges as well.

The following are examples of key challenges:

(a) Coordination
(b) Complexity of problems required to be solved
(c) Volume of transactions
(d) Need to switch mindset for the different responsibilities
(e) Budgetary constraints

5.12 APPLICATION OF JOB LITERACY

The concepts of job literacy help a candidate prepare or present oneself for a job.

The subtle nuances of job mandate, KRAs and job specifications that are particular to a job help tailor one's presentation in the application and interview more accurately and appropriately.

The understanding of the job mandate, job functions and general specifications help prepare one's candidature.

When individual job mandates, functions and specifications are generalised based on common patterns, they create a job archetype. A job archetype is a core job description and specification that is prevalent across organisations and even industries and encompass similar job functions.

We will refer to these as job profiles.

The different kinds of job profiles encountered for entry level are as follows:

1. Processing / Clerical
2. Professional and Technical
3. Servicing
4. Liaising and Influencing
5. Selling
6. Supervising or Administrative

They are illustrated and detailed in Fig. 5.1.
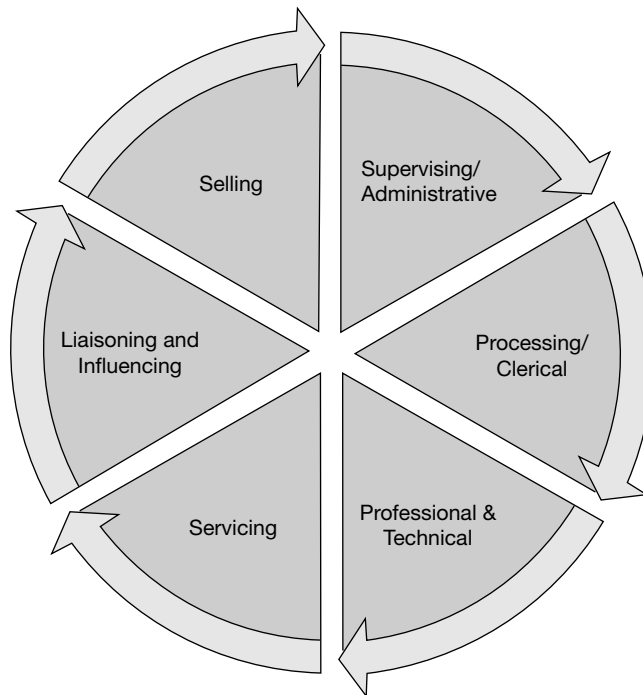
Fig. 5.1 Job Archetype: The generalized job profiles

Adjacent job profiles have been placed in the adjacent sectors of this circle. For example both liaising and selling have commonalities in terms of being able to influence without much authority. Similarly, selling and supervising involves getting other people to do what one wants them to do – of course one amongst them is with authority. Servicing and liaising is about getting something done for others, servicing and solving share the commonality that they are both problem solving for clients and understanding the problem itself is half the battle won. Similarly, solving and process-oriented profiles both produce an end outcome, one through procedures and other through decision making and designing. Processing and supervising the profile both involve guaranteeing outcomes, one by oneself and one by breaking down work into constituent parts and supervising the individuals to deliver.

Please note that the right circles (in Fig. 5.2) represent adjacent employment readiness capabilities and can be superimposed on the left circle to indicate the key employment readiness competency clusters that are significant deal breakers for performing a job profile.
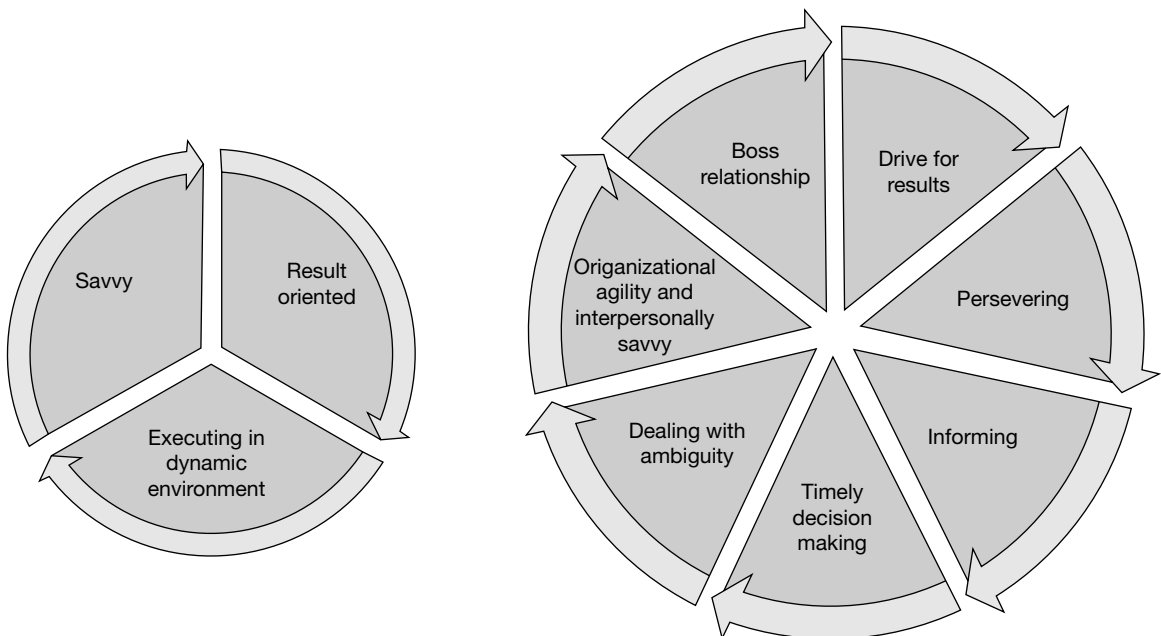
Fig. 5.2   Employment readiness competencies map for the job archetypes

For example, for the processing job profile (example back office BPO), the key employment readiness cluster is result oriented. If we deep dive, it is persevering and drive for results. These jobs involve an individual to keep up with a standard operating procedure and also be resourceful enough to close the transaction for the customer by using escalation mechanisms. Individuals who can also intelligently inform about their work (note this is from the cluster – operating in a dynamic environment) are looked at for more complex jobs.

Similarly a retail sales person at the store need to be savvy as well as results oriented. He or she must be able to convert a reluctant prospect into a customer by engaging and convincing.

A software engineer essentially deals with more back office like profile while supporting an application and a more problem solving or technical profile while creating or improving a software application.

Each of the entry level job profiles are described and illustrated with examples in the upcoming sections.

5.12.1 Processing/Clerical Jobs

Processing or clerical jobs are the profiles in which the job holder processes information or material based on standard procedures. The BPO industry and back office functions of many organisations have such job profiles in plenty. The incumbents of such jobs do transaction processing or queries' responding. Usually, the response to queries is more impersonal than with a strong interface with the other party.

An example of the processing profile is bookkeeping and ledger posting in the financing and accounting departments. It is characterised by the need to diligently apply rules and procedures and within prescribed boundaries take some decisions or calls. Executing is the critical competency cluster, within which timely reporting and informing, task and priority related decisions need to be made.

Dependability and reliability are key expectations from others. The job has got a repetitive cyclical pattern to it. In the result orientation cluster, perseverance and tenacity are sought more than drive and resourcefulness, i.e., the job holder is expected to be persevering, dedicated and not creative.

Public administration, financial, transport and communication services' industries employ more than 8 million of the clerical or processing job profiles

Diligence, predictability, turn-around, basic comprehension, ability to report would be tested in such profiles. Could you read or visualise one of the above industries and the job profile? It will be worthwhile to dig deeper and actually discuss with a job incumbent on the basic job mandate, job description, job functions and KRAs.

It also includes to find out about the selection calendar of some large employers in these industries.

When I did ask potential candidates as to how and why they think they deserve the job, this is what they had to say.

(a) because…..I took lot of initiative in my college and for example, organised the drive to collect clothes for flood relief at Uttarakand.

(b) because….I have had the experience at my fathers' shop, tallying the accounts book at the end of the month. Once, we had to go through 3 months of transaction history and I was able to find out that some entries had not been recorded by an employee who had left the shop suddenly.

(c) because…..I convinced my friends to give up smoking and some of them even started exercising. I was able to present facts and figures on the same through researching the internet and several studies

Yes, "b" is the most appropriate response and this candidate is likely to hit the ground running

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As an exercise, do scan news items by the help of which you predict that these job opportunities are going to arise in the ensuing months.

In your state, estimate the number of such job profiles that exist. How and where will you start the estimation? Write your answers in the given box.
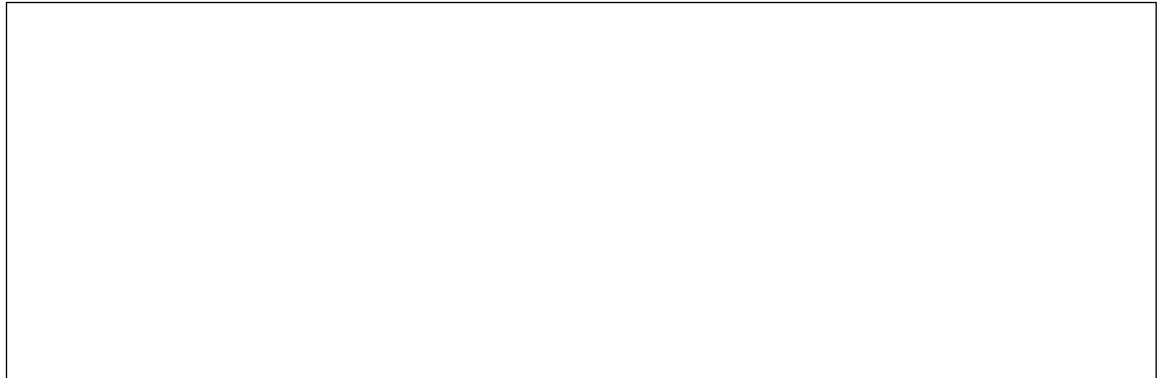
5.12.2 Professional and Technical Job Profile

We will now discuss the second kind of job profile – problem solving. Here the major expectation is that technical know-how is used to solve a problem.

The most classical example is the programmer of the software industry. There is also a prevalent myth that the IT world is full of programmer jobs only. The bulk actually is to maintain an application or program or to test one. It is not to program itself in the first place. However, even the software engineer (maintainer) is a largely problem solving job profile. Someone, either a user or a technical team is reporting an incident or a problem or is asking for a small feature and this profile uses their technical know-how to provide the solution or the service in the most optimum fashion.

Core problem solving skills and analytical aptitude are frequently checked in these profiles. Also, the ability to systematically approach a problem or situation is checked. Of the employability competency clusters, certainly persevering, task and problem solving related decision making, informing and reporting are critical tasks. At the entry level, there is less of leading or influencing expectation. The influence or leadership comes from knowing the context and the problem well.

In India, an estimated 2.5 lakhs end up in such a job profile each year, of which 60% are engineering graduates and others are non-engineering.

Once on the job, lack of big picture, not being dependable are all negatives to being employable. Being flexible and the ability to get along with a diverse group is also challenging for many. The ability to learn on the job and learn quickly becomes another differentiator. Since in the industry, there is lot of dynamism in the tools used to solve problems, the need to be constantly abreast of the latest tools is a positive. The expectation is to intelligently seek help from others and likewise provide help to others.

- *Lab technicians, who take measurements and interpret them – ECG, blood count, X-ray, ultrasound are also a category of professional and technical people. Each of these involve judgment and interpretation characteristic of a problem solver.*
- *Research assistants who perform calculations, statisticians who collect data and perform analysis are all "solvers" too. Quality controllers in manufacturing are also solvers. They are definitely using a process, but also judgment of a technical nature to come to conclusions. All of them are problem solving or technical and professional job archetypes.*
- *All teachers belong to this job profile. So do auditors.*

Technical qualification and certification become important pre-requisites or filters for a candidate to get invited to a selection process. Written tests of a problem solving or a skill demonstrating task assignments are common selection processes. The working ability to team, transact, communicate and related become important filters too for selection and advancement.

Often, it is not intuitive to correlate life experiences with these job requirements. There is a deliberate thinking and preparation required to present the case for getting the job. It is also important that the whole presentation gives a feel that you are natural, confident, at home in the situation though trying to put your best foot forward – does not look "false/artificial".

5.12.3   Servicing Job Profile

Examples of servicing profile include the relationship manager of your bank, career counselor, the employee of concierge services. As you would notice, real jobs do not neatly fall into one bucket but can extend to another.

- *For example, the cashier at the bank or the clerk at the railway reservation counter can be a processing or servicing job profile, depending on the mandate or orientation given to the job by the organisation.*
- *In the ICICI bank, this relationship manager has been given a selling slant in addition to the servicing slant. For the cashier at the bank, it might be given a processing slant in addition to the servicing slant. The career counselor on the other hand, might have been asked to "solve or guide" in addition to service a request.*

Two jobs, apparently similar can be really distinct based on the composition of servicing or solving or processing. In order to know this, you need to understand the mandate, function, responsibilities and tasks of the job.

- *For example: A nurse at the hospital is in servicing job profile with a bit of solving added to it.*
- *Similarly, the store clerks at the pharmacy might do servicing and selling.*

Customer Savviness is a key requisite for the servicing job profile.

Beyond merely relating to others, the higher expectation here is that the job holder bonds with the customer. The job holder should also know what can be offered as a solution to which need. The servicing job profile is a major destination for graduates who pass out, especially as a part of small and medium-sized establishments.

Since the servicing job profile involves doing work without the benefit of too much inspection, a degree of independence and trustworthiness gets a premium.

5.12.4   The Sales Job Profile

The sales job profile is intuitively the simplest to understand. 'Meet targets' is the straightforward mandate. Savviness, whether you are selling to an organisation or to an end consumer is a key employability trait. Usually, selling environments are dynamic, hence the need to creatively drive results and keep at it. Dynamic environment calls for quick decisions and the ability to bounce back from failure.

Most of the jobs in the Small and Medium Enterprises are sales job profiles. The wholesale and retail trade industry employs the sales job profile. It is a whopping 30 million jobs. It is perhaps the single biggest destination for the graduate seeking employment. The industry also absorbs a lot of non-graduates.

Presentability, savviness to deal with, being prompt and attention to customers, high presence of mind are distinguishing characteristics for those who are successful in this job. In the Indian economy, as this industry matures and operates to focus on the customer experience while buying, and especially in the urban areas, the demand for graduates in this job profile will increase, as opposed to current trend of employing non-graduates.

A good employee in this job directly translates into high benefits.

Recall the story of "Ramu and Ramya" and why the owner valued Ramya. Her presence of mind, savviness, correct approach to the context made her much more valuable. She was able to spot an opportunity while Ramu was merely completing the task.

To look beyond the stated and obvious point for value addition is a key characteristic.

The selection process could involve a situation-response analysis of your approach. Questions would be like, suppose this happened to you....what would you do....?

Previous exposure in the industry, even as an apprentice, comfortability in interacting with strangers, keenness to face new situations are some of the advantages that make a candidate employable.

Reaching this job opportunity is often a big challenge. The industry is largely unorganised and recruits on needs, not so much in a seasonal or structured fashion. Diverse job hunting skills are required to figure out where the opportunity exists and how to get a valid introduction to the decision maker.

5.12.5   Liaison and Influencing Job Profile

Influencers understand very deeply how individuals and organisations work. They are able to sense quickly through face-to-face interactions with critical people across the levels the latent structures, networks and cross-currents behind the façade of the formal organisational command structure. They know who, where, how and what for decisions, especially, those relating to committing resources outside their organisational boundaries. They have a quiet but effective way of doing things. They may not be the impressive sales types, who impress with their presence and articulation.

From the agent who represents you to get a passport or visa to the lobbyist at the White House, the liaison and influence job profile is a significant one. Usually, it reports directly to senior management, even though it might be staffed by an entry level graduate.

Therefore, the key employability trait comes from being able to communicate with the top management. Reporting and informing – executing in a dynamic environment and making timely decisions becomes a differentiator. Also critical is the Savviness cluster, as this job holder has to navigate complex interfaces with the party liaisoned with.

At the end of the day they are also result oriented. They are constantly at their agenda. Again contrasting with the sales job profile, they do not push a proposition "in your face". Their jobs have a complexity and a desired set of outcomes, which are more qualitative. The sales job profile, by contrast has more quantitative and definitive outcomes. The sales job profile is more measurable.

This job profile has much similarity with the sales. Both need to be savvy, result oriented, take decisions and bets in a dynamic environment.

5.12.6   The Supervising or the Administrative/Executive Job Profile

The ability to lead others, to communicate with clarity, to resolve conflicts with tact are some of the key success factors of this profile.

The foreman, shift lead, office manager, executive assistant are all in a supervising job profile in different ways. They usually have reportees to administer, sometimes people to work with them for a task or a project or an outcome.

Often, the profile supervises employees of distributors, suppliers, etc. Once again, the ability to keep a tab on how the supervised ones are receiving their context, their challenges and even the act of supervision differentiates the successful and the unsuccessful. The ability to enthuse a team of people to either produce or sell is the key characteristic.

Wholesale and retail trade, transportation, hotels and restaurants in the services sector (6.5 million) and the manufacturing sector (8 million) employ such kinds of profile in large numbers.

Table 5.1 illustrates how a given job can be classified using the generic job profiles. Would you like to fill the rest?

Table 5.1   Matching Jobs to Job Profiles

Job Title	Profile Classification	Core Knowledge	Cluster: Dynamic Environment	Cluster: Savviness	Cluster: Drive for Results
Store Clerk – Pharmacy	Service	Medium	Low	High	Low
Cashier – Bank	Service	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Nurse	Service	Medium			
X-ray technician	Professional & Technical	High			
Accountant	Clerical	High			
BPO – back office	Clerical	Low			
Head hunter	Sales	Medium			
Insurance Agent	Sales	Medium			
PP agent	Service	Low			
Materials Clerk	Administrative, Executive, Managerial	Low			
Production Supervisor	Administrative, Executive, Managerial	Medium			
Relationship Manager – Bank	Service	Medium			
Programmer	Professional & Technical	High			

5.12.7   For the IT and ITES Sector

In Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5, we will apply all that we have learnt through the concepts and examples of job literacy for four major job profiles in the IT and the ITES sector. Four core job profiles are analysed – Back Office, ADM, Product Engineering and Infrastructure Administrator.

I. Back Office

These are the back office entry level job profiles used in the business process management and outsourcing sector (BPO). The contact center employees who may be doing business process transactions for the front office are a variant. Major differences include oral communication and accent neutralisation, as often these employees talk to the clients' customers across continents.

For simplicity, the back office associate supporting customer service through chat and email modes have been chosen. The key questions of job literacy are applied to give a practical handle to candidates on this job profile.

Similarly, the level 1 technical helpdesk job is also a variant of the back office job profile. These jobs will more likely get automated and shrink in the next 5 years and hence have not been the big focus in this book. The job handling more complex tasks in technical infrastructure is addressed as part of the Infrastructure Administrator job profile.

Table 5.2 Analysis of Entry Level Job in IT Enabled Back Office (ITES)

Key Questions / Aspects	Answers & Information
1. What is the title? What clues does it give on the content of the job? Which Job Archetype does the job belong to?	Associate – Customer Care. It is an individual contributor job at the entry level. It is a clerical / processing job profile
2. What is the mandate or purpose?	To resolve (customer) queries through web-chat or email within the stipulated SLA's using standard operating procedures
3. Which function does the job belong to? What are the basic threshold expectations to belong to this function?	The job belongs to the servicing function at the parent organization, which is often outsourced and held at the partner organization (ITES setup) in the production function
4. What are the key responsibilities?	To address different customer queries as per standard procedures To escalate in a timely manner to ensure resolution of customer queries To update data and information as required for reports and other documentation on time
5. What are the core job functions?	Dealing with customer queries & Resolution using pre-referenced procedures
6. How do you describe the job in the organizational context? How does the job map in the flow of business?	The job begins when a customer emails or chats with an information inquiry or a problem incident. The job holder listens to the customer and classifies the inquiry or incident using a ready checklist of questions (a question tree). The job holder then matches the resolution or answer to the question asked and is required to guide the customer with the answer or the resolution. Occasionally, when the job holder finds that the query is new or is unsure of the information asked or problem reported, is required to escalate this to their supervisor in a timely manner. Using the company's electronic systems, the job holder is expected to update details regarding the incident and the resolution / the inquiry and the information

7. Who are the key stakeholders? What relationships do the job holder has with these stakeholders?	The inquiring customer is the primary stakeholder and the relationship is to guide or resolve the customer. The supervisor is the stakeholder to whom transactions not resolved at one's end are reported for either getting guidance to resolve or transferring the same for appropriate resolution. The third stakeholder is the team that peruses the information records and reports generated by the job holder
8. What are the key volumes and dimensions of the job?	The job is repetitious as well as high volume. Depending on the nature of the query, transaction volumes can be as high as 20 per hour
9. What does a typical day look like?	By logging in with one's identity, taking stock of missed messages, checking if the communication equipment is in order and responding to emails or chats. Periodically, the job holder also updates information and reports about the previous hours' activities
10. What is the person specification of the successful incumbent?	
a. What challenges should they be able to overcome?	Must be able to operate high volume without getting fatigued Must be able to deal with irate customers Must be able to listen well and politely help customer clarify their inquiry or problem statement Must be willing to take help / escalate quickly Must not miss reporting and information updates
b. What knowledge and skills must the incumbent possess?	Listening Skills Written Communication skills Thorough understanding of incidents/inquiries and their resolution references Must be patient & detail oriented Comfort with communication equipment and computer applications
c. What kind of previous exposure and experience is an advantage?	Assignments that involved high levels of interaction and high requirements to get it first time right by using systematic approach. E.g. Being the event inquiry desk for a major event at college which required you to interact with public, responding to their queries in a timely manner
d. Which of the competency clusters for employment readiness becomes more critical and why?	From the results oriented cluster – perseverance, from the operating in a dynamic environment cluster – informing and timely decision making, and from the savviness cluster – interpersonal savviness

II. Application Development and Maintenance (ADM)

These entry level profiles are used for developing custom applications for clients or internal teams to specifications. These applications are developed to work in given environments, and built using platforms and front ends. Most likely these applications have a middle layer where the core logic of the application is conceived and a database is constructed to administer application users or hold inputs and outputs.

Its variation is development to unlock the functionalities of standard package applications (like Enterprise Resource Planning or Customer Relationship Management). In such development, the functional consultant specifies the functionalities required to realise a business process and the technical consultant (the entry level job) will use the package platform to develop the same.

For simplicity, the custom application developer or application enhancement scenario has been chosen. To perform the variant job profile, the developer must be familiar with the platform and also have an appreciation of the core functionalities of the standard package.

Table 5.3   Analysis of Entry Level Job in Application Development & Maintenance

Key Questions	Answers & Information: Application Development & Maintenance
1. What is the title? What clues does it give on the content of the job? Which Job Archetype does the job belong to?	Software Engineer. It is an individual contributor job at the entry level. It belongs to the professional and technical – problem solving job profile
2. What is the mandate or purpose?	To develop, maintain or test code as per given specifications
3. Which function does the job belong to? What are the basic threshold expectations to belong to this function?	Belongs to the solutions development and partly to the production function
4. What are the key responsibilities?	To write or maintain program code outlined in application specifications To perform unit testing of the code developed to ensure they provide the desired output To document as per standards To identify and communicate technical problems, processes and solutions
5. What are the core job functions?	Program code development, validating and verifying program code
6. How do you describe the job in the organizational context? How does the job map in the flow of business?	The job begins when the project manager or the business analyst defines requirements and the application designer has converted this into a high level and then a low level design. In application maintenance modes, the job begins when a change request for enhancing the application or module of the application is defined. The job holder then develops the program or enhances it and verifies it before releasing it to the project team for next steps
7. Who are the key stakeholders? What relationships do the job holder has with these stakeholders?	Project manager and application designer are like customers whose requirements are being delivered to by the job holder. They also review the job holders' work
8. What are the key volumes and dimensions of the job?	Lines of code per day or function points delivered and number of assigned change requests – both major and minor at any point in time are the typical dimensions

9. What does a typical day look like?	Logging into the development environment, working on the versioned artifact, ensuring there are no compilation errors and checking it into the environment for next steps. Ensuring documentation is completed for work just checked in
10. What is the person specification of the successful incumbent?	
a. What challenges should they be able to overcome?	Analytical and systematic approach to turn around the required output first time right Be able to take help at points to speed up one's work Ensure their work and its presentation is usable by other colleagues readily, as it is clear and well documented
b. What knowledge and skills must the incumbent possess?	Well versed with programming concepts Familiarity with the given syntax Problem solving skills
c. What kind of previous exposure and experience is an advantage?	Team working Hands on experience in writing or enhancing code
d. Which of the competency clusters for employment readiness becomes more critical and why?	Executing in dynamic environment – Informing, dealing with ambiguity & timely decision making Results Oriented – drive for results and perseverance Savviness – Interpersonally savvy

III. Product Engineering

These entry level profiles are used for realising system requirements defined by lead engineers. They are a part of projects where platform products or software embedded in machines and equipment is created. They vary from the application development and maintenance in one important aspect in the sense that the knowledge of the engineering environment and its features and constraints are a core criterion in successful job performance in this job profile.

Variations include dedicated entry level verification engineers who verify software and embedded software products under different product and integration environments. While most entry level jobs are going to be of the verification profile, the primary testing methods are for the product engineer who realise a system requirement. This is because this first-hand know-how is what will help a successful verification.

Hence the software or embedded software product engineering profile has been chosen and elaborated using the concepts of job literacy.

Table 5.4   Analysis of Entry Level Job in Product Engineering

Key Questions	Answers & Information: Product Engineering – Software
1. What is the title? What clues does it give on the content of the job? Which Job Archetype does the job belong to?	Software Engineer. It is an individual contributor job at the entry level. It belongs to the professional and technical – problem solving job profile

2. What is the mandate or purpose?	To realize or verify the low level design in the given engineering environment
3. Which function does the job belong to? What are the basic threshold expectations to belong to this function?	Belongs to R & D / solutions development function
4. What are the key responsibilities?	To understand the System requirements specification and its nuances in the software to be engineered To realize the low level design in the given engineering environment To unit test the software (or module) and verify it To deploy or integrate such software into the overall system To create product and user documentation as required
5. What are the core job functions?	System realization to specification, verification and validation
6. How do you describe the job in the organizational context? How does the job map in the flow of business?	The job begins when the lead engineer has prepared a system requirements and the low level design. The job holder realizes it in the given engineering environment keeping in mind scalability, resource constraint and system performance considerations. This realization is first self-verified in the development environment and versioned before releasing it to the project team for next steps
7. Who are the key stakeholders? What relationships do the job holder has with these stakeholders?	The project manager and lead engineer are both customers and reviewers of the job holders' work
8. What are the key volumes and dimensions of the job?	Lines of code or function points delivered are the key volumes/dimensions
9. What does a typical day look like?	Logging into the development environment, working on the versioned artifact, ensuring there are no compilation errors and checking it into the environment for next steps. Ensuring relevant documentation is completed for both developers and users
10. What is the person specification of the successful incumbent?	
a. What challenges should they be able to overcome?	Analytical and systematic approach to turn around the required output first time right Strive to provide more elegant solutions keeping in mind performance requirements and system constraints Understand integration nuances when their output is integrated Be able to take high level help and use it to speed up one's work Ensure their work and its presentation is usable by other colleagues readily as it is clear and well documented

b. What knowledge and skills must the incumbent possess?	Well versed with programming concepts Familiarity with the given syntax Understand interplay between one's output and larger system environment – the platform or operating system Problem solving and analytical skills
c. What kind of previous exposure and experience is an advantage?	Team working Hands-on experience in writing or enhancing code
d. Which of the competency clusters for employment readiness becomes more critical and why?	Executing in dynamic environment – Informing, dealing with ambiguity & timely decision making Results Oriented – drive for results and perseverance Savviness – Interpersonally savvy

IV. Infrastructure Administrator (Level 2)

These entry level profiles administer IT infrastructure. Administration includes problem management – where issues reported by technical teams of users are resolved and incident management – planned maintenance of the infrastructure is undertaken.

IT infrastructure could include servers – database servers, security servers, web servers; storage devices and networks; local and wide area networks, computer systems and databases.

The higher variant of this job profile is the Level 3 administrator, who is often performing changes to the underlying configuration or code, doing database design as well as administration, network enhancements and major security and firewall upgrades. Usually, entry level candidates are not chosen for the L3 administrator, hence the level 2 (L2) administrator has been the focus of analysis using the key job literacy questions.

Table 5.5 Analysis of Level 2 Administrator in IT Infrastructure Management

Key Questions	Answers & Information: Infrastructure Administrator (Level 2)
1. What is the title? What clues does it give on the content of the job? Which Job Archetype does the job belong to?	Level 2 Administrator. It is an individual contributor job at the entry level. It belongs to the professional & technical as well as to the processing job profile
2. What is the mandate or purpose?	To install or configure, maintain, test or monitor IT infrastructure components (like servers, networks & storage environments), using standard methodologies
3. Which function does the job belong to? What are the basic threshold expectations to belong to this function?	Belongs to the production & operations function
4. What are the key responsibilities?	To troubleshoot problems reported by users of the network/ server/storage/database/and any other infrastructure element To perform root cause analysis to eliminate such trouble tickets and make recommendations To study and resolve issues reported by the helpdesk and other groups To install, upgrade, configure, secure or maintain networks, storage, servers, databases

5. What are the core job functions?	Troubleshooting, planned maintenance & upgrades
6. How do you describe the job in the organizational context? How does the job map in the flow of business?	The job begins when a problem is reported by the user or IT team, alternatively, the job scope begins when it is determined to make a planned maintenance of the IT infrastructure – whether applying a patch or installing/configuring a firewall or security. Enhancing the known error database or performing root cause analysis to eliminate problem incidents are the other expectations
7. Who are the key stakeholders? What relationships do the job holder has with these stakeholders?	The IT team or business user functions as the customer for the administrator. The track lead (server, storage, data, network, etc) is the supervisor, reviewer and point of escalation. The helpdesk team could pass on unresolved problems to the team of administrators to seek help for user issue resolution
8. What are the key volumes and dimensions of the job?	Ticket volume, number of patches, number of test scenarios and cases are the typical volumes and dimensions
9. What does a typical day look like?	Logging into the issue resolution system and reviewing the problems and resolving them within SLA's. Preparing checklists for planned activities like maintenance and ensuring that the sequence is adhered to. Adding to the known error database documentation and preparing root cause analysis reports could be in a typical work day
10. What is the person specification of the successful incumbent?	
a. What challenges should they be able to overcome?	Must be able to operate medium level of volume and within SLA's Have a systematic approach to work, especially in diagnostics and root cause analysis Ensure no shortcuts are taken in the activities around problem management or planned maintenance Document effectively Take help from seniors, escalate issues
b. What knowledge and skills must the incumbent possess?	Knowledge of maintenance methodologies Familiarity with the issue management tools used by the organization Diagnostic skills Systematic and careful approach, detail orientation
c. What kind of previous exposure and experience is an advantage?	Troubleshooting and maintenance of machinery or equipment Instances where one had to be prompt as well as systematic
d. Which of the competency clusters for employment readiness becomes more critical and why?	From the results oriented cluster – perseverance From Executing in dynamic environment – Informing, timely decision making and dealing with ambiguity From Savviness cluster – interpersonal savviness

We now know about the things that must make a job seeker feel equipped to get hired. We now know how to understand a job, in terms of title, mandate, responsibilities, functions, affiliations, volumes,

challenges and a typical workday. We can classify related jobs into some buckets or archetypes. We also know the major entry level job profiles in the IT and ITES industries.

In the next chapter, we will focus on the selection processes for each of these job profiles. In the appendix, we will utilise this profile analysis to help the candidates determine, where does one fits best.

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, you have learnt:
1. The method to understand a job in terms of its components.
2. The key entry level profiles in the IT and ITES industry and their description in terms of the job literacy framework.
3. The classification of jobs into generic profiles or archetypes that will help understand common job requirements across seemingly different jobs.

Points to Ponder

1. Can a person easily do multiple jobs that belong to the same job profile?
2. Is there a way to test my personality fit to jobs or job profiles?
3. How do I know I will be happy doing this job? Is there a scientific way to test this?

Try this Activity

Interview any of your friends or relatives working in the corporate world and analyse their job. The analysis is to be similar to tables 5.2 to 5.5, answering the 10 critical questions of job literacy.

6
SELECTION PROCESS AND PREPARATION TIPS: IT AND ITES SECTOR

"It usually takes me two or three days to prepare an impromptu speech."

— Mark Twain,
19ᵗʰ Century American Author and Humorist

6.1 FOUR MAJOR PROFILES

Table 6.1 is an 'at a glance' view of the key entry level jobs and the selection stages for each job that is normally deployed by the industry.

The reference job on the left hand column is the same as the one referenced in Chapter 4. These reference jobs have been chosen because the industry hires for them in high volumes.

Table 6.1 Selection Stages for Entry Level IT & ITES Job Profiles

Reference Job	Stages of Selection
Entry Level Back Office Jobs Variant: Entry Level Contact Centre Jobs Mandate / Purpose To resolve (customer) queries through web-chat or email within the stipulated SLA's using standard operating procedures Key Responsibilities To address different customer queries as per standard procedures To escalate in a timely manner to ensure resolution of customer queries To update data and information as required for reports and other documentation on time	Written Test – Verbal Ability Reading and Pronunciation (for contact centre jobs) Typing Test (for chat and, occasionally, for email) – Accuracy & Speed Technical Interview – Process related general awareness questions – curiosity, general aptitude to learn Simulated client interaction – process orientation, savviness Write a paragraph or chat as user reporting an issue / seeking clarification About college project – perseverance and team working, core values HR Interview – Flexibility questions Aspiration & Intent to stay questions About yourself questions

Entry Level Administrator Jobs (of IT Infrastructure) – L2 Administrator Mandate / Purpose To install or configure, maintain, test or monitor IT infrastructure components (like servers, networks & storage environments), using standard methodologies Key Responsibilities To troubleshoot problems reported by users of the network/server/storage/database/and any other infrastructure element To perform root cause analysis to eliminate such trouble tickets and make recommendations To study and resolve issues reported by the helpdesk and other groups To install, upgrade, configure, secure or maintain networks/storage/servers/databases	Written Test – Quantitative Ability, Verbal Ability, Logical Reasoning Interaction Session / GD – Speak your ideas in a group, Introduce yourself in a group, Respond to someone else's ideas Technical Interview – General Concepts and Awareness questions on the technical track one is going to administer Questions on area of graduation Questions on college project/internship HR Interview – Flexibility questions Aspiration & Intent to stay questions About yourself questions
Entry Level Application Development & Maintenance – Developers/Software Engineers Mandate/Purpose To develop, maintain or test code as per given specifications Key Responsibilities To write or maintain program code outlined in application specifications To perform unit testing of the code developed to ensure they provide the desired output To document as per standards To identify and communicate technical problems, processes and solutions	Written Test – Verbal Ability, Quantitative Ability, Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning, Programming Technical Interview – Graduating Area – Have fundamentals been understood? Can candidates apply the fundamentals to explain real life situations? General IT concepts – networks & communication, databases, web, Operating Systems and platforms, User Requirements descriptions Problem Solving – Develop an algorithm or approach to do 'X'. X could be sorting, searching, queuing, dynamic load balancing Projects & Internships – Explain as abstract, Explain application, Explain challenges, Explain own contribution if team project, Explain references used, Explain next stages if want to deploy project output at scale HR Interview – Communication Questions Personality Questions Flexibility & Stability Questions
Entry Level Product Engineering – Software Engineers Mandate / Purpose To realise or verify the low level design in the given engineering environment Key Responsibilities To understand the System requirements specification and its nuances in the software to be engineered To realise the low level design in the given engineering environment To unit test the software (or module) and verify it To deploy or integrate such software into the overall system	Written Test – Verbal Ability, Quantitative Ability, Analytical Ability & Logical Reasoning, Programming Technical Interview – Graduating Area – Have fundamentals been understood? Can candidates apply the fundamentals to explain real life situations? Engineering Constructs used in different real life examples, when something is not applicable General IT concepts – networks & communication, databases, web, Operating Systems and platforms, Hardware

To Create product and user documentation as required	Problem Solving – Develop an algorithm or approach to do 'X'. X could be sorting, searching, queuing, dynamic load balancing, Interrupt handling, Creating Data Flow Diagrams
	Projects & Internships – Explain as abstract, Explain application, Explain challenges, Explain own contribution if team project, Explain references used, Explain next stages if want to deploy project output at scale, Explain Test scenarios, Explain Limitations of Construct
	HR Interview –
	Communication Questions
	Personality Questions
	Flexibility & Stability Questions

As you go through Table 6.1, you will notice that the entry level jobs at BPOs have a different selection process. We will hence provide a separate treatment of how to pass the selection process for the BPO job. We will focus on what gets tested or assessed and how it is done.

Case studies of real candidates will help us realise where they are going right or wrong and help us fine-tune our own preparation for the selection process.

For the other three streams, namely – the infrastructure administrator and the software engineers building or maintaining business applications or products, the written test is fairly common. They focus on verbal aptitude and ability, quantitative ability as well as logical and analytical reasoning.

We will detail each of these test sections in terms of patterns of questions, what they test and how best to prepare for them.

For the software engineer stream, an additional programming test is also included. Such a test can be at the level of logic/algorithm or it may also be asked in a particular programming platform – like Java or C.

The Group Discussion (GD) stage of the selection process tends to be common for the infrastructure and the software streams.

The technical interview has variations, but the HR interview is common. We would be hence clubbing or separating each of the selection stages as required. Let us now focus on the written test in the upcoming section.

6.2 ALL ABOUT THE WRITTEN TEST

The written test is an elimination step. Usually all those who pass the minimum threshold of the written test will be advanced to the next, GD stage. Since written tests involve problem solving under time pressure, it is important to ensure that you get a chance to attempt every question you know. Time management and prioritisation is a critical aspect of success as much as your general aptitude in the tested areas.

There are three golden rules to be applied in solving written aptitude tests which are as follows:

Rule Number 1 – Make a decision: Will you solve this problem now?
You should have a general idea of your strong and weak areas based on your practice sessions. For example, if it is a section on probability and you have mostly got such questions wrong in the practice tests, and if you are unsure about this question, move on.

If you have answered correctly most of the questions from this area but are unsure of this question, then apply the next rule.

Rule Number 2 – When and how to make an educated guess?

Aptitude tests do have negative markings, 1/4th negative marks for wrong answers if the number of options is 4. In practice tests, if you have got 50-50 right on educated guesses in the area tested, you should make an educated guess. See the options given. Can you eliminate at least 2 of them as incorrect answers?

If so, go ahead and make the guess.

It saves your time of re-reading the question and solving it, especially if you have time after attempting all the questions you know.

You must balance the time between making an educated guess here *vs* not getting to attempt a question you are sure of because of time constraints.

Work out a sub-section-wise time table in advance. For example, a typical thought process of a good candidate runs like this:

I intend to spend 20 minutes in the verbal ability section. Inside this section, I will make sure that I have had a chance to attempt all questions I will get right. This particular question needs to be skipped and at the end of this section or of all sections one should make an educated guess on this one.

When tests are divided into sections, it is natural to expect that each section would have a minimum cut-off as well as that the overall test score will have a cut-off.

Rule Number 3 – Don't regret. Don't panic

Sometimes, our intention to do well comes in the way of our doing well. Since we associate high stakes to getting it right, if we realise we are not doing well, we tend to panic and feel depressed. The attitude to such tests is a simple question – am I in a state of mind in which I can give my best?

Don't care about the expectation in the test. You should be giving *your own best* that day. Isn't this obvious? You have a better chance if you are your best that day.

If you recollect down the line that you have answered one question incorrectly and you are now confident of solving it, but the act of searching for it (especially if the test is online) is going to be time consuming, don't regret. Just move on. Such mistakes are common place and you are not the only one making it.

Let us turn to the first of the written test sections.

6.2.1   Verbal Ability Test

What gets tested here is vocabulary (the number of words you know), fluency (could you use those words in sentence construction) and grammar (can you create correct sentences or are you able to correct wrongly constructed sentences).

I. Vocabulary

Antonyms (opposites) and Synonyms (meanings) are the most common formats for test of vocabulary. Find some sample questions given as under:

Antonyms

S. No.	Word	Antonym
(a)	Broadly	
(b)	Hamper	
(c)	Pre-meditated	
(d)	Arrogant	

Synonyms

S. No.	Word	Synonym
(a)	Hinder	
(b)	Shabby	
(c)	Conceited	
(d)	Transient	

The more complex variation is 'which is NOT the antonym or the synonym of a given word' For these type of questions, your vocabulary must be even more diverse and only if you understand all the words in the options will you be able to get this right. Find some sample questions as given under:

Which is not the Synonym of Activist?

    (a) Campaigner   (b) Advocate   (c) Radical   (d) Reactionary

Which are not the Antonyms of: Playful

    (a) Subdued   (b) Serious   (c) Overwhelmed   (d) Flippant

Verbal <u>analogies</u> test both fluency and vocabulary. It is not about knowing the word and its meaning alone, it is also about using it correctly. Here are some example questions:

Alcohol : Intoxication ::

    (a) Water : Thirst   (b) Narcotics : Drowsiness

    (c) Drug : Addiction   (d) Ointment : Infection

    (e) Food : Hunger

Sand : Deserts ::

    (a) Snow : Mountains (b) Fish : Ponds   (c) Salt : Seas   (d) Grass : Lawns

    (e) Corn : Fields

II. Fluency and Grammar

Though not strictly different from vocabulary, formats to test fluency involve filling the blanks, substituting a word and rearranging a jumbled sentence. They may also involve correcting an incorrectly constructed sentence.

]Which segment of the sentences below has an error?

1. (A) Western Culture has (B) influence many people in (C) India in a very powerful way.
2. (A) Harish likes to play cricket (B) and riding a bicycle (C) besides playing video games.
3. (A) The whole thing moves (B) around the concept of building a small dynamic (C) organisation into a larger one. (D) No error

In the question, a part of the sentence is italicised. Find the right substitute for the italicised word so that it improves the sentence:

She *gave* most of her time to music

    (a) Spent   (b) Devoted   (c) Lent   (d) No Improvement

Which of the phrases given under should replace the phrase in brackets () to make it a grammatically sentence?

Because of his ill health, the doctor has advised him (not to refrain) from smoking.

    (a) To not refrain from   (b) To resort to

    (c) To refrain from   (d) To be refrained from

    (e) No correction required

Fill in the blanks:

The astronaut made the descent with unusual caution, placing each foot first _____ then firmly.

1. heavily 2. clumsily 3. tentatively 4. confidently 5. languidly

Pick out the most effective pair of words from the given pair of words to make the sentence/sentences meaningfully complete.

1. The teacher must _____ the unique style of a learner in order to _____ it to the desired level of knowledge.

   (a) advocate …….. direct
   (b) perpetuate …….. develop
   (c) appreciate …….. focus
   (d) discover …….. harness

2. Not all countries benefit _____ from liberalisation. The benefits tend to _____ first to the advantaged and to those with right education to be able to benefit from the opportunities presented.

   (a) equally …….. generate
   (b) richly …….. downgrade
   (c) suitably …….. ascribe
   (d) uniformly …….. percolate

The following four sentences, when arranged, form a coherent paragraph. Choose the most logical order of sentences from those given below:

1. He was so busy with them that he did not have time to eat
2. Thousands of people came to see him and asked different types of questions
3. No one cared to see that he had his food or rest that night
4. Swami Vivekananda once stayed in a small village

   - 2314
   - 3214
   - 4213
   - 4231

Choose the most logical order of sentences from among the given choices to construct a coherent paragraph.

A. The situations in which violence occurs and the nature of that violence tends to be clearly defined at least in theory, as in the proverbial lrishman's equation: is it a private fight or can anyone join in?

B. So, the actual risk to outsiders, though no doubt higher than our societies, is calculable.

C. Probably the only uncontrolled applications of force are those of social superiors to social inferiors and even here there are probably some rules.

D. However binding the obligation to kill, members of feuding families engaged in mutual massacre will be genuinely appalled if, by some mischance, a bystander or outsider is killed.

Directions:

1. *Use all the phrases given.*
2. *Minimum words should be 50 otherwise your email cannot be validated.*
3. *Addressing and signing should be done as in the question given.*

4. *Common grammatical rules, punctuation should be according to standard English.*
5. *You can use your own phrases along with the phrases given.*

Question 1: Using the following phrases, write an email in 70 words to the customer Mr. Gill Roy explaining the delay to the project.

Payment processing system – Schedule – 10th May (Friday) – Unexpected power outage – 3 days – Overall delay – 7 days – includes recovery of lost work – will not recur

Question 2: You are the project leader for a team of 20 members. As the team members are not submitting the weekly time sheets regularly, you need to email them stressing over the need to submit without fail. Using the following phrases, write an email in 70–100 words to your team members informing the same.

Can be accessed online – lead to loss of pay – every week – do not default – used to bill client – actual working hours – by friday – failure to adhere – time sheet filling application.

Hope you had good practice on the verbal aptitude and ability section. Did you notice that there were different types of questions in the section? They have been summarised for your ready reference.

1. Antonyms and Synonyms
2. Verbal analogies
3. Spotting the segment of a sentence that has an error
4. Substitute the given word with the best option
5. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words or pair of words
6. Arranging the set of sentences into a coherent paragraph
7. Writing an email, given a subject and key words

6.2.2 Quantitative Ability

The different question structures of a quantitative ability test are as follows:

1. Ratios and proportions
2. Ages and Relationships
3. Time, distance and relative motion
4. Calendar calculations
5. Probability
6. Profit and Loss
7. Geometry – Areas and volumes
8. Functions & Equations

I. Ratios and Proportions

The ability to visualise quantities and relationships is what is getting tested here. The expectation is that one is able to do 'back of the envelope' calculations and reasoning. It is the quantitative equivalent of the verbal analogy question!

1. In a camp, there is a meal for 120 men or 200 children. If 150 children have taken the meal, how many men will be catered to with the remaining meal?
   A. 50   B. 30   C. 40   D. 10

2. 36 men can complete a piece of work in 18 days. In how many days will 27 men complete the same work?

   A. 26   B. 22   C. 12   D. 24

3. A person works on a project and completes 5/8 of the job in 10 days. At this rate, how many more days will he take to finish the job?

   A. 7   B. 6   C. 5   D. 4

4. A wheel that has 6 cogs is meshed with a larger wheel of 14 cogs. If the smaller wheel has made 21 revolutions, what will be the number of revolutions made by the larger wheel?

   A. 15   B. 12   C. 21   D. 9

5. A container contains 40 litres of milk. From this container 4 litres of milk was taken out and replaced by water. This process was repeated twice. How much pure milk is now left in the container?

   A. 26 litres   B. 29.16 litres   C. 28 litres   D. 28.2 litres

6. Tea worth ₹126 per kg and ₹135 per kg are mixed with a third variety of tea in the ratio 1 : 1 : 2. If the mixture is worth ₹153 per kg, what is the price of the third variety per kg?

   A. ₹182.50   B. ₹170.5   C. ₹175.50   D. ₹180

7. Find the ratio in which rice at ₹7.20 a kg is mixed with rice at ₹5.70 a kg to produce a mixture worth ₹6.30 a kg.

   A. 4 : 3   B. 3 : 4   C. 2 : 3   D. 3 : 2

II. Ages and Relationships

In this category of questions, the rules of adding or subtracting and multiplying or dividing need to be correctly applied. Often, after solving the problem, candidates fail to notice the actual question asked. For example, the actual question may be 'what is the ratio of their ages today?' and not any of 'their individual ages'.

1. Ten years ago, P was half of Q in age. If the ratio of their present ages is 3 : 4, what will be the total of their present ages?

   A. 45   B. 40   C. 35   D. 30

2. Father is aged three times more than his son Sunil. After 8 years, he would be two and a half times of Sunil's age. After further 8 years, how many times would he be of Sunil's age?

   A. 4 times   B. 6 times   C. 2 times   D. 3 times

3. The Average age of a class of 22 students is 21 years. The average increased by 1 when the teacher's age was also included. What is the age of the teacher?

   A. 48   B. 45   C. 43   D. 44

4. Six years ago, the ratio of the ages of Vimal and Saroj was 6 : 5. Four years hence, the ratio of their ages will be 11 : 10. What is Saroj's age at present?

   A. 18   B. 17   C. 16   D. 15

5. The sum of ages of 5 children born at the intervals of 3 years each is 50 years. What is the age of the youngest child?

III. Time, Distance and Relative Motion

The speed factor needs to be adjusted in different directions. The rules of vector algebra come in handy for the more complicated problems in this sub-section. Like in the Ages' Section, pay attention to the final question for which you are choosing the options.

1. A motorboat, whose speed is 15 km/h in still water goes 30 km downstream and comes back in a total of 4 hours 30 minutes. The speed of the stream (in km/h) is:
   A. 10   B. 6   C. 5   D. 4

2. Speed of a boat in standing water is 14 kmph and the speed of the stream is 1.2 kmph. A man rows to a place at a distance of 4864 km and comes back to the starting point. The total time taken by him is:
   A. 700 hours   B. 350 hours   C. 1400 hours   D. 1010 hours

3. A man takes twice as long to row a distance against the stream as to row the same distance in favour of the stream. The ratio of the speed of the boat (in still water) and the stream is:
   A. 3 : 1   B. 1 : 3   C. 1 : 2   D. 2 : 1

4. A and B take part in a 100 m race. 'A' runs at a speed of 5 kmph. A gives B a start of 8 m and still beats him by 8 seconds. The speed of B is:

IV. Calendar Calculations

We are not mentally used to the 7 day cycle of the week and the most likely mistakes made by candidates is related to the use of the decimal framework in calendar calculation problems. Complicated problem versions require you to factor in the leap year.

1. Today is Monday. After 61 days, it will be
   A. Thursday   B. Sunday   C. Monday   D. Saturday

2. How many days are there in x weeks x days
   A. 14x   B. 8x   C. 7x2   D. 7

3. Today is Friday. A client says, 'You have to meet me two days after the day before the day after tomorrow'. That means which day??

V. Probability

To answer questions in this section, one must be familiar with the concept of combinations. Also, a basic knowledge of frequently used scenarios like Dice and Cards is required. In the options the right answer may be further simplified, for example, 3/9 might be given as 1/3.

Here again, pay attention to the actual question asked, it may be the inverse of what you think the answer is.

1. A die is rolled twice. What is the probability of getting a sum equal to 9?
   A. 2/3   B. 2/9   C. 1/3   D. 1/9

2. A bag contains 2 yellow, 3 green and 2 blue balls. Two balls are drawn at random. What is the probability that none of the balls drawn is blue?
   A. 1/2   B. 10/21   C. 9/11   D. 7/11

3. A card is randomly drawn from a deck of 52 cards. What is the probability getting an Ace or King or Queen?

   A. 3/13   B. 2/13   C. 1/13   D. 1/2

VI. *Profit & Loss*

The concepts of cost price and selling price need to be understood. Profits or loss % is calculated on the basis of the cost price while margin is calculated on the basis of the selling price. Tricky questions are when there is a ratio and proportion angle to the profit and loss problems.

Given are 3 tough samples:

1. The cost price of 20 articles is the same as the selling price of x articles. If the profit is 25%, find out the value of x.

   A. 15   B. 25   C. 18   D. 16

2. If selling price is doubled, the profit triples. What is the profit per cent?

   A. 100   B. 105 & 1/3   C. 66 & 2/3   D. 120

3. A trader has 1600 kg of sugar. He sells a part at 8% profit and the rest at 12% profit. If he gains 11% on the whole, find the quantity sold at 12%.

   A. 1200 kg   B. 1400 kg   C. 1600 kg   D. 800 kg

4. A man wants to sell his scooter. There are two offers, one at ₹12,000 cash and the other a credit of ₹12,880 to be paid after 8 months, money being at 18% per annum. Which is the better offer?

VII. *Geometry – Areas & Volumes*

For this sub-section, one needs to be familiar with formulae for areas and volumes of different shapes. Candidates who are able to visualise the problem are often better able to solve such questions.

   One needs to pay attention to whether the problem statement indicates area, circumference or perimeter.

1. Pipe A takes 16 min to fill a tank. Pipes B and C, whose cross-sectional circumferences are in the ratio 2:3, fill another tank twice as big as the first. If A has a cross-sectional circumference that is one-third of C, how long will it take for B and C to fill the second tank? (Assume the rate at which water flows through a unit cross-sectional area is same for all the three pipes.)

   A. 66/13   B. 40/13   C. 16/13   D. 32/13

2. A rectangular park, 60 m long and 40 m wide, has two concrete crossroads running through the middle of the park and the rest of the park has been used as a lawn. The area of the lawn is 2109 sq. m. What is the width of the road?

   A. 5 m   B. 4 m   C. 2 m   D. 3 m

3. If the length of a rectangle is halved and its breadth is tripled, what is the percentage change in its area?

   A. 25 % Increase   B. 25 % Decrease   C. 50 % Decrease   D. 50 % Increase

4. A person walked diagonally across a square plot. Approximately, what was the per cent of time saved by not walking along the edges?

   A. 35 %   B. 30 %   C. 20 %   D. 25 %

5. The breadth of a rectangular field is 60 % of its length. If the perimeter of the field is 800 m, find out the area of the field.
   A. 37500 m²   B. 30500 m²   C. 32500 m²   D. 40000 m²
6. An error of 2 % in excess is made while measuring the side of a square. What is the percentage of error in the calculated area of the square?
   A. 4.04 %   B. 2.02 %   C. 4 %   D. 2 %
7. If 2 squares are similar but not equal and the diagonal of the larger square is 4 m. What is the area of smaller square if its area is 1/2 of the larger square? Also, find the side of smaller square.
8. A cow is tied to one corner of a square plot of side 12 m by a rope 7 m long. Find the area it can graze.

VIII. Functions and Equations

It is a more conceptual variant of the ratio and proportion question.

1. If x % of a is the same as y % of b, then z % of b is:
   A. (xy/z) % of a   B. (yz/x) % of a   C. (xz/y) % of a   D. None of these
2. Three consecutive whole numbers are such that the square of the middle number is greater than the product of the other two by 1. Find the middle number.
   A. 6   B. 18   C. 12   D. All of these
3. If x increases linearly, how will a – x behave (a > 1)?
   A. Increase linearly   B. Decrease linearly
   C. Increase exponentially   D. Decrease exponentially
4. A Monkey ate 100 bananas in five days, each day eating 6 more than the previous day. How many bananas did the monkey eat on the first day?

6.2.3   Analytical Ability and Logical Reasoning

This section tests your logical clarity. Questions often involve deriving the right conclusions within a given framework. Following are the three kinds of analytical and logical aptitude types of questions:

1. Deductive Reasoning – elimination of all impossible conclusions to reach the right answer;
2. Data Sufficiency – the ability to examine that the sufficiency of data to arrive at the conclusion are actually the areas that get tested using different question formats; and
3. Mathematical Reasoning – while not typical, may also be a question pattern.

Tip 1: Reduce Cognitive Overload

The trick in answering these questions is to reduce cognitive overload. Cognitive overload is when you run out of space and forget the earlier condition as you apply the latter condition. The best way to reduce this overload on your mind is to reduce to symbols and relationships what is given in words and sentences.

For example, if the statement reads,
Ram is older than Lakshmanan but
Lakshmanan is not older than Bharath and
Shyam is neither the youngest of them all and nor the oldest, which of the following is true?

1. Shyam is older than Bharath
2. Shyam is older than Lakshmanan
3. Shyam is younger than Ram

This must quickly be converted into symbols – R > L; L <= B;

S > L, S may be greater than B, S < R

 Statement '2' is true. Statement '1' may or may not be true under the given conditions. Statement '3' is true.

Tip 2: You don't have to solve all aspects of the problem

The moment you read the statements, read the question asked quickly. Most often, it will turn out that only part of the problem need to be pieced together to answer the given question. Otherwise, our tendency in these questions is to solve all aspects of the logical puzzle and this leads to time wastage, without improving our scores.

Tip 3: Pay attention to the conditions – Whether 'necessary' or 'sufficient' (the reverse may not be automatically implied)

For a given conclusion, a condition may be necessary. However, it does not imply that the conditions are sufficient, i.e. there may be more than one condition required to reach a certain effect or conclusion.

 For example, the statement – 'If the sky is not clear, kites are not flown' – implies that – if kites are flown (this is the conclusion, effect or observation), then necessarily the sky has to be clear.

 However, if the sky is clear, it is not necessary that kites will be flown.

 The reverse is not true.

Directions: In each question below are given three Statements followed by three Conclusions, numbered I, II and III. You have to take the given Statements to be true even if they seem to be at variance with commonly known facts. Read all the conclusions and then decide which of the given conclusions logically follows from the given Statements, disregarding commonly known facts.

1. Statements:
    Some cycles are buses. All cars are buses. Some buses are trains. Conclusions:
    I. All cars are cycles.
    II. Some trains are buses.
    III. Some trains are cars.
       (1) None follows   (2) Only I and II follow
       (3) Only I and III follow   (4) Only II and III follow
       (5) None of these.
2. Statements: All pencils are sticks. Some sticks are notes. All diaries are notes. Conclusions:
    I. Some notes are diaries.
    II. Some sticks are pencils.
    III. Some diaries are sticks.
       (1) All follow   (2) Only I follow
       (3) Only I and II follow   (4) Only II follows
       (5) None of these.

3. Statements: Some buds are leaves. No leaf is a fruit. Some fruits are buds.
   Conclusions:
   I. Some fruits are leaves.
   II. All buds are fruits.
   III. Some leaves are buds.
      (1) Only I or II follows   (2) Only III follows
      (3) Only II follows   (4) None follows
      (5) None of these.

4. Statements: Some birds are animals. All animals are rivers. Some rivers are lions. Conclusions:
   I. Some lions are animals
   II. Some rivers are birds
   III. No animal is lion
      (1) Only II follows   (2) Only either I or III follows
      (3) I and II follow   (4) Only either II or III follows
      (5) None of these.

5. Statements: All boxes are pans. Some pans are jugs. Some jugs are glasses. Conclusions:
   I. Some glasses are boxes
   II. No glass is a box
   III. Some jugs are pans
   IV. No jug is pan
      (1) Only I and II follow   (2) Either I or II and III follows
      (3) Only III follows   (4) Either I or II, and either III or IV follows
      (5) None of these.

6. DECODE – If 'PENCIL' is coded as '?@,=;7' and 'PAPER' is coded as '?9?@5'. What is the code for 'CLIP'?

7. Here are some words translated from an artificial language.
   plekapaki means fruitcake
   pakishillen means cakewalk
   treftalan means buttercup
   Which word could mean 'cupcake'?

8. If the wind is strong, kites are flown
   If the sky is not clear, kites are not flown
   If the temperature is high, kites are flown.
   Assume the statements above to be true. If kites are flown, which of the following statements must be true?
   I. The wind is strong
   II. The sky is clear
   III. The temperature is not high

9. The given question has a main statement followed by four statements labelled A, B, C, and D. Choose the ordered pair of statements where the first statement implies the second, and the two statements are logically consistent with the main statement.
   If I talk to my professors, then I do not need to take a pill for headache.
     (a) I talked to my professors.   (b) I did not need to take a pill for headache.

(c) I needed to take a pill for headache.   (d) I did not talk to my professors.

(e) I did not talk to my professors.

10. Choose the option consisting of three statements put together in specific order which indicates a valid argument, i.e., where the third statement is a conclusion drawn from the preceding two statements.

   A. All software companies employ knowledge workers.
   B. Tara Tech employs knowledge workers.
   C. Tara Tech is a software company.
   D. Some software companies employ knowledge workers.
   E. Tara Tech employs only knowledge workers.

11. Choose the correct alternative from a set of four statements, which have three segments each, where the third segment in the statement can be logically deduced using both the preceding two, but not just one of them.

   A. Ram is taller than Laxman. Bharat is shorter than Ram. Laxman is shorter than Bharat.
   B. Giants climb beanstalks. Some chicken do not climb beanstalks. Some chicken are not giants.
   C. All explorers live in snowdrifts. Some penguins live in snowdrifts. Some penguins are explorers.
   D. Many singers are not writers. All poets are singers. Some poets are not writers.

12. A cube has three adjacent faces of blue colour. It is cut once horizontally and once vertically to form cuboids of equal sizes. Each of these cuboids is coloured pink on all the uncoloured faces. Then it is cut as before into four cuboids of equal sizes. How many cuboids have three faces coloured blue?

13. Consider a cuboid of having dimensions 6cm × 4cm × 1cm. It is painted black on both the surfaces of dimensions (4cm × 1cm), green on the surfaces of dimensions (6cm × 4cm) and red on the surface of dimensions (6cm × 1cm). Now the block is divided into various small cubes of side 1cm. each. The smaller cubes so obtained are separated. How many cubes will have two sides with green colour and remaining sides without any colour?

14. Find the wrong number in the given series: 64, 71, 80, 91, 104, 119, 135, 155.

6.3 GROUP DISCUSSION

Few IT companies use GD as a format in the selection process. Even amongst the companies which are known to use GD, it has been an occasional usage. Since the GD happens after the written test and before the technical interview, it is used as an elimination mechanism to funnel select candidates for the more intense one-on-one technical and HR interviews.

The goal for the candidate in a GD, hence, must be to do a decent job and not make classical mistakes so as not to get eliminated in this process. The GD has the ability to test the job readiness competencies. In the paragraphs below, we outline positive and negative behaviours that display your job readiness competencies in a GD.

6.3.1   Savviness

Table 6.2   GD Markers for Savviness

Positive Markers	Negative Markers
Sensitively responds to emerging conflicts in the group Recognises the group members unstated positions on the topic Engages with others positively	Stokes unproductive conflict Provokes hostility by demeanour and tone Displays shyness and awkwardness in engaging with group members

6.3.2   Ability to Operate in a Dynamic Environment

Table 6.3   GD Markers for the Ability to Operate in a Dynamic Environment

Positive Markers	Negative Markers
Is able to make progress even without all the information Creates options when the group gets stuck	Seeks clarity before attempting to contribute Brings relevant information after the group has moved on to other matters

6.3.3   Vigorous Pursuit

Table 6.4   GD Markers for Vigorous Pursuit

Positive Markers	Negative Markers
Keeps the group focused on the problem to be solved, the decision to be made and the conclusion to be reached Is willing to do the extra analysis and thinking when group members have given up	Easily loses sight of the objective of the discussion or sub-discussion in progress Is not able to communicate or pursue ideas of self or others

There are 2 GD formats which are as follows:

(A) A problem solving GD (operates like a meeting).

(B) A debate oriented GD, where one takes sides and argues pros and cons.

In both these formats, the topic of discussion can elicit your values and beliefs and provide a clue to you as a person. For example: should we do away with attendance in colleges?

The following are some popular GD topics:

1. *How do you teach ethics?*
2. *Higher education enrolment is just around 22% so provide some recommendations to increase this.*
3. *Are mobile towers a health hazard?*
4. *Compare and contrast the leadership styles of M S Dhoni and Rahul Dravid.*
5. *We should extend engineering education by 1 more year and make the last 2 years of this 5 year course an apprenticeship. Debate the merits and de-merits of the idea.*
6. *Coaching classes (like those that exist for higher education preparation) for making young graduates BPO-ready is an idea worth exploring. Discuss.*

7. *Qualities of a great teacher.*
8. *Qualities of a great boss.*
9. *IT companies overpay for entry-level staff.*
10. *3 big ideas to make your town/city (where the college is located) a tourist hub.*

6.3.4 Exercise 1 – Give Your Ideas and Recommendations

Here is the transcript of a GD of 5 members – 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E'.

The MP of the constituency in which your college is located is wondering if a student group like yours can give bright and implementable ideas for 'Swachh Bharat'. He wants to do an intervention where the change is visible in 90 days and sustains even after 9 months. Let us see what all of you come up with.

B: Friends, this is the need of the hour. It must be done in all constituencies.

A: I am not clear. In 90 days, how will we do this?

D: We cannot have false starts on this initiative. Period.

E: I think we should set in motion 3 ideas and in a week, see which one works. Let us start though. I propose that a scorecard be set up in every sector so as to track the progress they are making towards Swachh Bharat.

D: Who is interested in your scorecard?

C: Friends, 'E' has tabled an idea, let us move on and generate more options. I think small video clips at traffic intersections, which highlight the importance of cleanliness, is a second idea I am tabling for us to consider.

A: How will we attach the screens? What if it rains?

E: Good idea 'C'. Just like the traffic light screens are themselves protected from rain 'A'.

D: Guys, let us put up a penalty for people who make the place ugly.

E: Worth considering 'D'. We should find out the biggest acts of 'ASWACHH' and create a penalty to reduce them. We must position it nicely.

D: I know how to execute it.

C: I am sure you know 'D'. Do you want to take the group's ideas on execution?

B: We will call for a meeting of all the 'Presidents' of the Resident Welfare Associations. We will tell them to adopt our resolution of the penalty for ASWACHH.

C: I am not sure they will come queuing 'B'. We could perhaps ask the MP to convene this meeting, and give them the option to adopt.

E: For those who adopt, we can ask the MP to do something special from his constituency development fund.

C: Good idea 'E'. We need to think through the mechanics though.

E: We have 3 ideas, a penalty system for the biggest acts of ASWACHH. This needs to have a collective agreement, so it must be mooted in the resident welfare associations for them to consider and adopt. An education system where we use traffic lights to increase awareness and a scorecard which says which sector is winning this week.

C: Well summarised 'E'. Let us look at the resources required to do this.

Moderator: Thank you group for this discussion.

Exercise Questions

1. What kind of GD format was this? Why do you think so?
2. Rate the participants on employability competencies? Provide justifications using the positive and negative markers in a GD listed earlier in the chapter.

Candidate	Operating in a dynamic environment	Savviness	Vigorous Pursuit
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
Remarks			

6.3.5 Exercise 2 – Should We or Shouldn't We?

Let us now look at the transcript of another GD.

Colleges should do away with the practice of minimum attendance as an eligibility to appear in the University examinations. Discuss and conclude. The group members who are discussing this topic are 'H', 'I', 'J', 'K', 'L' and 'M'.

H: It is a funny kind of topic, one which we guys have discussed at the tea shop on the campus.

K: Shall we all take a minute and write out pros and cons of doing this? Could we then present our notes to each other, add in and conclude? Will this be ok with everyone?

I: I think we should assume it has already happened, the scenario of minimum attendance being abolished! We should then imagine what all will be happening afterwards, in our college and in other colleges.

L: I am clear this idea of abolishing attendance is a bad idea. Good teachers will get dejected if students are not serious.

M: I agree with 'L' here

H: Why so, 'L' and 'M'? Students will attend classes if they find it valuable.

I: Not sure, we can conclude that way. Do we decide whether to take the prescribed medicines?

K: 'I' brings a valuable distinction between trusting the expert and making our own decision. Since we have all started speaking in any case, let us just build on it.

M: 'K' seems to have a point here.

H: Our friend 'M' does not want to pick up an argument today! He is agreeing with everyone.

I: If this were to have already happened, we will find attentive people in the class. It was their choice and they found it of value. The class will be half-empty of course. Out of the half that do not turn up, 50% will fail the exams and soon the message will be passed that classes are critical to learning. If we can build a faster feedback loop on the relationship between attending classes and pass rates for different types of students, this is not a problem but an opportunity. We can use the spare capacity created by students not attending to admit more students into colleges.

L: Professors may deliberately fail students to make them realise that they need to come to class.

M: Yes, that could happen.

K: I think we are linking to the university level examinations here in this topic, where the professors' scores do not have a role.

I: That's right, 'K'. If people can learn on the internet and pass with the minimum requirements, what is the need to attend classes?

Moderator: Thank you group, now consider the same topic that as long as people can work without coming to office, attendance in office should also be abolished!

H: That's a tricky one!

K: I would think we should look at the difference between college and office here. At office, folks will come to me for help, for fixing issues. My presence and accessibility is a key criteria for my ability to contribute.

H: 'L' – do you think by the same token, bosses will give poorer appraisals to those who do not come to office?

L: No, I do not think this will happen. In organisations, if work happens, it is ok.

I: In certain jobs, I think it works.

Moderator – Thank you group for the lively discussion.

In this GD, it is not only about problem-solving, more importantly, it is about judging your values and beliefs.

Exercise Questions

Score the group members on employability competencies and also highlight red flags on inappropriate or odd values and beliefs displayed by candidates.

Candidate	Operating in a dynamic environment	Savviness	Vigorous Pursuit	Values & Beliefs – Remarks
H				
I				
J				
K				
L				
M				
Remarks				

6.4 ALL ABOUT THE TECHNICAL INTERVIEW

Companies differ in their philosophy on how much of IT awareness or programming knowledge must exist for an entry-level candidate. The larger companies have their own training engine to be able to skill an entry level campus hire into a software programmer. The smaller organisations who do not have such a learning infrastructure might insist that the candidate come with some programming knowledge or IT awareness. Surely, IT awareness and programming is certainly an advantage to get selected.

Organisations make this an optional section. For those not opting for this section, their aptitude scores need to be higher for them to qualify for selection. These are awareness, definition and concept questions asked at the technical interview.

6.4.1 Awareness, Definition and Concept Questions

I. Data Structures and Algorithms

1. What is the difference between a string, a linkedlist, an array, an N-dimensional array and a tree?
2. What is an algorithm?
3. What is sorting?
4. What is searching?
5. What is recursion?
6. What is the difference between sorted linear search and binary search?
7. What is overflow? How to avoid overflow?

II. Platform and Operating Systems

1. What is a Cloud platform?
2. Difference between an operating system and an application.
3. What is an API?

III. Web and Internet

1. What is a data-centre?
2. Explain the concept of mobile enablement of a website. What are the steps involved?
3. Explain the digits of an IP address.
4. What is the difference between *http:* and *https:*?

IV. Networking

1. What are the seven layers of a network?
2. Explain packet routing in a network.
3. Explain the use of parity bit in network communications.
4. What is the difference between LAN, WAN and the internet?
5. What are software-defined networks?
6. What are storage area networks?
7. List some network monitoring parameters.

V. SDLC and Programming Concepts

1. What are the differences between structured and object-oriented programming? Give some examples.
2. What is the difference between Agile and Waterfall methodology and when are they used?
3. How is application maintenance effort reduced?

4. Explain code maintainability.
5. Explain data and application migration.

VI. Testing Concepts

1. How to find the number of test cases required for any program? What is this number called?
2. What is the difference between black box and white box testing?
3. What are test scripts? When are they used?

6.4.2   Your Project Work

By the time you appear for the selection process, you would have done at least one project, and some of you may have even interned in the industry. One of the validations that interviewers want is that you have personally invested time to do your project and learnt from it and not had a free ride on your friends' efforts.

Interviewers are delighted if you have thought deeply about your project and its real-life applications. Post your project work, if you have curiously related to it in other academic projects or built something for external validation – a published paper, a demonstrated prototype or a prize won in a competition, it is a big plus.

Given here are some popular questions you could be asked about your project work.

1. Explain the business/real-life problem your project solves.
2. What are the next logical features of your project artefact? Why?
3. Explain how you captured your project requirements in a flow diagram or a table.
4. What was the most challenging phase of your project and why?
5. Which areas of IT did you deepen your understanding of with this project? Why do you identify these areas?
6. Looking back, could your code be optimised? How?

6.4.3   Programming and Application Questions

Interviewers ask these questions if you have a background in IT or computer science. If you are not from these backgrounds, but have done programming on your own, this is an advantage and companies can use these sets of questions to test your understanding and application.

As programming enters as an optional subject in several undergraduate and school curricula, in the future, one believes that this could be an expectation to get into the IT industry. Even if it is not an expectation, it will be to your advantage if you can attempt this area.

Even if you are not into programming in any language, these questions can easily be asked as 'write the step by step method to solve this'. They can be in the form of algorithms.

The questions below are best attempted if you know all about data structures and are comfortable with Java or any other programming. Do not worry if this is too daunting for you at the moment because you are unfamiliar with data structures or programming. This section gives you a good view of what programmers do every day, the kind of complex problems they solve:

1. Write a code to check a String is palindrome or not.
2. Write a method which will remove any given character from a String.
3. Write a function to find out the longest palindrome in a given string.
4. How to count occurrence of a given character in a String?
5. In an array 1–100 numbers are stored; if one number is missing how do you find it?
6. In an array 1–100 exactly one number is duplicate; how do you find it?
7. Given two arrays, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 2, 3, 1, 0, 5 find which number is not present in the second array.
8. How do you find the second highest number in an integer array?
9. How to find the largest and smallest number in array?
10. How do you find the middle element of a linked list in a single pass?
11. How do you reverse a singly linked list?
12. How do you find the depth of binary tree?
13. Print out all leaf nodes of a binary tree.
14. Write a program to sort numbers in place using quick sort.
15. Write a program to implement binary search algorithm in Java or C++.
16. Write a code to check whether a number is a power of two or not.
17. Write a program to find all prime numbers up to a given number.
18. Write a function to compute the Nth Fibonacci number. Both iterative and recursive?
19. Write a program to find the prime factors of integer.
20. Write a program to find out if two rectangles, R1 and R2, are overlapping.
21. You need to write a function to climb 'n' steps; you can climb either 1 step at a time or 2 steps at a time. Write a function to return the number of ways to climb a ladder with n steps.
22. Write a code for Generate Random Number in a range from min to max.
23. Design an algorithm to find the frequency of occurrences of a word in an article.

6.5 ALL ABOUT THE HR INTERVIEW – MINIMISE TYPE 2 ERRORS

The HR tries to ensure that an unsuitable candidate is not recruited. They reject such candidates if they are found having a 'performance block' or a 'team-working block'. The HR also tries to minimise 'infant attrition' – candidates with a low intention to either join or likely to leave soon after joining. By default they are trying to confirm as you are technically selected, unless they find one of the two things above.

In the IT/ITES sector, people get rejected on grounds of communication. In a project environment, lack of threshold communication skills can make the whole team ineffective or prone to errors. To check this separately, HR asks you to narrate an incident, summarise your experience or talk about your hobbies.

This allows the interviewer to observe only on communication skills without getting distracted by presence or absence of analytical and problem solving abilities.

What is checked in communication is vocabulary, fluency, clarity and coherence.

6.5.1   Test for Communication

Typically used questions for the test of communication are as follows:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Which achievements are you proud of?
3. How would your friends describe you?
4. Which activities and hobbies do you enjoy the most?
5. Tell me about your favourite book/author.

If the interviewer feels the candidate is not able to get his / her point across or gets stressed while expressing such simple incidents, they could reject the candidate. If the client on the other end, and usually on telephone, finds it hard to follow the individual, it will diminish the presence of the 'consultant' as well as the company. This is the reason threshold communication skills are important.

Especially in such instances, this can also be a tie breaker – when two candidates are equally good technically, and there is only one position vacant, the tie gets broken through this test of communication.

6.5.2   Test for Personality Issues – Tell Me When…/ Tell Me About…

There are two uses for such questions which are as follows:

1. Firstly, they help weed out candidates with issues and not ready to be professional. They test for the three competency clusters of operating in a dynamic environment, vigorous pursuit and savviness.
2. Secondly, they allow HR to weed out those unlikely to join or likely to leave soon after joining.

6.5.3   Test for Operating in a Dynamic Environment

Usually, questions that test operating in a dynamic environment are like:

(a) Tell me of an instance when you had to change your original plan because of new developments.
(b) How did you land in your current college and course? What decisions led you here?
(c) Tell us about the most complex projects you were part of.
(d) Were there any crises in your life? How did you handle them? Looking back, would you have handled it differently?
(e) How do you react to stressful situations? Give an example.

6.5.4   Testing for the Drive for Results

Questions that test drive for results and perseverance (vigorous pursuit) are as follows:

(a) Tell me of a challenging situation you faced and how did you overcome it?

(b) Have you achieved something after keeping at it for long?

(c) At what point did you give up and decided that something was not going to happen? Give some examples.

(d) How do you handle resource constraints when you pursue something? Give examples.

(e) Are there any unfulfilled goals/missed goals? In retrospect, why were they missed?

6.5.5 Test for Savviness

The questions that indicate candidate savviness are as follows:

(a) While working in a team or project, there could have been conflicts; what were they and how did you deal with them?

(b) While working in a team or project, you could have observed a conflict brewing between two team members? Why do you think it happened? How did the parties deal with the conflict? Were you able to do anything as a fellow team member?

(c) When you campaigned or canvassed for something – fund raising, a decision in your school or college, a team outing decision; how easy was it for you to do it? How did you approach such situations?

(d) Have you had to explain your stance to teachers, professors or other elders? Tell me a bit more about what happened.

(e) Have you been in an argument? Tell me more about the origin of the argument, what happened and who won.

Red flags in the responses of candidates, which indicate issues in being a professional, are used to eliminate even otherwise analytically or communication-wise sound candidates.

Similarly, candidates lacking in analytical or problem-solving ability and fluency in communication but who impress interviewers in these clusters are given a priority in selection. To an extent, these even compensate for lack of ability in other areas.

6.5.6 Test for Intention to Join and Stay

The questions that test your intention to join and stay will be indirect. They would typically be like:

1. Where else did you try for, apart from our company?
2. Why do you want to join our company?
3. What are your medium and long-term goals (follow up question: how does our company fit in?)
4. Your peer group must be applying for higher education. Why won't you do that too?
5. Can you relocate to where the project requirements are?
6. What is your GRE/GMAT/CAT score? (Follow up question: Isn't MBA / MS a better idea for you?)
7. For what kind of opportunities will you leave our company?

6.6 CASE EXAMPLES OF SELECTION FOR FOUR MAJOR PROFILES

Infrastructure Administrator

Anjali Abraham graduated in May 2014 from Kottayam. She is an Electronics and Instrumentation Engineer. She was trying for different kinds of jobs in programming area as well as in the network administration area in the IT industry.

Today she is part of the network design and implementation team in an IT major. She is undergoing on-the-job training to become a network administrator (a level 2 administrator) and will move up on the job ladder for solving network design and implementation aspects. We will turn to some of her senior colleagues in similar tracks to understand their job profiles.

Vipin is performing a server administrator job, similar to the job that Anjali was interviewed for. He also passed out from an engineering college. He joined a banking client of the company. His initial job was that of an L1 administrator. Typically, he did three things every day on the 'Remedy' application – the platform that was used by this client to report and resolve issues:

(a) He added new users to an application or a server. These were triggered by new joiners to the client organisation who were going to work in their roles and required certain permissions to be configured on the server or application;

(b) He produced reports on requests from the client IT management teams – they could be about level of users and usage of the server or application infrastructure; and

(c) As he monitored data flow between applications, when he figured out that data transfer was not happening due to performance issues or time outs, he had to raise a trouble ticket that would be solved by expert teams so that the organisation's data was updated and correct. For example, the exit management system has recorded an employee exit but the same has not got refreshed in an application to be accessed, the exited employee may be able to work on the application over the web. Since this is not a desirable situation, he raises an incident log that gets addressed by expert teams (the L3 administrators).

Harish, after performing a similar job as Vipin, and after 1.5 years, has graduated to be an L2 administrator.

He works for the company's retail client. His typical day is as follows:

He logs on to the client's platform for reporting and resolving IT issues. It is called Service Now – a popular platform.

He, along with 11 colleagues, administers UNIX servers of the client. He solves 8 to 9 tickets per day. Before putting him on the job, his company trained him on AIX administration in a lab environment, made him pass certain technical certifications and also gave him professional or soft skills training.

Some of the typical problems or queries he handles are as follows:

Slow systems;

Loosely connected hardware and network

Issues with the power system

User's inability to access applications

Replacement of bad disks copying of their content

Confirming whether the fix has been installed

Now that we understand the jobs Anjali is going to do 3 months from now and 2 years from now, let us return to how she was selected.

On the day of the off-campus drive; there were some technical issues in administering the online test. The test server went down and would take 2 to 3 hours to be fixed. So the company executive in charge, decided to reverse the sequence of stages to minimise inconveniences to all. The executive assessed that the number of people who had walked in for this off-campus drive were still manageable and he had a larger number of panel members with him. He had explained to the visiting students that the sequence would be altered to respond to this technical glitch. Even all those who got eliminated in these rounds would be allowed to take the online test once the issue was resolved and if they did score above a pre-determined cut off, they would be called back if necessary.

1. First Round – Find clear cases to eliminate in terms of basic aptitude.

Anjali and others were given a verbal ability test with 20 questions and the approximate time for solving being 10 minutes. Those who correctly answered less than 6 questions out of 20 were eliminated. This resulted in elimination of 25% of the candidates.

2. Second Round – Find clear cases to eliminate in terms of communication.

Thirty students were seated in a circle and asked to – (a) introduce themselves and (b) talk about the places they came from. Anjali spoke about herself, her college, her family members and what she liked to do. In places, her diction and accent were not coming out clear. The executive intervened and asked another student, 'Do you follow what she is saying?'

On this Anjali raised her voice a bit and spoke slower and she felt this was appreciated by the executive as a quick course correction on her part. She then spoke about Kottayam, and mainly about how it has rapidly changed in recent years. Some of her descriptions evoked some laughter and some agreements from the other group members.

She did notice that some of the other competitors in this round were not able to speak coherently or became too shy at the prospect of speaking in a peer group. In her group and others, she noticed about 4 or 5 out of 30 getting eliminated in this round.

3. Third Round – Technical Interview.

Anjali was asked questions on the OSI layers – the 7 layers of a network. She explained it. She was asked to explain the difference between a Local Area Network and a Wide Area Network. Questions on Hubs and Switches followed. She was then asked about her college project in some detail. This sounded interesting to the interviewer.

The Project was a 'black box' for a car, just like it is there in aeroplanes. The black box helps us investigate the cause of accidents and in this case also forewarns accident prone driving. This is how Anjali had described her project in her CV.

Extract from Anjali's CV

> Main Project: Black box in car with speed control in desired areas
> A car Black-box is a digital video-audio recorder that helps to determine what has caused a car accident and the events that led to collision. We have also implemented speed control in desired areas using zigbee transmitter and receiver, and messaging system with the aid of a GPS module.

She was asked about the other team members in the project and her own contributions. She was then asked to explain her project with a block diagram.

In this exercise the interviewer was testing her ability to present in the abstract both sequence and scenarios for which the black box has been designed. This is one of the ways of expressing functionality of a given application or product and also the typical way in which diagnostics of problems reported are done.

4. Fourth Round – Written Test (Ideally should have been the first round)
This was a three-section test of 30 minutes, each totalling 90 minutes.

The three sections—Quantitative Ability, Verbal Ability and Logical Reasoning.

She believed that she was selected and that represented an applicant to select of 1: 10 on that day for the company.

Exercise: In the given space, list 5 things that went right for Anjali in the entire selection sequence

Developers/Software Engineers – Application Development and Maintenance or Product Engineering

Riya had campus placement interviews with an IT major a year ago. She was in the final year of her MCA program. A few companies on campus were only open to the BTech branches as they felt that stiffer cut-offs apply for admission to BTech and hence they are likely to get better quality candidates.

This reluctance was displayed by this IT major too. The placement officer intervened to explain to the company executives that they might find the MCA curriculum directly relevant and in any case they can apply the same cut-off scores. In addition, the students can be asked more direct technical questions. The executives agreed to include the MCA stream in the selection process.

1. First Stage – Resume shortlist

All students who had no standing arrears and who had a score of 60% and above were shortlisted after the resume submission stage. Out of 65 students in her class, 57 had evinced interest in this IT major. Out of the 57, only 34 passed the first resume shortlist filter.

2. Second Stage – Written Test

This stage contained questions on verbal ability, quantitative ability and logical reasoning. The question patterns were similar to those outlined in the chapter. There were also some simple programming questions. The total time for the test was 90 minutes.

About 11 students qualified after the written test.

3. Third Stage – GD

There were really 2 GDs that were done for this group of 11, one group had six members and were asked to comment on the phenomenon of brain drain. The second group of five members discussed the role of IT in India – past, present and future.

Two candidates from each of these groups were eliminated as they were found wanting in confidence, fluency, vocabulary. So, for the next interview stage, out of 11, only 7 candidates were shortlisted.

4. Fourth Stage – Interview

Since Riya was an MCA candidate, she was asked about the different subjects she studied in the previous semesters. When she spoke about software engineering, Riya was asked the following two questions on the same:

(a) What is a software engineering life-cycle?
(b) What is black box testing? How is it different from white box testing?

She was asked to do a 2-minute self-introduction. This was to test her fluency and confidence. She spoke about where she grew up, her fathers' transferable job, how she has a diverse set of friends because of this experience and how the social networks have kept them in touch. She also spoke about how she had thought about her career at school and now in college. She did a good job.

She was then asked to solve a puzzle. This is about a boatman who had a tiger, a bundle of grass and a goat with him. He had to cross the river on a boat. He could not leave the tiger and goat OR goat and grass unsupervised as they would be eaten. He cannot on-board all of them at once as the boat would sink. Under these constraints, how should he take all the items across the river with least number of trips?

Riya was also asked to write a 'C' program to generate the numbers of the Fibonacci series – 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 …

Next, she was asked if she knew what the golden ratio was. She did not know about it.

Riya was asked about her flexibility to work in different locations and she responded in the affirmative.

Riya's friend Karthic, meanwhile, also qualified for the interview. He was not very impressive at the GD on brain drain. He was first asked to reflect on his GD performance and whether he felt the group did a good job.

Karthic quite maturely responded that if he had to do it all over again, he would have probably listed some pros and cons and also questioned if fundamentally, the thing called country makes sense anymore in the virtual world we live in today. The interviewer was impressed with this answer. He then asked Karthic to speak non-stop for 3 minutes on any topic.

Karthic chose to speak about his college. He recounted its history, when it started, what was the town like at that time. He spoke about some of the illustrious alumni and how the college had become quite popular, how and why it fell in student preferences a bit in recent years and how is it again catching up. He had an overall positive message about how the college had made a difference to his own

growth and development as a person. He recalled how his schoolmates and family members are now able to observe a positive change in him. He had become a bit more outgoing, is confident of interacting with strangers and has built this value system of knowing one's subject thoroughly.

The interviewer latched on to this. Karthic had a statistics background in his undergraduation. He is now Riya's classmate in MCA. He was asked to explain the adequacy of a sample size and how this is this arrived at? He was asked to think about how statistics can be applied to improve public health in his town. He tried to think aloud on this topic and was appreciated.

Since Karthic had done both Java and C++, he was asked to explain some basic differences. He was asked about the concept of 'inheritance' vs. 'interface'.

He was also asked about the concepts of 'object', 'class' and 'encapsulation'.

Since they had done a course on Rational Rose, he was asked to draw an activity diagram, a class diagram and explain the difference between the two.

He was asked to write a program to verify if the given string is a palindrome.

Both Riya and Karthic are happily employed in this IT major today. Riya is in an application development project while Karthic is in a product engineering project for a Japanese client.

Exercise: IN the space below, guess the score that Riya and Karthic would have got on a 10-point scale and provide some examples / justification for the score you give.

GD and Interview Record: Riya

Area Description	Score (1 to 10, 10 is highest)	Justification / Evidence
IT Awareness		
Programming Ability		
Logical reasoning		
Operating in a dynamic environment		
Savviness		
Vigorous Pursuit		
Intention to Stay		
Communication Skills		

GD and Interview Record: Karthic

Area Description	Score (1 to 10, 10 is highest)	Justification / Evidence
IT Awareness		
Programming Ability		
Logical reasoning		
Operating in a dynamic environment		
Savviness		
Vigorous Pursuit		
Intention to Stay		
Communication Skills		

Entry Level Back Office

Girish Kumar, a B. Tech in ECE from UP Tech University walked into our office at Business Services division looking for an opening. He had responded to a walk-in advertisement.

'We will consider him for multiple openings', the recruitment team told me. He is a B.Tech of 2014, and from a good university, so must be good. The default orientation on the candidate was positive.

Outside the organisation, we might think that organisations are trying to find ways to reject and they are trying to find faults. It is not so, dear reader, they are equally keen to find the right person and fast. Girish's walk-in was just that. Everyone was hoping he will be good and selectable.

He sat down on the chair meant for him; his legs inter-twined and pushed back even farther than the chair's legs. He was clearly nervous.

'How are you today?'

'Fine sir, just that this is my first interview'

It did not sound right; he had passed out 10 months ago.

'I see. Were you doing some courses after your engineering or were you preparing for something?' The interviewer was now curious as he was wondering how this was his first interview.

'Should you not have applied for a job early?'

'My father asked me to try for a bank job, Sir'.

'Where does your father work and tell me about your family?'

'He is a government servant and wanted me to try in government or bank, if I did not get into a good private company.'

'My mother is a homemaker, my sister is studying Bachelors in nursing, and my younger brother is doing his engineering'.

'Do you ask your father and take career decisions? What is your career plan? How does this job fit in with your overall plan?'

'I missed the Bank Probationary Officer and Clerical Exams by narrow margins. I will continue to apply to those. Meanwhile, I thought I can also try in reputed private firms and within 6 months of getting into business services division, move to software projects'.

Oops….the interviewee is coming across as if the needs of the organisation do not matter. He has not bothered to find out or ask, if such transfers are possible. He has clearly given the intention that the current job he is applying for is a 'stop gap' arrangement.

Girish was lucky. Others would have lost their chance by now. Remember, I had said that the interviewers hoped that Girish would do well. The interviewer was helpful.

'Of course, you can move across divisions. However, you must be clear that it takes a minimum of 15 months as per internal policy. It will take some time for you to be productive and the division cannot lose you to other divisions. I hope this is ok with you. Also, you might have to work a few night shifts. We have a 5-day working week and the 6th day is overtime. However, the 6th day is not standard—it can be a Saturday or Sunday depending on business requirements. I hope this is also ok with you. Where do you live?'

'These are all ok with me Sir. I want to gain some valuable experience. I live very close by'

'OK please. Could you wait for a while, I will get a colleague to do the technical interview?'

About 15 minutes later, the technical interviewer walked in. Girish was called again to the same room.

'Hello Girish, I am Shoba! I will be taking this technical round. I hope you are ok today'

'Yes M'am'

'I see your CV details a lot of your interests in Information and Communication Technologies. I am going to ask you to apply it into a common situation'.

'Can you sell your cell phone to me by describing its features and advantages? Assume I am a common person'.

'My phone is a Sony Ericsson J Series, it has 2 cameras, its glass is made of scratch proof material, plus it will work even if your hands are a bit oily, it has got a RAM of. . .'.

'Ok, ok I am not sure I got everything, can I connect on Facebook or Twitter. Can I take a selfie? Does it have Chrome?'

Shoba was checking if Girish can do one of the CRM (client relationship management) process for this telecom client of their company. She realised Girish was not able to communicate effectively, even after he got a clue that the person on the other side is a lay person and is not following. Girish was also not fluent and was making grammatical errors.

She asked a few questions on Micro-controllers. Girish responded to some of them. He was recollecting definitions, but was not able to relate, apply or explain them. It gave an impression that he went through the motions in his Engineering and did not really get into the subject.

From the several telecom clients in voice and back office, they had collected a series of words used by clients. Not understanding them had caused issues in the past. This was a practical check on the person to see if they could perform in that process. They asked Girish to first read the words slowly and loudly. Do find them given as under.

Treasure	Casually	Speed stream
Measure	Thank You	Visual
Division	She Said	Crowd
Section	Apologise	Position
Decision	Specialisation	Path finder
Jeopardy	Primarily	App

After reading four words, Girish became nervous.

'Can I drink some water?'

'Please, go ahead. It is over there'.

He came back, and after few more words, they asked for meanings of some of these words. Shoba asked him to use them in sentences. The technical interviewer wanted Girish to produce some of his written work, like project reports or something. She was going to ask if Girish had any of them at hand.

May be, the other process that does not involve speaking to client but solving problems on chat is an option, she thought. She asked the recruiter if there are requirements of team members in that process. The recruiter said that all selections to that process have been made.

After Girish left, the recruiter showed his CV and pointed to a spot to the technical interviewer. It was the Objective Section. It sounded bombastic but incoherent. It was difficult to guess what was being conveyed there. This is what it contained:

'Looking at a challenging career, where there is scope for demonstration, always on lookout for positive and bigger outlook...Have fun attitude is everything, bottom line raises with the organisation, a learner for life'.

Girish had actually given evidence in his CV that he cannot handle a chat process in the back office!

They decided to tell Girish that they will get back if they find a suitable opening. They were going to ask him to brush up on a few things and check with them in 8 weeks, but Girish, being disappointed with the outcome, quickly thanked and walked away.

In the given space, attempt how you would have presented yourself if you were Girish. Describe this in 500 words using some of the questions the interviewers asked as the guideposts for this description.

Here are 3 individuals that are part of a back office banking process with a large company in IT-Enabled back office services. Do notice how their interviews correlate well with what they do on the job.

There were five processes and one master process that worked on allocation to one of the 5 teams for this client.

For clients in UK and parts of Europe, there was an account opening process. There was also a more complicated process on International Funds transfer. The third process was on standing orders like a recurring deposit, a utility payment like an electricity bill or school fee. The fourth was stops and amendments, where an existing instruction is sought to be amended, the most common being stop payment instructions for cheques issued. The fifth was on client information and the most frequent request was for change of address update in bank records.

The indexing process routed the client request into one of these five teams.

Shibu Khan, a BCA graduate from Meerut was in the account opening process for one of the countries. There were three kinds of accounts the bank supported – a current account, a savings bank account and a business account. All these accounts were for the student community of that country.

His job was to look at the scanned copy of the hand written account opening form. He needs to ensure all the relevant fields are filled and they are valid information. Once he finds them valid, he needs to make an account opening submission in the bank's software application. He handles about 50–60 transactions per day.

After his graduation, Shibu opened a hardware and network service store at Meerut. He would take clients' calls on problems in PC's, peripherals like printers and scanners and reported issues in other network components like modems and routers.

While Shibu was analytical, he lacked oral communication skills and client presence. His English language comfort was very low. He was rejected for the call process for a telecommunications client because of his poor oral communication skills. His first round was to introduce himself and talk about his family and his educational background. He was also given a set of words to read and pronounce.

Having been rejected for any voice process, at the next manager round, he was asked about mother boards, USB's—the number of ports—and on firewalls and security in network configurations. He was on top of his area, having worked as a hardware and network services entrepreneur.

He was then given a written exam that tested Grammar and punctuation. Shibu did better on this one and in any case the responses that employers had to give were more templatised in this process.

A typing test followed where on a software platform, he was asked to type a note printed and given to him and the software tested him for accuracy, speed and whether he was using fingering appropriately.

The HR discussion was on his ability to relocate and operate near the office location, his preferences or constraints for work timings, his commitment to staying in the light of other opportunities he may be pursuing and his career aspirations and, finally, on his promise to brush up his oral communication skills.

Shibu did mention that he had closed his shops for good as he did not find it sustainable in a place like Meerut. Since he graduated a good 18 months ago, he is looking for a stable corporate job. His desire was to move to a more technology-oriented process as the opportunities might permit.

Deepti Bharadwaj had joined the same client recently. She was in the stops and amendments process. She had a BE in Electronics and Communication Engineering from a college in Dehradun. She had been trying for government jobs without success, in the last 18 months. For preparations, she had already relocated with friends a few kilometres from the office.

She described her work as generated by a client request, which can come through emails, posts or from a branch the client would have contacted. The allocation team puts this request in the workflow system of Toscana and sends it to the stops and amendments process team. The team's service level agreement was that each request would be executed within 24 hours. Each day, Deepti handled about 45 requests.

Like Shibu, her selection process also involved describing herself, her studies and her aspirations.

At the technical interview, she was asked about cheques and banking. She was also asked about the number of digits in the account number she must have seen in cheques and about the types of accounts.

Like Shibu, she also read a paragraph and typed it in the software. Her speed and accuracy was good and she was in.

Anup joined the client for a different process: payment processing. He graduated from Varanasi with a BCA.

He does about 30-40 transactions per day. The whole payment process involves the following steps:

Indexing – Checking the value and the date on which it needs to be executed.

Prepping – Checking if the account has enough balance on the said date.

Routing – The settlement could be done from a NOSTRO account – in case of country to country payments where there is a bank to bank transfer and then from the receiving bank to the individual or from a VOSTRO account in case of direct transfer.

Processing – Entry and posting in the designated bank application.

Verification – Checking and releasing the payments.

His CV was well-written.

Extracts from Anup's CV

Career Objective

To be associated with a progressive organisation that provides scope to apply my knowledge and skills, and to be a part of a team that dynamically works towards the growth of the organisation.

Key Strength

Adaptive to fast-paced and changing environment.

Meticulous planning and executing tasks to perfection.

Excellent interpersonal skills.

Good client co-ordination and communication skills.

Anup was also asked to introduce himself, talk about his town and his family. He was asked a few questions on his banking awareness. His written test was for him 'to write an email to the bank requesting for updating change of address'.

He was also given the typing test and his HR interview checked his commitment and flexibility.

As an exercise, could you interview two current incumbents of a back office process and ask them to recollect their selection process?

Describe what you find in the two boxes, just like I have described them above. To make it easy, I have given a structure for you to describe in the first instance and an empty box for the second one.

I spoke to……

He/She works for <company name> in their <process name> for their <client name>

He/She is responsible for the following tasks and responsibilities.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

Their job begins when ……

His/her prior experience before the current job was…..

His/her selection process contained the following steps

Firstly, ….

All shortlisted candidates from stage 1, approximately x% were eliminated in round 1, were asked to….

At the next interview stage, the questions were of the following types

About me

About my degree and questions on my subject were

About my project and internship, these questions were asked

Looking at the job I do, and looking back, the reasons those questions were asked were….

<> now works for….

You must be wondering to yourself, 'Why do they ask all these questions? What must they be testing?' If you notice the content and drift of any of these examples, they are testing the candidate's general employability skills. Flip through the second and third chapters and you will relate to the many questions being asked to these candidates. Similarly, flip the chapter on job literacy and you would know how these questions relate to the content of the jobs for which candidates are being hired. Another equally important linkage is your responses to these questions make you successful or unsuccessful in the early stages of your career.

How do I prepare myself to do well in the first year is the subject of the next chapter.

6.7   KEY TO WRITTEN TEST

6.7.1   Verbal Ability

I. Vocabulary

Antonyms (opposites) and Synonyms (meanings) are the most common formats to test vocabulary.

Which is not the Synonym of Activist?

    (e) Campaigner   (f) Advocate   (g) Radical   (h) <u>Reactionary</u>

Which are not the Antonyms of Playful?

    (e) Subdued   (f) Serious   (g) <u>Overwhelmed</u>   (h) <u>Flippant</u>

Verbal Analogies test both fluency and vocabulary. It is not about knowing the word and its meaning alone, it is also about using it correctly. Here are some example questions:

Alcohol : Intoxication ::

    (f) Water : Thirst   (g) <u>Narcotics : Drowsiness</u>
    (h) <u>Drug : Addiction</u>   (i) Ointment : Infection
    (j) Food : Hunger

Sand : Deserts ::

    (f) Snow : Mountains   (g) Fish : Ponds
    (h) Salt : Seas   (i) <u>Grass : Lawns</u>
    (j) Corn : Fields

II. Fluency and Grammar

Though not strictly different from vocabulary, formats to test fluency involve filling in the blanks, substituting a word and re-arranging a jumbled sentence. They may also involve correcting an incorrectly constructed sentence.

Which segment of the sentences below has an error?

  4. (A) Western Culture has (B) <u>influence many people in</u> (C) India in a very powerful way.
  5. (A) Harish likes to play cricket (B) <u>and riding a bicycle </u>(C) besides playing video games.
  6. (A) The whole thing moves (B) around the concept of building a small dynamic (C) organisation into a larger one. (D) <u>No error.</u>

In the following question, a part of the sentence is italicised. Find the right substitute for the italicised word so that it improves the sentence:

She *gave* most of her time to music

  (e) Spent   (f) <u>Devoted</u>   (g) Lent   (h) No Improvement

Which of the phrases given below should replace the phrase in brackets () to make it a grammatically correct sentence?

Because of his ill health, the doctor has advised him (not to refrain) from smoking.

  (a) to not refrain from   (b) to resort to
  (c) <u>to refrain from</u>   (d) to be refrained from
  (e) No correction required

Fill in the blanks:

The astronaut made the descent with unusual caution, placing each foot first _____ then firmly.
1. heavily 2. clumsily 3<u>. tentatively</u> 4. confidently 5. languidly

Pick out the most effective pair of words from the given pairs of words to make the sentence/ sentences meaningfully complete.

 1. The teacher must _____ the unique style of a learner in order to _____ it to the desired knowledge.
   (a) advocate………direct   (b) perpetuate………..develop
   (c) appreciate………focus   (d) <u>discover………harness</u>
 2. Not all countries benefit _____ from liberalisation. The benefits tend to _____ first to the advantaged and to those with right education to be able to benefit from the opportunities presented.
   (a) equally ………generate   (b) richly………..downgrade
   (c) suitably………ascribe   (d) <u>uniformly……….percolate</u>

The following four sentences when arranged form a coherent paragraph. Choose the most logical order of the sentences from those given below:

 5. He was so busy with them that he did not have time to eat
 6. Thousands of people came to see him and asked different types of questions
 7. No one cared to see that he had his food or rest that night
 8. Swami Vivekananda once stayed in a small village
   • 2314
   • 3214
   • <u>4213</u>
   • 4231

 Choose the most logical order of sentences from among the given choices to construct a coherent paragraph.
  A. The situations in which violence occurs and the nature of that violence tends to be clearly defined at least in theory, as in the proverbial lrishman's equation: is this a private fight or can anyone join in?

B. So, the actual risk to outsiders, though no doubt higher than our societies, is calculable.

C. Probably the only uncontrolled applications of force are those of social superiors to social inferiors and even here there are probably some rules.

D. However binding the obligation to kill, members of feuding families engaged in mutual massacre will be genuinely appalled if by some mischance a bystander or outsider is killed.

Answer: <u>A, D, C, B</u>

Directions:

1. Use all the phrases given.
2. Minimum words should be 50, otherwise your email cannot be validated.
3. Addressing and signing should be done as in the question given.
4. Common grammatical rules and punctuation should be according to standard English.
5. You can use your own phrases along with the phrases given.

Question 1: Using the following phrases, write an email with a minimum of 70 words to the customer Mr. Gill Roy the explaining delay to the project.

Payment processing system – Schedule – 10th May (Friday) – Unexpected power outage – 3 days – Overall delay – 7 days – includes recovery of lost work – will not recur

Answer 1

Mr. Roy

I regret to inform you that the payment processing system project is delayed by 7 days from the scheduled go live date of 10th May.

An unexpected power outage for 3 days has delayed a key step as well as loss of some codes, which cascaded the delay. We are confident of meeting this delayed go live date of 17th May, and would not only catch up on the recovery of lost work but also fix the root cause, so that this does not recur.

I thank you for your understanding and am keen to respond to any questions on this matter from your side.

Regards

Question 2: You are the project leader for a team of 20 members. As the team members are not submitting the weekly time sheets regularly, you need to email them stressing the need to submit without fail. Using the following phrases, write an email with a minimum of 70 words and a maximum of 100 words to your team members informing the same.

Can be accessed online-lead to loss of pay-every week-do not default-used to bill client-actual working hours-by Friday-failure to adhere-time sheet filling application.

Answer 2

Hello Team,

It is disheartening to note that we as a team are not submitting our time sheets on regularly despite having enabled convenience of filling it from our desks and phones. In our business, our clients pay for the time we put in solving their problems. This also helps us measure our productivity.

To better inculcate this discipline, we are now linking our payrolls to time sheets. This means that those of us who do not fill our timesheets will see our monthly pay being reduced proportionately. I seek your support and attention on this matter.

Regards

6.7.2 Quantitative Ability

I. Ratios and Proportions

1. In a camp, there is a meal for 120 men or 200 children. If 150 children have taken the meal, how many men will be catered to with the remaining meal?
   A. 50   B. 30   C. 40   D. 10

2. 36 men can complete a piece of work in 18 days. In how many days will 27 men complete the same work?
   A. 26   B. 22   C. 12   D. 24

3. A person works on a project and completes 5/8 of the job in 10 days. At this rate, how many more days will he take to finish the job?
   A. 7   B. 6   C. 5   D. 4

4. A wheel that has 6 cogs is meshed with a larger wheel of 14 cogs. If the smaller wheel has made 21 revolutions, what will be the number of revolutions made by the larger wheel?
   A. 15   B. 12   C. 21   D. 9

5. A container contains 40 litres of milk. From this container, 4 litres of milk was taken out and replaced by water. This process was repeated twice more. How much milk is now contained by the container?
   A. 26 litres   B. 29.16 litres   C. 28 litres   D. 28.2 litres

6. Tea worth ₹126 per kg and ₹135 per kg are mixed with a third variety of tea in the ratio 1 : 1 : 2. If the mixture is worth ₹153 per kg, what is the price of the third variety per kg ?
   A. ₹182.50   B. ₹170.5   C. ₹175.50   D. ₹180

7. Find the ratio in which rice at ₹7.20 a kg can be mixed with rice at ₹5.70 a kg to produce a mixture worth ₹6.30 a kg.
   A. 4 : 3   B. 3 : 4   C. 2 : 3   D. 3 : 2

II. Ages and Relationships

In this category of questions, the rules of adding or subtracting and multiplying or dividing need to be correctly applied. Often, after solving the problem, candidates fail to notice the actual question asked. For example, the actual question may be 'what is the ratio of their ages today?' and not any of their individual ages.

1. Ten years ago, P was half of Q in age. If the ratio of their present ages is 3:4, what will be the total of their present ages?
   A. 45   B. 40   <u>C. 35</u>   D. 30
2. Father is aged three times more than his son Sunil. After 8 years, he would be two and a half times of Sunil's age. After further 8 years, how many times would he be of Sunil's age? (QUESTION SHOULD BE AFTER FURTHER 16 YEARS?)
   A. 4 times   B. 4 times   <u>C. 2 times</u>   D. 3 times
3. The Average age of a class of 22 students is 21 years. The average increased by 1 when the teacher's age also included. What is the age of the teacher?
   A. 48   B. 45   C. 43   <u>D. 44</u>
4. Six years ago, the ratio of the ages of Vimal and Saroj was 6 : 5. Four years hence, the ratio of their ages will be 11 : 10. What is Saroj's age at present?
   A. 18   <u>B. 17</u>   C. 16   D. 15
5. The sum of ages of 5 children born at the intervals of 3 years each is 50 years. What is the age of the youngest child?

Answer – <u>4 years</u>

III. Time, Distance and Relative Motion

The speed factor needs to be adjusted in different directions. The rules of vector algebra come in handy for the more complicated problems in this sub-section. Like in the ages section, pay attention to the final question for which you are choosing the options.

1. A motorboat, whose speed in 15 km/h in still water goes 30 km downstream and comes back in a total of 4 hours 30 minutes. The speed of the stream (in km/hr) is:
   A. 10   B. 6   <u>C. 5</u>   D. 4
2. Speed of a boat in standing water is 14 kmph and the speed of the stream is 1.2 kmph. A man rows to a place at a distance of 4864 km and comes back to the starting point. The total time taken by him is:
   <u>A. 700 hours</u>   B. 350 hours   C. 1400 hours   D. 1010 hours
3. A man takes twice as long to row a distance against the stream as to row the same distance in favour of the stream. The ratio of the speed of the boat (in still water) and the stream is:
   <u>A. 3 : 1</u>   B. 1 : 3   C. 1 : 2   D. 2 : 1
4. A and B take part in 100 m race. 'A' runs at a speed of 5 kmph. A gives B a start of 8 m and still beats him by 8 seconds. The speed of B is:
   <u>3.6 KMPH</u>

IV. Calendar Calculations

We are not mentally used to the 7 day cycle of the week and most likely mistakes made by candidates is to use the decimal framework in calendar calculation problems. Complicated problem versions require you to factor in the leap year

1. Today is Monday. After 61 days, it will be
   A. Thursday   B. Sunday   C. Monday   <u>D. Saturday</u>

2. How many days are there in x weeks x days
   A. 14x   B. 8x   C. 7x2   D. 7

3. Today is Friday. A Client says you have to meet me two days after the day before the day after tomorrow that means which day??
   Monday

V. Probability

To answer questions in this section, one must be familiar with the concept of combinations. Also, a base knowledge of frequently used scenarios like Dice, Cards is required. In the options the right answer may be further simplified, for example, 3/9 might be given as 1/3.

Here again, pay attention to the actual question asked, it may be the inverse of what you think the question is

1. A die is rolled twice. What is the probability of getting a sum equal to 9?
   A. 2/3   B. 2/9   C. 1/3   D. 1/9

2. A bag contains 2 yellow, 3 green and 2 blue balls. Two balls are drawn at random. What is the probability that none of the balls drawn is blue?
   A. 1/2   B. 10/21   C. 9/11   D. 7/11

3. A card is randomly drawn from a deck of 52 cards. What is the probability getting an Ace or King or Queen?
   A. 3/13   B. 2/13   C. 1/13   D. 1/2

VI. Profit and Loss

The concepts of cost price and selling price need to be understood. Profits or loss % are on the base of the cost price while margin is on the base of the selling price. Tricky questions are when there is a ratio and proportion angle to profit and loss problems.

Find below 3 tough samples

1. The cost price of 20 articles is the same as the selling price of x articles. If the profit is 25%, find out the value of x
   A. 15   B. 25   C. 18   D. 16

2. If selling price is doubled, the profit triples. What is the profit percent?
   A. 100   B. 105 & 1/3   C. 66 & 2/3   D. 120

3. A trader has 1600 kg of sugar. He sells a part at 8% profit and the rest at 12% profit. If he gains 11% on the whole, find the quantity sold at 12%.
   A. 1200 kg   B. 1400 kg   C. 1600 kg   D. 800 kg

4. A man wants to sell his scooter. There are two offers, one at ₹12,000 cash and the other a credit of ₹12,880 to be paid after 8 months, money being at 18% per annum. Which is the better offer?

   Cash offer

The simpler method is to say interest earned for 8 months is 880/- and compute the corresponding annual interest rate – (880 × 12/8) × 100/12000 and compare with the 18%.

VI. Geometry – Areas and Volumes

For this sub-section, one needs to be familiar with formulae for areas and volumes of different shapes. Candidates who are able to visualise the problem are often better able to solve such questions

One needs to pay attention to whether the problem statement indicates area or circumference, perimeter or area.

1. Pipe A takes 16 min to fill a tank. Pipes B and C, whose cross-sectional circumferences are in the ratio 2:3, fill another tank twice as big as the first. If A has a cross-sectional circumference that is one-third of C, how long will it take for B and C to fill the second tank? (Assume the rate at which water flows through a unit cross-sectional area is same for all the three pipes.)

   A. 66/13   B. 40/13   C. 16/13   D. 32/13

   The above is a tricky problem, as cross sectional circumference ratios are given, while we need cross-sectional areas to compute. Also note that the size of the tank to be filled is twice as big. So, if you miss the 2 details, you will get the problem wrong even if you know the logic

2. A rectangular park 60 m long and 40 m wide has two concrete crossroads of the same width running in the middle of the park and rest of the park has been used as a lawn. The area of the lawn is 2109 sq. m. What is the width of the road?

   A. 5 m   B. 4 m   C. 2 m   D. 3 m

   In the above, do not forget that when you do length x width of cross road and breadth x width of cross-road, you are counting the intersection twice. Better to try out the 4 options rather than solve this problem

3. If the length of a rectangle is halved and its breadth is tripled, what is the percentage change in its area?

   A. 25 % Increase   B. 25 % Decrease   C. 50 % Decrease   D. 50 % Increase

4. A person walked diagonally across a square plot. Approximately, what was the percent saved by not walking along the edges?

   A. 35%   B. 30 %   C. 20 %   D. 25%

5. The breadth of a rectangular field is 60% of its length. If the perimeter of the field is 800 m, find out the area of the field.

   A. 37500 m²   B. 30500 m²   C. 32500 m²   D. 40000 m²

6. An error 2% in excess is made while measuring the side of a square. What is the percentage of error in the calculated area of the square?

   A. 4.04 %   B. 2.02 %   C. 4 %   D. 2 %

7. If 2 squares are similar but not equal and the diagonal of larger square is 4 m. What is the area of smaller square if its area is 1/2 of larger square. Also tell the side of smaller square

   4 sq m; 2m

8. A cow is tied to one corner of a square plot of side 12 m by a rope 7 m long. Find the area it can graze?

   38.5 sq m

Functions & Equations

It is a more conceptual variant of the ratio and proportion question

1. If x% of a is the same as y% of b, then z% of b is:

(a) (xy/z)% of a   (b) (yz/x)% of a   (c) <u>(xz/y)% of a</u>   (d) None of these

2. Three consecutive whole numbers are such that the square of the middle number is greater than the product of the other two by 1. Find the middle number.

(a) 6   (b) 18   (c) 12   (d) <u>All of these</u>

3. If x increases linearly, how will a – x behave (a > 1)?

(a) Increase linearly   (b) <u>Decrease linearly</u>

(c) Increase exponentially   (d) Decrease exponentially

4. A Monkey ate 100 bananas in five days, each day eating 6 more than the previous day. How many bananas did monkey eat on the first day?

<u>8 bananas</u>

6.7.3 Analytical Ability and Logical Reasoning

Directions: In each question below are given three Statements followed by three Conclusions numbered I, II and III. You have to take the given Statements to be true even if they seem to be at variance from commonly known facts. Read all the conclusions and then decide which of the given Conclusions logically follows from the given Statements disregarding commonly known facts.

1. Statements:

Some cycles are buses. All cars are buses. Some buses are trains. Conclusions:

   I. All cars are cycles.

  II. Some trains are buses.

 III. Some trains are cars.

     (1) None follows   (2) Only I and II follow

     (3) Only I and III follow   <u>(4) Only II and III follow</u>

     (5) None of these

2. Statements: All pencils are sticks. Some sticks are notes. All diaries are notes. Conclusions:

   I. Some notes are diaries.

  II. Some sticks are pencils.

 III. Some diaries are sticks.

     (1) All follow   (2) Only I follow

     <u>(3) Only I and II follow</u>   (4) Only II follows

     (5) None of these

3. Statements: Some buds are leaves. No leaf is fruit. Some fruits are buds.

  Conclusions:

   I. Some fruits are leaves.

  II. All buds are fruits.

 III. Some leaves are buds.

     (1) Only I or II follows   <u>(2) Only III follows</u>

     (3) Only II follows   (4) None follows

     (5) None of these

4. Statements: Some birds are animals. All animals are rivers. Some rivers are lions. Conclusions:

   I. Some lions are animals

  II. Some rivers are birds

    III. No animal is lion
- (1) Only II follows
- (2) Only either I or III follows
- (3) I and II follows
- (4) Only either II or III follow
- (5) None of these

5. Statements: All boxes are pans. Some boxes are jugs. Some jugs are glasses. Conclusions:
   - I. Some glasses are boxes
   - II. No glass is box
   - III. Some jugs are pans
   - IV. No jug is pan
     - (1) Only I and II follow
     - (2) Either I or II and III follows
     - (3) Only III follows
     - (4) Either I or II, and either III or IV follow
     - (5) None of these

6. DECODE – If 'PENCIL' is coded as '?@,=;7' and 'PAPER' is coded as '?9?@5'. What is the code of 'CLIP' ';=?'

7. Here are some words translated from an artificial language.

   plekapaki means fruitcake

   pakishillen means cakewalk

   treftalan means buttercup

   Which word could mean 'cupcake'?

   'Penpaki'

8. Statements:

   If the wind is strong, kites are flown

   If the sky is not clear, kites are not flown

   If the temperature is high, kites are flown.

      Assume the statements above to be true. If kites are flown, which of the following statements must be true?
   - I. The wind is strong
   - II. The sky is clear
   - III. The temperature is not high

9. The given question has a main statement followed by four statements labelled A, B, C, and D. Choose the ordered pair of statements where the first statement implies the second, and the two statements are logically consistent with the main statement.

   If I talk to my professors, then I do not need to take a pill for headache.
   - (a) I talked to my professors.
   - (b) I did not need to take a pill for headache.
   - (c) I needed to take a pill for headache.
   - (d) I did not talk to my professors.
   - (e) I did not talk to my professors.

   'a,b'

10. Choose the option consisting of three statements put together in specific order which indicates a valid argument, i.e. where the third statement is a conclusion drawn from the preceding two statements.
    - A. All software companies employ knowledge workers.
    - B. Tara Tech employs knowledge workers.
    - C. Tara Tech is a software company.

    D. Some software companies employ knowledge workers.

    E. Tara Tech employs only knowledge workers.

    <u>'A,C,B'</u>

11. Choose the alternative from set of four statements, which have three segments each, where the third segment in the statement can be logically deduced using both the preceding two, but not just one of them.

    A. Ram is taller than Lakshman. Bharat is shorter than Ram. Lakshman is shorter than Bharat.

    B. Giants climb beanstalks. Some chicken do not climb beanstalks. Some chicken are not giants.

    C. All explorers live in snowdrifts. Some penguins live in snowdrifts. Some penguins are explorers.

    <u>D. Many singers are not writers. All poets are singers. Some poets are not writers.</u>

12. A cube is having three adjacent faces of blue colour. Then it cut once horizontally and once vertically to form cuboids of equal size. Each of these cuboids is coloured pink on all the uncoloured faces. Then it cut as before into four cuboid of equal size. How many cuboids have three faces coloured blue?

    <u>'1'</u>

13. Consider a cuboid of having dimensions $6cm \times 4cm \times 1cm$. It is painted black on both the surfaces of dimensions ($4cm \times 1cm$), green on the surfaces of dimensions ($6cm \times 4cm$) and red on the surface of dimensions ($6cm \times 1cm$). Now the block is divided into various small cubes of side 1cm. each. The smaller cubes so obtained are separated. How many cubes will have two sides with green colour and remaining sides without any colour?

    <u>'8'</u>

14. Find the wrong number in the given series: 64, 71, 80, 91, 104, 119, 135, 155

    <u>'135', it must have been '136'</u>

6.7.4 Group Discussion

Swachh Bharat

Candidate	Operating in a dynamic environment	Savviness	Vigorous Pursuit
A	Low	Medium	Medium
B	Medium	Medium	Medium
C	Medium	High	High
D	Medium	Low	Medium
E	High	High	High
Remarks			

Attendance

Candidate	Operating in a dynamic environment	Savviness	Vigorous Pursuit	Values & Beliefs – Remarks
H	High	High	Medium	
I	High	High	High	Process orientation?
J	Low	Low	Low	
K	High	Medium	High	
L	Medium	Medium	Low	Trying to please? Not trusting others?
M	Low	Medium	Low	Initiative?
Remarks				

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, you have learnt:

1. Follow the written test strategies in the chapter to maximise your scores in the available time.
2. Make sure you cross a minimum threshold in every section of the written test so as to get shortlisted for the next stage.
3. Figure out the nature of the GD topic and participate accordingly. Listening and handling objections is as important as articulation. Use the GD scorecard in the chapter to finely tune your preparation and presentation during a group discussion.
4. Use resources on the web to become familiar with the awareness and concept questions in the technical interview.
5. If asked to solve the problem on the spot, survey the problem well and logically approach it, do not hesitate to think aloud.
6. You are most likely to be asked questions on your project work, especially the difficult decision points in the project and how you took them.
7. Be natural in the HR interview, use the contents of this chapter to orient your response to questions asked.

Points to Ponder

1. How will you respond to a stress interview, where the interviewer puts you on the dock and fires away questions expecting a fast response?
2. What do verbal, quantitative and logical reasoning have to do with entry level jobs in IT?
3. If you realise in the course of the interview that you had answered an earlier question incorrectly but the interviewer did not seem to take note of, what will you do?

Try This Activity

Create a question bank of 5 new questions for each of the sections and subsections of the written test.

7

NAVIGATING THE FIRST YEAR OF YOUR CAREER

"The beginning is the most important part of the work."

—*Plato, Green Philosopher*

This Chapter deals with your first few days, weeks and months on the job. This is important for a fine understanding of what working means. This chapter will help you understand what to expect early in your career. By knowing this in advance, you will also be able to present yourself as a job-ready candidate for the interviews.

If you are re-reading this chapter after you have secured a job offer, congratulations on this proud moment in your life! We will talk about how you can be successful as a new professional in the real world of work.

Why do people react to each other the way they do? This question from the world of psychology is a relevant one for navigating the first year. The dynamics such reactions set, make or spoil a new hire's first year on the job. This is the first pivoting point of a newbie. He or she must demonstrate savviness first.

There are several individuals I meet at job interviews. They go about with a nose-in-the-air attitude. Instinctively, I feel that they will not get themselves included. It is good to be confident and have high expectations from yourself, but it is another thing to appear as unapproachable. An employable new hire never provokes hostility in others, and by blending in gets the most important information and perspective ahead of others. He or she does not gossip but is such a good listener and relates so well to key groups and understands what is important and what is not sooner than later.

However bright you are, as a new hire, it is important for others to like you and give you tips about the place. I have also seen new hires come with an attitude that what is happening is irrational. It might be, but one must assume that it has meaning for someone in some way. This outlook helps one understand what meaning it has and for whom and is a key to understanding how the organisation works. If you do not understand them, then you cannot harness them for your objectives. You need to understand when and how to make a representation in this organisation.

Remember the bright MBA we talked of earlier, who came and asked, 'How am I doing? It is 90 days since I joined the team'. She could not wait to succeed.

I told her that I was impressed with her diligence and efforts, her grasp of problems as evinced in her statements and the meaningful first analysis that she gave. 'I am however unsure about how much of the informal channels do you tap into. I also do not know if your colleagues of today will report to you

tomorrow. Are you provoking hostility or do they think they can pick up something from a colleague who has gone to a better business school?'

I asked her these questions because she was not doing well in this area. I told her that establishment goals are 70% and the achievement was 30% in the first year. Within a few days, she committed an error, tried to run away from it, disowned it and got everyone pouncing on her. To avoid complete breakdown of relationships, and to give her a clean chance, she was transferred to another team with an explicit counselling. However, instead of respecting the verdict of results, she became more paranoid, more disjointed and more determined in the 'I am right, you're wrong' attitude. A few months later, the new manager said, I would rather go without a staff than have this person. She got the message and left the organisation.

7.1   THE CAMPUS TO CORPORATE TRANSITION

More than 50% of the graduates that join the professional world every year do not adjust to this world speedily and effectively. It will make a big difference to the Indian economy and Corporate India if more graduates can become productive, and sooner.

Of course, for an individual graduate like you, who is about to enter the corporate world, a successful transition is priceless. By getting these first few steps correct, you could be an effective, happy and successful employee in a fast and prosperous career track. By not getting these correct, you may decide to chug along, working from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. so you can live between 6 p.m. and 9 a.m.

This is not about an (far-fetched) attitude change which will help you in every facet of life. It is also not a miraculous technology, about to be unfolded. Let us be clear: the burden of this transition is yours, entirely. By anticipating and preparing for the challenges in each phase, your chances to succeed improve. This is to give that space, time, detachment and a framework to reflect on what is about to come. Luckily, you are not yet in the tumble of a transition. Perhaps, you will also know some resources to tap – both within and around. It is meant to be a more practical help.

My experiences as a practicing HR professional will hopefully raise important questions about transitioning to the corporate world as well as giving some pointers to accomplishing this transition. Yes, my own transition from the campus to the corporate world which, when I look back now, seems to have been a fairly smooth, fast and successful one, and has provided me some deep insights into the demands and the dynamics of the transition.

We cannot 'solve' the transition problem if we do not 'understand' it. So what causes the ineffective transitions that we see galore?

Firstly, it is change. Change is difficult to adjust to. It produces anxiety. It creates self-doubt. It predisposes us to commit mistakes and makes us vulnerable. What will happen to us if we fail? To break this vicious cycle, we need to take the initiative and do something about this change. Firstly, understand what has changed for you.

The simple answer is 'the rules of the game have changed'. How? Refer back to Chapter 2.

The college classroom is a safe haven. This is where you have hitherto proved yourself.

Sure, it was a competitive place. You had relative grading. You went through a rigorous examination. You were as good as your last semester. Your professor was hard to impress.

However, it was a place that told you clearly and unambiguously – whether you succeeded and how much you succeeded. A learned and older person called the professor was paid by you to make you successful. While he slogged for your success, you could question him on why such and such a question was 'out of syllabus'. Beyond the academic tenure his liking your face or *vice versa* did not

matter. Understanding, which is cerebral and within the individual's control, was the objective of the classroom. There cannot be many slips between the cup and the lip in this classroom. You had friends who were going through similar experiences and seniors who had been there, done that the same, just a year ago. You could slog it out and make up during the term-end examinations. You did not have many distractions. Beyond the timetable, you could structure your time as you pleased. You could take a nap at 4 p.m. You could tap friends even if you missed classes. There was this huge library with neatly organised information, all at your disposal. This was where you proved yourself.

Reread Story 3 from Chapter 3, 'Vasudha was asked to wait'. This will remind you of the reality of the workplace for a new professional.

Ask the executives how they are doing.

This is a flesh and blood conversation between 'K' the senior who has already entered the world of work and 'A' who is still a student and who was great friends with 'K' during college. 'A' is curious to know what 'K' goes through and how does he like this 'cool' state, now that he has got a job.

A: How are you doing?

K: Well, I guess…. Good

A: Are you doing better than so and so?

K: It is sort of difficult to say, it is not apples to apples … time alone will tell!! It might depend on what happens to my boss and how much I am able to sense opportunities.

A: Well, how do you recognise this opportunity?

K: It isn't as simple as you think. Unfortunately, the world of work is a minefield of ambiguity, and great opportunities are almost always 'out of syllabus'. You have to recognise them when you see them and seize them the moment you recognise them.

A: Why don't you chat with your boss about these things?

K: Are you crazy …? My boss has a thousand problems of his own, and his boss did not pay him to sort these things out for me … she pays him to solve her problems. I guess that is what I should also do … solve my boss' problems.

A: Do you talk about these things amongst friends and colleagues … like we do about exams and our future in college?

K: Friends and colleagues are not at all interested in these things. I have friends in the 20s and others in the 50s. Their priorities and outlook differ like chalk and cheese. They have their own expectations from work, plus they have no time and all of us have multiple deadlines ahead, always.

A: How about after office hours?

K: Means, during dinner time … I leave for office at 8 a.m. and reach home, if I am lucky, at 8 p.m. Invariably I have dinner and crash on the bed and boom, as I am already asleep. I am just about able to read the newspaper in the morning.

A: Do you work continuously?

K: Perhaps not. Perhaps yes. I have to be there at my seat during office hours, regardless of how much I am occupied. I can't go for a quick movie like you do when you do not have classes! In fact, even after being at my seat throughout, I have a suspicion that my boss thinks I am wasting time. I am already having nightmares on that count.

A: Why don't you ask him?

K: And sound defensive? Plus, it is not a done thing to ask these things openly and gracelessly. I have to infer as we go along. I am also not sure if Shyam at office is fuelling this impression.

A: I thought Shyam and you had a good laugh at many things about office and that you easily jelled with him?

K: Yes, of course, I still like Shyam and he likes me too. Ever since, he went to the other department on an assignment, he must be wondering that I am cracking some jokes on his inefficiency too and telling my boss how he hated his new boss. I guess it will become all right once he is back and sees for himself that I have no ill intentions.

A: How terrible is this corporate world?

K: Oh No! I am not living in hell. There are some good charms to being a corporate executive, seriously. Firstly, you have some status and identity in society. I felt good when I gave my visiting card to my father's friend who had known me as a school kid. Secondly, the paycheck.

A: But you have no time to spend it anyway?

K: However, the thought that somebody values your contribution and capability and thinks you are worth matter so much.

A; Common, these are justifications. Accept that you are suffering.

K: So are all my seniors … soon you will also have to suffer too. I hope I get to know and understand the 'rules of the game' in the world of work quickly. That should help me. I met my classmate, who is in a different line in the corporate world (not a competitor); we were having some good conversations on the changes we are encountering. Strangely, there seem to be some similarities in what he is going through and what I am going through.

A: Some solace, eh.

K: I am meeting Venkatesh for dinner this evening…that is,, provided our bosses release us today. We are strategising; it is sort of interesting to grapple with these challenges. I'll see you then.

A: Can I join you?

K: Your presence will retard our frank conversations. You can now go to your college, your books and your professors and when you get to the world of work, I promise to help you. See you for now.

The fundamental mistake made by bright graduates is to carry the campus paradigm into the corporate world—that is, to think that what worked for them as a student will work for them as a professional.

We will try to break this uphill task into meaningful phases, reflect on the frequently made mistakes and the causes that could propel us to act erroneously. The simple solution is to behave in the opposite direction, sort of over-correct ourselves. This will ensure we make lesser numbers of the mistakes and even if we do, help ourselves recover soon.

7.2   THE PHASES OF A CAMPUS TO CORPORATE TRANSITION

Every phase of the campus to corporate transition requires a uniquely recognisable mindset. They call for identifiable skills, and specific ways in which we have to spend our time. While phase 2 will follow phase 1 for every one of us, they are not of equal duration.

Pre-joining phase, the phase ending with first assignment, finishing the whole role cycle and your first appraisal, and post-first appraisal are the four phases of transition.

7.3   THE WRONG AND RIGHT MINDSET IN PHASE I: PRE-JOINING TO ORIENTATION

As you are treating your friends and family for this well-deserved accomplishment, examine your thoughts. Most of us see this job offer as a culmination, not a beginning. We tell ourselves that we have arrived, and it is just going to be joy ride from here on. This mindset could get you fatigued and frustrated at the first challenge you encounter on the job. You have just got a ticket to fight a greater battle, that's all! By looking at your job as an opportunity to prove yourself in the real world, you will mentally, physically and emotionally mobilise yourself.

Successful transitioners do not over-analyse or over-worry at this stage. It is important to get this attitude right. That the task of proving themselves all over again is around the corner does make them pre-occupied about how they could possibly cope. Their source of hope is not empty confidence or a general optimistic outlook. Their hope is based on the fact that similar others have made it through. They tend to recall the issues faced by seniors, their behaviours and their reflections about those behaviours later. They do not boast at the party about how well they plan to do in the corporate world. They seek a general feedback about the issues they are likely to face from those who could help them with a feedback, and with others they simply share the happy moment. Simultaneously, they make up their mind about what they would do, if the transition does not go well, for whatever reason. With this Plan B in place, they begin to collect specific information about their organisation.

While seeking the perspective of others on their future employer, successful transitioners classify the inputs obtained. They would give more weight to spontaneous sharing of independent outsiders than responses from insiders who could have a 'vested interest' one way or the other. From all those they seek inputs, they would give constant assurance that they realise no place is perfect.

If feasible, successful transitioners tend to familiarise themselves with the physical settings of their office before day one. Needless to say, they would study the website of their employers-to-be.

Re-read your response to the 'interviews of incumbents' that you did for back office BPO in the chapter on 'Preparation tips for the IT/ITES Selection Process'.

Whether called to the site of work or to the site of induction on day one, successful transitioners would give themselves a clear half-an-hour to soak in the setting. On day one, a new hire is distracted or even overwhelmed with his new settings and especially, if there is a stark difference between his economic background and the setting of the office. This half an hour gives the hire an access to the 'green room' where he could see his inductors in their native selves.

The mind of a successful transitioner is at its listening best at this stage. He/She is keen to receive the thousand bits of information that are the ropes of the organisation. She would greet fellow joinees with a positive curiosity of how they got to the organisation. She would forgive herself for a few faux pas, even if they happen to be committed and not get bogged down and guessing what others are thinking of me. As they are doing this in the first few hours of interaction, successful transitioners are already testing their hypothesis about what works and what does not, what is to be expected and what not, what could be encouraged and what could be discouraged, but never over-analysing or firming their outlook. Successful transitioners gracefully accept the fact that it would take them months or years to figure these things out.

Re-read the story of 'Vidya' and 'Priya' from the chapter 'What Changes from Student Life to Professional Life' and more importantly, your response to the exercise on differences between them.

During one's orientation sessions, one is often in the midst of peers. These peers may or may not be interfaces in the course of one's work. However, successful transitioners broadly identify areas where these peers could be useful to them – for contact, for information, for expertise and, simultaneously, identify their own potential offerings for these peers. Their relationship with such peers is one of competition as well as cooperation. Sure, they vie with the other to make a point during the sessions, but successful transitioners also realise that the race is long and a few moments of classroom triumph do not mean much. Their grace is noticeable in such interactions.

Successful transitioners do 'active listening' during their orientation. The various speakers and their points of view do not drive them. They have a mental structure/expectation from every session and so they can measure the deviation between what they expected and what they received.

Even as they make the right efforts above, successful transitioners do not overdo anything. They understand the race is long and they have to take it easy at first. This lack of anxiety keeps them relaxed and listening – the most invaluable disposition during the orientation and, perhaps, in all of work.

Summarise the different behaviours of successful and unsuccessful transitioners in the first phase.

Successful Transitioners	Unsuccessful Transitioners

7.4 PHASE 2 – ALLOCATED TO A ROLE

While successful transitioners know that the first role – the first boss is going to determine their work life – for all practical purposes; they are actually aware and they have little control over this allocation.

They know little about the organisation, and little about themselves as working professionals to hold a strong opinion. So, they take this phase quite easily.

At the time of allocation, they present their case, what they believe their strengths are, but in an open-ended manner. They seek feedback from the experienced members of the organisation, who have just met them, on their own opinions. Successful transitioners also choose divisions or departments where there is a scope to rotate into a different role, should there be any issue.

They try to find out about the role they would be playing, in concrete ways. Being interpersonally skilful, they do not press or corner the professional who is allocating them to a role. They make it interpersonally easy for this individual to help them by matching strengths and opportunities. Even as they seek to establish contact with boss and colleagues in their immediate work spot, they do know that all of them have different priorities. They are running to complete things, pursue projects to pay high attention to their assimilation into the team. They know for sure, that much of the burden of getting acceptance to this immediate work spot is their own.

If posted to a different city, they attend to physically settling down first, so it is out of the way and they can concentrate on understanding and settling down in their roles.

Successful transitioners are too mature to think that there is an open position with identified deliverables waiting for them to assume. If it were so, the activities and programs associated would be so peripheral, for if it were central, it wouldn't be waiting for anybody. Should it be central, someone is already doing it, and not doing enough. They already know that their first work activity in an organisation is a potential conflict.

To take over work from a peer-to-be, without provoking hostility and without sounding judgmental requires quite a lot of tact. After all, the work has assumed significance and therefore needs an additional hand, which is why you have been allocated to it. Over and above, even in the minutest formal handover, there is an informal transfer of 'tribal knowledge and wisdom' that cannot be dictated or mandated. It will happen only if the person handing over likes you! He needs to feel safe that you are not going to grind axe. You are there to make the whole group successful, by easing someone's burden to start with.

Do re-read the story of William Harvey from the chapter 'Employability Competencies Explained'.

Anticipate in the space below, the equivalent Harvey-like situation you could be facing shortly at your place of work

The most concrete way to relate to your new job is to discover its cycle. Even in most project-mode jobs, in smaller timescales, there is always a cycle of activities involved. Typically, they would involve planning, doing, checking and reporting. Not only is it important to understand the specific activities against each activity, it is extremely important to pin down the timeframe involved in a typical cycle. New hires are the most disoriented about the ebb and flow of time as they do their daily activities.

The first few days should be spent in familiarising with your immediate work colleagues or interfaces as you are discovering your job cycle. Know them informally; try to be with them and 'with your mouth

shut and ears open'. There is a tendency to pass comments on a job or someone's performance or on a recent conflict at office. Successful transitioners know that they do not know enough. They would be the last ones to pass comments, even when pressed by colleagues they tend to divert the question with generalities. They are too wise and recognise that there could be formal and informal channels in the organisation, by previous work relationships, friendships at college, etc., and they may never understand them completely in all of their work lives. They would rather be safe than sorry.

Since this is a phase where truckloads of information are not enough, they are careful not to switch off any sources of information. For instance, they do not ill-treat the unqualified employee who has risen from the rank; they try to accommodate their requests. As the long-time rankers tell them something, they do not judge, do not frown, do not sermonise, they simply listen and empathise. If confident, they give them solutions without downplaying anybody.

Any addition to a group is an opportunity to create momentum. Successful transitioners seize such opportunities and make sure their presence makes life better for everyone. They unblock and release blocked energies. You can spot a successful transitioner when people around say that when I meet him / her, I feel more confident of myself and more cheerful about life.

Having spent the first week trying to tie loose ends of information and taking over or, rather, jointly delivering with their peers, the transitioner anticipates his first assignment. By the time the boss gets to define the first assignment, they usually already have a feeling that they are behind time in the definition and execution of this assignment. This is to be accepted as the typical boss mindset.

The boss is equally hoping against hope that his new hire is just able to pick it up. Since the boss does not understand the personality and emotions of this new team member, he is equally anxious of the need to strike the right chord.

Though a new hire himself a few years ago, bosses quickly forget this fact and want new hires to be used to cryptic definitions of problems or even half definitions. Do re-read the story of 'Ramu and Ramya' from Chapter 3.

At the instance of your first assignment, what could be a Ramya-like response that you can think of? Do write this in the given space.

It is very typical of the new hire to treat this assignment as a test of his/her worth whereas the boss treats it as nothing more than work to be done for which (s)he has a new team member. The orientations that can come from these two differing perspectives can create quite a discord in the communication and discussion of this first assignment. As the new hire struggles to find out whether the casual half-statement of this problem is meant to test him/her or to occupy him/her till something is found, the boss is actually relieved (s)he has got his/her first assignment out. (S)he hopes the new hire can start on it and is actually pleased with him/herself that (s)he did a decently comprehensive problem definition with this

new hire, compared to his/her discussions with other team members. He might vaguely recollect and wonder if this was enough for the new hire to start, but will quickly suppress this with … this is how life is anyway, the sooner the new man gets used to it, the better!

If there is one thing a new hire underestimates in this first assignment, it is initiative. Yes, the need to take initiative. After the problem description, the new hire needs to collect him/herself, recollect the words of the boss and start reflecting on the lines and between the lines too! If typical first assignment descriptions are anything to go by, it is likely to be an improvement requirement. Any boss will be too scared to disrupt the existing flow of things. (S)he would like the new hire to get into the groove by analysing from a distance and then starting to contribute to the flow itself.

Working on an improvement program to an existing process or transaction(s) best does this. This could also take the form of a second verification to someone's output, or re-running a transaction in a mock mode. This could take the form of solving a software trouble ticket in the test environment. It could be unit testing of someone's code. The first common thing about this new assignment is that it does not disrupt the main flow. The second commonality is, it is a potential conflict!

The whole of the first assignment will teach a new hire how to guess what is on the mind of the boss while giving this problem. The guessing is not to ingratiate, but to understand and draw out tacit pains of your function or project. The new hire will also have to guess, how much it bothers all concerned. This analysis of how much and what the organisation will lose to get this correct is a difficult one to guess for the new hire. Remember, the new hire had just been a student a while ago for whom problem statements were just that. They were not situations to be traded off with commitments, investments and risks. It is extremely important for a new hire to realise the real world is a huge rubber bag taking unpredictable shapes. If a place has to be depressed, one must be willing or accepting of the fact that another place might get bloated. The Taoist outlook of Yin and Yang, and that every action produces a counter balancing action is a good outlook to carry to the workplace.

A successful transitioner does not reach his friends outwards and discuss their assignments. He should be internally oriented at this moment – to soak in the organisation and its dynamics. He needs to eat, sleep and dream about the players at the office. They should be his 'significant others' for this first 4 months.

Do re-read the story of Benjamin Franklin with the French from the chapter 'Employability Competencies Explained'. What are you doing similarly? Describe in the given space.

A significant milestone in the first assignment is the first discussion the boss calls for, after having given the problem statement. This is an opportunity to second-guess the depth and speed of deliverables expected. It is also an occasion to tell your boss that you are there to help and that your eye is constantly on the ball and should there be a slip-up in your judgment you would not hesitate to alert him. At the same time, it is important that the boss realises that you are not a 'hoaxer'. He would decide in this meeting on how much to discount your accounts in the future.

A new hire will encounter the most typical dilemma at this stage – how seriously to take the casual remarks of the boss, like 'you need to work a bit more on this'. The right answer to this is dead seriously. Since the boss is anxious to strike the right chord being unaware of the new hires' personality and emotions, while the new hire has received unambiguous critique of his answers and presentations from his professor so far, the seeds of mismatch are sown. The new hire is likely to underestimate this casual remark. It is important to listen to this remark and place it in context. Do not become over-anxious. Do not over check with the boss about your approach and the correctness of it. Remember, the boss took time off to define this assignment for you, though you might think it was ill-structured as a problem to work on. Mentally resolve to address it and verify it with the boss' criteria after having addressed it. Usually, people know whether they have adequately addressed something or not. Do not implement the boss' words step by step. They are meant to be directional, not detailed. After having satisfied yourself that you had addressed the remarks of the boss, explicitly run through if your boss would be feeling the same way. As professionals, we work for objective projects, or so we think. We actually work for a boss who works for his boss, who might perhaps work on an objective project, and even this is a hope!

At the moment, your orientation is that your boss' requirements are your objective project. You are too new to judge otherwise!

Your peer interaction at this stage has to be careful and well-chosen. Naturally, your peers are curious about how you fared in the first meeting and more importantly, what you are working on. Be discreet. At the same time, do not be stiff. If pressed, tell them that your boss said that he would personally brief them all. Nobody checks with their boss on such things! At the same instance, your boss will definitely be interested in knowing if you are discreet. Actually, he might call the very same peers and ask 'if they found out what the new hire is working on' and should they repeat your answer, your boss will be extremely pleased.

Instead ask your peers, what they think about the assignment. Their perspectives can tell you quite a lot about fundamental issues and conflicts. It could also tell you why you have been given this problem statement! This is one of the most useful things to discover about your problem statement. If you can figure out why you, and not someone else, 3/4ths of your requirements, the deliverables and their depth and speed are figured out.

While submitting your findings, take care to emphasise your boss' remarks in the first and subsequent meetings. Explicitly state, how you addressed it in your findings, reports or proposed actions. Do not look for approval; if it is significant enough it will show in the body language – a language you need to learn thoroughly for your own success. Try to articulate, what you got from it as learning – how it corroborated or contradicted your view from the outside (you might want to state this mildly and as a reflective observation only). Without explicitly asking, try to find out how your deliverable is going to be used. Give your commitment to any action that is taken, based on your findings. If discussions with any peer helped, this is the time to acknowledge it without seeming like taking sides or forming a clique. Ask your boss' perspectives on the findings, if the conversation permits.

Should the boss indicate that your deliverable has fallen short of expectations in certain areas, do not become defensive. Listen and go back to the basics. What did you miss? Did the boss have an impression about your background that you want to correct? Without resolving to improve it, unless he indicates you work on them, go back and silently address the gaps. Without provocation, once you are satisfied, send it to the boss asking him to go through it at leisure, prefacing that you have now addressed these things pointed out. You are certain to receive a positive remark on this one!

Bosses will like it if at the end of it you identify for yourself the next logical thing to work on; broach this as a suggestion without making it sound like a demand.

Bosses will also ask how you are getting along. This is not the time to pour out all the little details one went through! This question is meant to give an opportunity to highlight if there is anything grave requiring intervention!! Welcome to the world of work, and time to quickly get used to this code language. As a matter of principle, when you feel a certain question is out of place or extraordinary, say less, ask more.

Summarise dos and don'ts before, during and after the first assignment review.

Dos

Don'ts

During and after your first assignment, you could be relatively less loaded. This is the opportunity to reach out to peers by offering to help them. While you reach out to peers (specifically in other functions and departments), remember the following. On a personal front though it would be easier to reach out and participate in and outside the function peer interaction, from an inter-departmental perspective, this could be difficult. On a person-to-person basis, this peer in an adjacent function perhaps does not see you daily and would be interested in how your outcomes could further his own advancement in the organisation whereas professional rivalries will be readily pronounced with the peer sitting adjacent to you in the same function. You must take extra attention to ensure your reaching out is not received as 'treading on'. The queer thing about this caution is that after it is received that way, your efforts to correct the impression will be counter-productive. As a matter of principle, should you realise you have treaded territory or rubbed somebody wrongly, first forgive yourself and then bring down this interaction for the time being. Such wounds are best addressed by letting it heal without doing anything about them rather than attempting to patch this up. Remember, as a new hire, you do not even know what is the wound and the issue. Passivity is the best policy.

Notwithstanding the cautions above, you should find out what your peer needs from your first work and how it could be useful to him. As you offer to connect up your work and his requirements, you

should be less finicky about the credit you may or may not receive. For a new hire, his first assignment output looks as the best creation in recent years. This is usually because of the enthusiasm with which one approaches the first assignment. And usually, for the organisation, it is merely that someone is beginning to contribute.

This is again a common mistake made by new hires. They assume they know all the answers. It is better to underestimate yourself. Even the brightest person does not have all the answers in a new organisation – so much so that Micheal Watkins' book – '*The First 90 Days*' in a leadership position emphasises this fact thoroughly. If this is the caution sounded for leaders who have been specifically hired to fix the issues in the organisation by convincing themselves that this leader has already accomplished this in an earlier organisation, what of new hires?

One of the crucial differences between work organisations and academic settings is with respect to 'what happens to one's output and what should happen?' In college, your output is an end in itself – it can be an answer to a question or it can be a project report. As long as it meets the standards, that is the end. However, in the world of work, one is expected to take some responsibility to make one's output productive. In the initial years, the boss usually shoulders this responsibility to make your output productive. To this extent you are a labourer – maybe you labour mentally, not physically! A smart new hire will make it easy for the boss to make his output productive. Where circumstance permits, he would himself make efforts in that direction.

In the current environment, where service economy and knowledge economy absorb the campus recruits in great numbers, this onus of making your output productive is a big onus. A knowledge worker has to worry constantly how others can use his work and how he can take inputs from others. He needs to work on how to communicate his needs and absorb the communication needs of others—as Drucker would say.

7.5 PHASE 3 – AFTER THE FIRST ASSIGNMENT

The end of the first assignment should be spent in some larger reflections as well. This is apart from 'did I add value?', 'did I meet or exceed expectations?' and reflections upon the deliverables/output.

This is the occasion to reflect about the ebb and flow of time and events in the organisation; this is the occasion to relate to the 'marathon' that is work life. One cannot relate to this in the same terms as a 'crammed' and 'scraped through' in the exam. In other words, it is not a sprint, but a marathon. One has to soak in the fact that every day is term-end and that this is how life will go on for 30 more years! This is also the time to study how successful people in the organisation cope with this unending ordeal. How do they find their peace and happiness even as they grapple with challenges and responsibilities that will never get finished? In other words, how do they not find it boring!

It is also important to think, 'Where am I going to contribute next and how?' while the boss would himself be grappling with this question. In this next role discussion, it is important for you to be prepared with your ideas. Most of the first assignments are of a project nature, i.e., which do not disturb the core and regular transactions of the organisation or function. If you have a choice, it is important to ask for the next deployment where you could be in the core transactions. This deployment is a natural way to assimilate you in the organisation. Deployment in a core transaction ensures that you need not justify too much why you exist, that is pretty much clear to everybody. You just have to meet and exceed expectations in this core transaction. In the language of the IT industry, you must become a core resource and not a shadow resource. If you can systematically initiate, achieve and showcase improvement even as you execute this core transaction, you would be liked and your acceptance becomes that much easier. This core transaction will also help you experience core issues as they occur.

Even as you pick up a role where you will participate in the organisation's transaction, be aware that you are now directly taking over what someone else did. It is your job to ensure that the person who gives this over to you does not feel a role-shrinkage. He should hand it over to you so the overall deliverables are well-met. Please make it a point to get this person's feedback on how you are doing. Also discreetly help this person execute his next set of tasks. Your help here would create useful friendships. Should the person be extraordinarily hostile–always follow the adage: let it heal. Do not attempt anything interventionist. You would be a little unlucky if you had a hostile person, but you should take it as human nature. If this be the case, you do not need to check with this person how you are doing or report status on what you are doing.

However, irrespective of whether you had a smooth takeover or a hostile takeover, your first job is to find out who the customer is for what is this deliverable about and make an attempt to gather his requirements unobtrusively. You should remember that while you are trying to help him, he sees you as a change in the person I need to interact with and I have to go over it all over again. Your boss will be very happy if this customer were to tell him that you made extraordinary efforts to get into the groove by yourself.

As you find your customer and about your customer, you should also find if there are influencers. These would typically be the reportees to the customer who would influence the judgments about you. You need not placate them, but you should definitely be aware of their needs and motivations.

It is important that you make an effort to formalise the rules of the game before the game starts. This could be relating to reporting of status on the transaction, communicating issues, the resources you could draw upon to get this job done and how would your boss be informed–level of information and frequency of updating. Usually, these will be available as tidbits in the team on this is how we do things. Normally, they would not be questioned. You could take this opportunity to alter this if you are absolutely confident. If not, follow the existing pattern; formalise them while giving you the liberty to revisit them after 5 or 6 cycles of operation.

Discuss key focus areas in the space below when you take over someone else's role after your first assignment.

This brings us to one of the crucial elements of your assimilation and productivity–discovering your role cycle.

7.5.1   Your Role Cycle

In work organisations, be assured your role follows a cycle. There are sets of activities that repeat over time. You would be able to cope with your work and enjoy it that much more if you can see this cycle early enough and find answers to why is the cycle this way and not otherwise?

It is even better if you can describe this cycle in calendar time. This will help you grasp the essential construct of your role. Also be aware of changing role expectations from significant stakeholders. This requires detached listening–a willingness to take a fresh look. It is also important to look at your role/job from different heights. This gives a sense of perspective and helps you tide over any frustrations.

Except your boss, you should also be aware that no one has the time or inclination to construct and describe your role and expectations thereof in detail. The relationship between organisational constituents and you is one of patient–doctor or client–consultant. They only know that it is paining and there are issues. The onus of finding the right issues or the cause and source of pain is entirely yours. If you start feeling frustrated that this is not fair, you would go nowhere. The sooner you adjust to this reality, the better equipped you would be. If you resist this, you will come to grief.

Please find in the given space, how Vikas understands his role cycle from his manager. Vikas is in a back office BPO for a utilities client.

Vikas: Hi boss. I had a few questions. Is it a good time to ask?

Pankaj: Yes

Vikas: Last Friday, frankly, I did not expect so many transactions.

Pankaj: Can you guess why? Tell me the nature of transactions you had.

Vikas: Can't guess. Most were about the discounts applicable.

Pankaj: Good, what did our client do recently?

Vikas: He changed the discounts model in line with competition.

Pankaj: Yes, this is the trigger for such queries. Whenever such trigger events happen, it triggers a cycle of activities before it subsides. Also remember, last Thursday was a billing cycle for 60% of the end customer base. They must have seen the new bill and had queries.

Exercise: Could you spot such major triggers for work that you anticipate in your job? How long are the major effects of the trigger expected to last?

By the time you settle into this role involving core transactions, i.e., run 4–5 cycles of it, it would be about 11–12 months into the organisation. This is a good time to benchmark what you are doing viz-a-viz classmates. The benchmark could be in terms of how comfortable they are feeling about their roles, the criticality of what they are doing and what issues they are facing. This is also a time when your

critical mass of experience can be turned into some wisdom with some external feedback. Even before your formal appraisal, do a self-review with a respected peer/senior and if feasible with someone in a different line of career. The fresh perspective they are able to offer by not being part of the tumble of things can be pretty illuminating. This is also a good occasion to revisit your time horizons on your role in particular, and your career in general.

Most of us relate to work life in the first year in very short time horizons, not more than a week at a time. While this could give focus, it throws our perspective off balance. The immediate deadline looms so large, the last goof-up still 'pinks us' on the face, we fail to enjoy our roles and jobs. We work and then we enjoy when we are not working. The yearly review should help you embark on an attitude which will help you enjoy as you are working as if they are not dichotomous.

However, you need to elongate this time perspective slowly for you to still feel grounded. Most of our grief and baggage in organisations come from over-estimating ourselves, from a sense of persecution complex. This is natural,, considering that the language in the world of work is a code language one that we are not used to as yet. Further, the stakes are high, we do not have a peer group to relate to, the specs are ambiguous and it is impossible to find out how we are doing. What more do you need to feel persecuted!

The yearly review can be used to remind yourself that you are not that important in this huge organisation. You might become important, there is promise, surely, but today you are not one among the key players. You are a new one, who is learning as much as doing and not one who is indispensable. Ask yourself, as you are reviewing yourself, who in the organisation remembers your goof up in the fourth month, if you want to check this discreetly. Unless, you went and re-reminded, nobody does! In the world of work, no one has time. Even as you breathe a sigh of relief that all is not lost yet, think again. In the same breath, nobody would remember the good things you did also. You begin to realise that you have to continuously prove yourself, your relevance, especially for the future. This is the only way value is going to be ascribed to you and opportunities given to you. Since this is reality, you have to get comfortable with this. There are no permanent certificates like your graduation!

7.6   PHASE 4 – YEAR-END REVIEW

Most work organisations in the world have a yearly cycle of appraisal of a person and review of his/her performance from the administrative point of view. The minutes and outcomes of this key discussion go into making the employees' performance record in a significant way. It is therefore very important to prepare for this discussion with your reporting manager and, possibly, other seniors.

Very often, campus personnel are shocked at the way their first year's review is being approached by the seniors in the organisation. They are shocked that the set of people seem to conveniently ignore the several constraints you faced. They seem to be going to the blackboard or white board while you were prepared to discuss the last one year in its intricate detail. A few of you could feel this is an unfair process.

Believe me, the way your seniors are approaching is one of the best methods to breathe order into a chaotic work organisation. Your seniors are approaching it as an opportunity to course correction, to look at the efforts from the results side to see if we should continue or abandon these efforts or should someone else, with less or no baggage, must put the efforts from now on. You are perhaps searching for justice in the way this appraisal is being administered. They are searching for solutions.

Firstly, let go of your justice paradigm – things are just or unjust. Approach this with openness. Through this review you should be almost handing over your job with the achievements to your seniors and upon request taking it over again. This will give the much needed zero base fresh thinking to your role. You would also be able to negotiate role enhancement, aspiration for a different standard or even a new role with an open mind. Else, this whole affair will be about justifying and defending what you believe are unfair accusations. I am sure you will agree that this is not the best way to finish your first year.

In the given box, find an extract from Giridhar's year-end review. In his project, they maintain a platform

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for a prestigious client

Manager: Hi Giri, sit down. How do you think the year went?

Giri: Very well Suneev. I was able to contribute to the project within a month of joining.

Manager: Yes, indeed. We were pleasantly surprised how you picked up all the aspects of the Unix environment. You took the lead right from the project training. How many CR's (change requests) you handled?

Giri: About 28 in the last 6 months.

Manager: Let me see this report, did you get all of them on time.

Giri: 3, I could not get because the testing environment was not ready, though I did my job quickly.

Manager: Where did it get stuck?

Giri: I don't know, my module lead said that some licenses took time. I guess she did not have time to push as she had to go onsite for an important proposal defence.

Manager: Could you have done anything on her behalf? Did you ask her? I also saw the client was upset as 2 of the CR's were critical.

Giri: How come, you are asking me at my appraisal Suneev? On my part, there was nothing pending.

Manager: Don't take it defensively Giri. If you had done it, you would have exceeded expectations.

Giri: So, I won't get the best rating.

Manager: These are just occasions to exchange expectations from each other. Your rating will depend on how your peer group has done. Also, after the environment was set up, I believe one of the CR resolutions had some issues.

Giri: Because of lack of time, multiple CRs that had piled up all were being tested simultaneously. Mine and Daniel's CR broke each other's code. It took time to figure out.

Manager: In retrospect, could we have avoided this pro-actively. Remember, we were racing against time and the client was unhappy. Could we have pre-checked this in some form? Or maybe, in future, if you have to put a process to pre-check such clashes, is there a simple checklist you can make?

Giri: Module lead, Shaily made this finally….

Exercise: Which were the places where you found Giri's responses inappropriate? Could you modify the response in the space below? First underline the responses from Giri that you found not up to the mark.

As they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. You should learn to respect results or the lack of it, irrespective of how well you worked. This is a significant unlearning from the campus situation where our teachers assure us that if you work harder you will score well. The same is perhaps true of the workplace too, but at the moment, the results or the lack of it is reality, the analysis is only conjecture. Your seniors will really appreciate if you lay down this reality as you see it. They will be happy to engage in the productive discussion thereafter. By clinging to a paradigm of justice – I should be rewarded because I tried, you might be damaging your career in the long run. Instead by letting go of the defensiveness, you would be well displaying a critical employability competency – that of vigorous pursuit – where results orientation and perseverance are the watch words.

Even if the results are good and you think your seniors/boss has not acknowledged it enough, do not resist and become anxious. Your graceful handling of this situation will mark you as a star in the organisational firmament. Reflect. Why did my boss not think highly enough about my contribution? The perception of your performance is also your problem, not of your boss or the sense of justice that ought to be in the organisation. It is difficult to get used to this thought. But should you display this grace and openness and start examining from first principles, your boss and seniors will see a person taking charge of himself and his career – a person who is not high maintenance. Anybody would love such a person in the world of work, simply because it is easy to work with this person. Re-read the "message to Garcia" from chapter 3.

Now that you are a year into this world of work, let us consolidate our wisdom about this world.

7.6.1   Congrats! You are Being Given Additional Responsibilities

If all goes as per plan, you are being given additional responsibilities after your annual appraisal. The challenge is how to take it!

In your college, when you were promoted to the next year, you were promoted en-masse. There was this ritual which announced to yourself and the world about it, and in any case, the calendar for promotion at the end of the year was no surprise to anyone. The rules were clear. You had passed the requirements for the 1st year and then you were in the second year. There were no disputes. It was clear who made that decision. Not so in the world of work!

There is no such ritual, and it is not dispute-free. All the parties who need to interact with you in your promoted role are not parties to your promotion decision. This decision has been handed over to them. There are peers, or so you thought, who got promoted to bigger roles than yourself or stayed the same. You will have to work with them in your new capacity. Naturally, this is not easy.

The biggest step you can take is to promote yourself in your mind. You should almost enter the role as an outside entrant, not as an extension or a leap from whatever you are doing. Your ability to re-initialise yourself and reset to these new demands will demarcate your propensity to succeed. Your peers who have not been so fortunate are, by human nature not interested in furthering your cause, so are seniors who think you now are going to compete with them and probably overtake them.

As articulated earlier, the best policy is to let it heal. In parallel you need to formalise your interaction with significant others whom you are going to work with. This is the first step by which you could adjust them to your new equations with them. Do not make the mistake of speaking the old language with them, and request them to relate to you that way. By relating to others in old styles, you are seriously delimiting yourself from assuming your increased responsibilities. The effort required to change this equation is very often underestimated. Notice, most work organisations transfer a person into a new interpersonal environment the moment they give the person additional responsibilities. They wisely realise the old baggage is going to pull this person down otherwise.

If you had practiced whatever we had said, you wouldn't have been loose-tongued. You wouldn't have sung the crib song with fellows and peers simply to get close to them. You wouldn't have criticised the organisation along with them or complained about your boss. If you had happened to do that, your task would become difficult. The others who are not promoted are going to remind you of your old song and take a moral high ground in not changing to the new demands. This is going to make things difficult or embarrassing for you. To wriggle out, should you make soft demands on them, this is surely going to impair your effectiveness.

Find some comments from three of your friends Vivek, Praneet and Vibhor on the occasion of your assuming higher responsibilities. From an administrator, you have been asked to also play the role of a shift lead. Provide your reactions in the spaces marked

> You: Friends, thanks for your well wishes, I have been given the task of being a shift lead. You heard our service delivery manager state this last evening.
>
> Vivek: Too much!
>
> Praneet: He must have worked over-time secretly
>
> You: ….
>
> Vibhor: Will you now be monitoring our performance?
>
> You: …..
>
> Praneet: I work on different classes of tickets, so don't know how you can help. You can of course help our SDM by reporting what we do.
>
> You:…..

The best way to wriggle out of this unfortunate situation is to have a frank chat with these others. You should tell them in no uncertain terms that the new order requires all of us to change. And that you would help them. These colleagues would remind you that you are not being fair, tell them politely but firmly that you are not going to change your behaviour or compromise on expectations though you feel bad.

In your incremental responsibilities, it is imperative you understand the delta or the 'additional component' quickly and specifically. It is possible that the organisation is expecting the next benchmark

of deliverables from you, your role content and cycle have not changed. It is possible that you are now going to service additional customers, again your role construct or cycle has not changed, or you are going to help a person into your role, guide, set it up and plan a role change, or the promotion could be role change itself.

Circumstances will force your boss and seniors to keep the additional responsibilities unclear. They may want to keep their options open. Should this elevation of yours backfire, they would want to go back to the next best working arrangement. By making a song and dance of this elevation, it becomes messy for them to pull back. It is also possible that they themselves are unclear how the role could take shape in specific detail. They might be looking for your ideas on the same. Whatever the reason, do not expect this delta to be clearly spelt out. Nevertheless, it is your job to catch it as it is today and make progress.

One of the other reasons bosses and seniors do not spell out a new role quickly is because they care for you. In the real world, as we saw, only results count. If for some reason, their judgment on your ability to handle this new responsibility is wrong, and you do not meet expectations or fulfil requirements, they want to create an escape path. A youngster with a damaged self-esteem goes on a negative spiral of low morale and low contribution. Can you imagine what your friends Vibhor, Praneet and Vivek would say to you, should this unfortunate thing happen?

The organisation does not want to lose a low maintenance, well-adjusted talent like you because of a bad judgment. This ambiguity allows them to steer you to new territory or revert to existing territory, where you are doing well.

Your first sense of success in your ability to assume additional responsibility should come from your boss. He/she is the first person who should see the difference, and quite unignorably. You should have surveyed your new 'territory/domain', taken the inventory, come out with a workable plan and been seen as spending significant time on the new area. This earnestness will please any boss. At the same time, if you are able to manage the older territory/responsibility without any escalation, the boss would find himself vindicated.

And, you would be on the path to rapid growth and success in the corporate world!

Now, let us share with others the valuable lessons we learnt the hard way. Can we systematise this learning to be job ready for the IT/ITES industry in particular and any industry in general? This is what we are going to explore in the next chapter. Even if some of these things are not done by your institutions, you and your friends are better off doing it yourselves, for your own good.

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, you have learnt:
1. There are clear phases in the first year on the job, and paying attention to the phases help you to develop an appropriate response to different situations in your early career.
2. A sense of humility and default belief that you need to work through, contribute, pay your dues before making a splash or achieving something that everyone will applaud to, is a good orientation to have in early career.
3. Savviness is the most important employability cluster of competencies in the first few weeks on the job. Listen more and talk less in the first few weeks.

Points to Ponder

1. Why do bosses often forget that they also went through a difficult student-to-professional transition and hence need to be more empathetic?
2. What should I do if my first assignment is to find all the areas of inefficiency or improvement in my division? Should I decline to do the assignment based on this chapter?
3. If you see your colleague doing something erroneous in his assignment, what should you do?

Try This Activity

Interview a close friend about his or her first year on the job. Ask him/her about 3 aspects – his/ her feelings during the pre-joining phase, what happened on the first day and the context of his/ her first assignment.

8

MORE EMPLOYABLE CITIZENS: BUILDING THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

—Lao Tzu,
ancient Chinese philosopher who lived during 550 B.C.

I do clearly understand that the student committees in campuses as along with the placement officers and faculty of the colleges in India operate under varied constraints. Undoubtedly, they all have good intentions to make their students get the best jobs because it is a matter of personal satisfaction and pride when their students get accepted in the professional world with flying colours.

However, the time and attention they devote towards excellence in this area could be reallocated or tweaked based on the contents of this chapter. Since I am unqualified to write about what each of these engines of employability (given their constraints) should do, I have chosen to focus on what, as a corporate recruiter, I would be delighted with. After reading this, the training and placement cells may say, 'Aha, this one can be easily done within my budget and constraints'. My only hope is that this chapter in some way helps you relook at the way you spend your time and resources, for I can in no way increase them.

8.1   10 'AHA' MOMENTS

Following are the 10 'Aha' moments I have experienced in colleges during campus visits:

1. The college has a clear, transparent and well-understood process for facilitating placements and is not wishy-washy about the steps involved. It is displayed in a pictorial form and is widely accessible.
2. The placement officer has already applied the company relevant filters and is able to provide a range of suitable candidates who could apply when asked for, at an instant.
3. Students have already seen company-specific orientations (now available on the web) and ask specific questions during the pre-placement talk about the company's future, recent news, work profiles and what they (companies) are looking for.

4. The placement officer or student placement committee is able to talk about recent introductions in the syllabus or method of teaching or an existing core strength that is industry relevant and which the company executive can see for himself or herself in the candidate-testing processes.
5. Many students meet the written tests threshold.
6. GDs are handled gracefully and come across as group problem solving or constructive debate.
7. Interviewees are able to think on their feet, even for questions that they do not have ready answers and in a logical fashion.
8. Students display a tendency to apply courseware, not merely know the definitions. They are aware of their knowledge as well as ignorance areas to a good extent.
9. Students have used local resources and contexts to get hands-on about work life.
10. The interactions are positive and keen, not desperate or with the tone that this outcome is the end of the world.

There are four markers of employable graduates. These are as follows:

(a) Have an application or employment perspective to their courseware.
(b) Have a compelling answer to 'Why should you select me?' which is specific, clear and is based on insight of job nuances.
(c) As new recruits, acquire the reputation of dependable and savvy professionals within six months.
(d) Can make their own syllabus for mastering the areas that are important for their job performance.

How could one go about creating 'Aha' moments in every company – institute interaction? How could we catalyse the creation of more employable graduates? How could we convert this intent into a programme?

The most practical way to institutionalise employability is to create a set of practices against a suitable calendar. There are seven practices to be considered for student placement committees and training and placement offices. These practices have been discussed in the upcoming sections.

8.2 PRACTICE 1: UPDATE THE COMPANY READY-RECKONER

A digital file – the ready reckoner should contain the following information about the company. It should be updated every year in the month of April by the student placement committee and reviewed by the training and placement officer.

8.2.1 Business Performance and Performance Trajectory (Compared to Last Year)

The pointers under this head are as follows:

(a) Usually, growth triggers demands for new people.
(b) Healthy short-term margin performance triggers the appetite to invest in fresh graduates.

   (c) Regional growth in manpower is an important factor for country-specific demands.

   (d) There could be an estimated number of freshers to be hired this year (a guesstimate or a figure confirmed by company executives).

8.2.2   Previous Year's Recruitments

(**Note:** Engineering recruitments happen between pre-final and final year transition for joiners from 12 to 15 months down the line, while off-campus is for more immediate consumption).

The pointers under this head are as follows:

   (a) Numbers in each profile. The four major profiles in this book can be used for classifying. There could be a fifth bucket of others. This could be done by fact finding around company publications and estimations based on business segment specific growth reported by the company.

   (b) Numbers in each region. Usually, it should be assumed to be proportional to base headcount of the company in the regions, adjusted for business or region growth and attrition factors.

   (c) The number of off-campus recruitments and total recruitments (including lateral recruits).

8.2.3   Key Criteria

The pointers under this head are as follows:

   (a) The process of recruitment adopted for each profile and the typical filtration rate at the end of each process.

   (b) The total numbers expected to be hired, broken by job profiles (four standard and others).

   (c) Sample questions for each section of the selection process – written test, sample group discussion topics, sample project related questions, sample technical and human resource interview questions.

   (d) Specific 'Dos and Don'ts' based on past interactions between the institution and company.

8.3   PRACTICE 2: FRIDAY AFTERNOONS DEDICATED TO ACQUIRING AN EMPLOYMENT PERSPECTIVE TO COURSEWARE (FIND QUESTIONS FOR ANSWERS)

Practice 2 can be experimented with willing faculty for a course they are teaching. The idea is to encourage students to apply even as they assimilate the concepts of the course. On a Friday afternoon, an open class is held (open to even those students who are not taking that course), where the professor introduces the syllabus to be covered during the next week for about 20 minutes. He or she then invites students to think over the real world applications for these concepts. The students are then clubbed in groups of four and asked to submit two real world instances, where the concept can be applied, over the weekend. The student groups are encouraged to utilise their social networks, connect with seniors and others to scout for the 'questions' in the industry, while during the next week course all these questions will get 'answers'. I have often experimented this as 'finding questions for answers' programme and it has produced high engagement and a deeper understanding of subject matter. Of course, students are able to handle interview questions about their course of study with greater ease and confidence. Students now assimilate the subject matter much more critically and understand the application and its boundaries.

The professors collect a rich instance list of applications over a period of time. Often, this can bloom into the professor being requested to be a resource person for training company executives who are in the job but have not been formally trained over the subject matter.

Here is a dialogue between 'A' who is still in college and pursuing a course on software testing fundamentals and 'K' who is now about 2 years into a testing project. Next week, 'A' is going to study all about – Origins of Defects – Defect Classes – The Defect Repository and Test Design – Defect Examples. This is an outcome of one such weekend exercise in a college.

A: Hi 'K'. I remember you saying that you are working on a testing project for a share trading platform. What exactly do you do?

K: Yes, you remember right. The platform helps brokers of a stock exchange to transact – buy or sell and settle – both shares and cash. Well, the project is not going as per plan.

A: Why, what happened?

K: There are lots of performance and scalability issues.

A: Of the team?

K: No, of the platform. Let me explain. In the development of the platform, my company participated, both in the hardware and software aspects. That got delayed in the first place, by which time the clients' requirements changed and now in testing, we failed to detect a defect.

A: Ha! That is what we are going to learn next week. This is why I called you. My professor is asking me to find real world instances of application of course material. I have to understand the origin of defects, the defect classes, defect repository and test design. I wanted to see if you can help with any real world instance and voila, you mention the same word! Sorry 'K', I know you are in bad shape, but I seem to have got my real world application and hence was excited.

K: Good for you. But sorry, I can't talk about this project. You will be presenting to your classmates and my company's reputation is at stake. I will get into trouble for this.

A: I promise, I will generalise the story. Further, my professor has allowed for this masking in sensitive matters.

K: Alright. The solution that our client is making for the stock exchange is like a box – it has hardware and software components. Hardware components include the processing speed of the ASICs (Application specific integrated circuits). Imagine, if 600 brokers were to access this server on price of 700 stocks or place an order, now imagine it were 6000 brokers and 3000 stocks. Any time lag between information to one broker to another is unfair and will be rejected by the stock exchange. If you increase the processing speed, the price of the server box increases and sometimes to a point where our client will lose business.

A: To systematically assess all the failure modes for such a thing is going to be incredibly complex.

K: You're right. We create this assessment framework and this is known as the overall test plan. And, mind you, as you fix a defect, the code could break and a new defect could occur, forcing you to repeat the entire testing cycle.

A: When you do such things, one can slip on timelines.

K: That's exactly what happened. The exchange had become popular and the 600 brokers became 2000 in 11 months. Our project was already delayed by seven months. So what we created for 600 'concurrent users' now had to become 2000. Even at 600, in certain scenarios, the server response was unacceptably slow.

A: Oh my God. Sounds complex! What is the testing miss?

K: Funny thing is someone forgot to record that brokers can access this platform even through dial up networks (like your data card). This network bandwidth also introduces its own delay, and the sum of delays can become unacceptable even as individual delays were in the limit. So, this defect was not tested for. This is a requirement specification defect in the first place. Nobody knew what the requirement was – work within acceptable delays in dial up mode!

A: I get it now. Defect can also originate in the design, coding or testing phases of the software development life cycle.

K: Exactly. Further, within the defect class, there can be a next level of classification, for example, in the testing class defect. This can be sub-divided into issues due to test scaffolding programme being in-appropriate or the test cases not being comprehensive

A: Thanks for this 'K'. I am now well prepared to handle a situation like yours, should it occur, and this is because I heard about this experience!

Do you, dear readers, realise how this inquiry has helped 'A' read his next week's lesson from an employment perspective? Imagine, if 'A' will do such a thing 100 times in the study of his curriculum, how much more employable would he get?

8.4   PRACTICE 3: A WRITTEN TEST QUESTION BANK WITH RESULTS BAKED INTO THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Take each section (e.g. quantitative ability) and under the section, each sub-section (e.g. profit and loss); and under the sub-section, each question and call it a question-type.

For each such question-type, generate a question bank of 10 questions graded from easiest to toughest. The gradation should take into account both the conceptual problem-solving difficulty level as well as the time it takes to calculate the answer.

Create a question paper with Grade 1 and Grade 2 questions for each section and sub-section and question type. Typically one would have:

4 Sections (Quantitative, Verbal, Logical, Technical) * 5 (sub-sections on an average) * 2 (question-types) * 2 (Grade 1 and Grade 2) questions = 80 questions

Similarly, one can make another question paper with Grade 3 and Grade 4 questions and so on. One will have 5 such question papers with increasing levels of difficulty. After taking the test, strictly within the stipulated time, analyse the following:

The sections and sub-sections with maximum error %

(a) If the error % > 40% for difficulty levels 1 and 2, or > 60% for difficultly levels 3 and 4, go back and read the concepts behind the test. Take help of your friends and faculty.

(b) If the error rates are lesser, then analyse in each instance what was the error. Was it an omission (you were inattentive to the detail) or was it commission (you misunderstood the concept).

(c) Redo those questions where you had committed the error, a full 2 weeks later, in under 30 minutes as a fresh question paper.

Repeat the same exercise for tests with the higher level of difficulty. Discuss the concepts and errors with friends.

One test and reflection every quarter with increasing levels of difficulty must prepare you very well in a year's time.

8.5 PRACTICE 4: JOB HUNTING EXERCISES

In job hunting exercise, groups of four students are formed. Each group is allocated two companies of interest. However, there is an overlap of every company with one more group. For example, if A, B and C are three groups and let us say,

A – HCL Tech, CTS
B – CTS, Accenture
C- HCL Tech, Accenture

The groups are asked to do this exercise independently.

The exercise has two parts which are as follows:

I. Part I
   (a) Make company pre-placement talk and answer questions;
   (b) Groups that ask the best questions also get some scores as given by the student placement committee or training and placement cell.

II. Part II
   (a) Create a time and opportunity landscape of the company.

   Here students talk about the year of interest and based on business growth and strategic plans, present the type and number of job opportunities by different locations. They also talk about the trigger for such opportunities, i.e., they correlate the news items about the company with projects the company is undertaking, the clients it has won and the volume of jobs that are likely to arise.

   This is further broken down by job profile and, if possible, by skill profile inside every job profile. For example, in the job profile Level 2 administrator – it could be divided into storage, networks and database administrators.

   Students also talk about how the advent of new technologies is affecting these job profiles – which ones will increase or decrease.

   They also correlate the syllabus, which they go through in their class, to these trends. They bring back some of the fine examples of applying course curriculum in real world – reading of course curriculum from an employment perspective.

This whole exercise also enhances the ready reckoner at the placement cell – the first practice we have described in the beginning.

If students are doing a good job, it presents an opportunity for the training and placement cell to invite company executives for the session. The two groups are asked to present independently to the rest of the groups so that there is no second presenter advantage.

Students also try and present the company's placement process, key people at the helm of affairs in this placement process, main expectations, alumni who are already working and if possible along with the key areas of testing and interview.

This exercise can be done during the months of October to March every year.

8.6 PRACTICE 5: WHY ME? – A VIDEO RESUME CONTEST AND 1-PAGE COVER LETTER CONTEST

The exercise is on the back of the previous exercise. The key rule should be that the group that presented the company information in the job hunting exercise should not be applying to the same company. They must be applying to the company they listened to as an audience.

In a narrative form, and within 4 minutes, they must present their credentials for a job profile they have identified in the company through a video resume.

The structure of the video resume should be as follows:

- About me – the person
- About my educational history and achievements
- About my aspirations – industry and job profile
- About my credentials – what have I done to prepare myself for my aspirations?
- About my proficiency in the selection criteria – with evidence as much as possible

The video should be shot (a smart phone camera will do) with the presenter sitting or standing and preferably visible, knee up, on the screen.

Video resumes can be scored and commented on by the peer group, student placement cell, training and placement officer, industry professionals in one's social network and, if feasible, by company executives invited for such events.

The idea is not to make an ultimate judgment but to get a feedback on messages that are coming across with impact and those not making the mark. The idea is to list one's strengths and weaknesses rather than compare with others. In inter-person comparisons, the learning value of the exercise gets lost.

Similarly, set up this off-line exercise of writing a one page cover letter on: Why am I qualified for this opportunity?

Every job, whether stated or not, has a purpose it serves for the business. To execute this purpose, certain tasks and responsibilities need to be discharged. To discharge these responsibilities, certain knowledge and skills are required.

Similarly, every person, based on their life history and environment, brings certain values and traits that make certain contexts highly meaningful for them. Each individual, similarly, has a certain experience and exposure that gives them a tacit knowledge and skill. A student acquires explicit knowledge and skill through their curriculum.

The match between the job and the person is the content of the cover letter. If a student can express this clearly, and even if the current match is not very high, an executive will get convinced that this student can learn and do the job in a short time.

Here is an indicative structure for the one page letter:

- List the mandate or purpose of the job you plan to apply to.
- Compare the mandate to your life interests and purposes.
- List the responsibilities, the knowledge and skill required to execute them.
- Self-rate yourself on the knowledge and skill areas.
- Select from your past, similar levels of problems you have solved and list them as achievements.
- Weave the whole proposition above into a nice 1-page cover letter.

Put up this letter on the notice board for use amongst friends. Ask the group to score one's letters and also write brief remarks (much like a collage).

Take the collage back to your room for reflection and refinement.

This exercise is best done during December to March after enough company information has been assimilated.

8.7 PRACTICE 6: BODY LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND IMPROVEMENT EXERCISES

We all know that attitudes affect behaviour and this behaviour is displayed in one's body language. Body language is all the non-verbal impressions that we leave on others – our posture, if we make eye contact, the tone of our voices and sometimes these account for more than 90% of the impressions we make on others. The content of what we say is a mere 10% or even lesser.

The recent startling finding is that just as attitude affects behaviour and is expressed in body language, the reverse is also true. In fact, the strength of the reverse effect, body language and behaviour affecting our attitudes and who we are is even higher!

In any case, short term impacts of change of our posture and voice modulation on the way we do tasks has been well-proven. Here are four tips about your body language on the eve of your group discussion or interviews – when you are going to leave impressions for interviewers to decide.

8.7.1 Tip 1 – Sit or Stand Erect with Your Shoulders Thrown Backward (as Opposed to Drooping or Forward)

Studies have shown that this single correction of posture has a tremendous impact on our confidence and our performance in problem-solving exercises. Just by correcting their posture and body language, people have regained the mental abilities they lost due to serious physical accidents and went on to achieve a lot in life. For an inspiring illustration of this, view Amy Cuddy's TED talk on body language at https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

8.7.2 Tip 2 – Breathe Deeply and if Possible Subtly Mimic the Interviewer – Pace and Lead

We are all social creatures and our fundamental act of socialisation is by mimicry. As you walk by the park near your place and notice people talking, observe their body language. Individuals, who from a distance seem to imitate each other's postures and gestures are usually having an agreeable conversation and are perhaps even feeling closer to each other. Go near them, and observe if this is true. Similarly, observe other pairs of individuals. If you notice two who are talking but are not in synch on their body language – the way they have seated, their hand movements and facial expressions? As you go near them, you might observe that they are perhaps having a less agreeable conversation and are not feeling emotionally close.

What is true of park conversations is also true of interviews. We are far more of social and impressionistic creatures than we are comfortable to admit. Even in professional situations like the interview, you are prone to the same intense likeness or dislikeness without even your realising it.

The fine art of conversation is then to subtly mimic the interviewer's body language – postures, gestures, facial expressions and voice modulations – this is called pacing. Then, slowly, but subtly change them to your natural style and you would notice that the interviewer is now following you as you are leading the body language. This is called leading.

Journalists use pacing and leading to have deep conversations with whom they interview, counsellors do the same with their subjects. It is the most fundamental rapport-building device we have, which we have subconsciously used for thousands of years.

Use the pacing and leading strategy for rapport building the next time you have an interview and you will be amazed at how much this works and how you are heard with a positive bias.

8.7.3 Tip 3 – Generally Adopt an Open Posture

One of the greatest joys you can give another human being is to listen fully, unconditionally and attentively. One of the biggest hostilities you can provoke is by ignoring the person – non-verbally and then verbally.

Again, we are tuned to this device of social engagement for thousands of years. Just because we built corporate entities (less than 300 years ago) and invented the IT industry (less than 50 years ago!), can we change the fundamental apparatus of human interaction?

Eye contact, a smile, a non-intrusive acknowledgement of what is being said (I see it, hmm, surely, would you mind explaining this portion again) and open arms and palms (as opposed to arms crossed or palm closed or inverted on one's lap or worse, in one's pockets) are sure to provide a subtle joy to the person talking – even if it is your interviewer!

If you are not sure you are getting this open posture correct, do not become conscious, just focus on making eye contact, have a smile, do not cross your arms across your chest, and generally adapt an attitude as if this person has something valuable to say.

8.7.4 Tip 4 – Don't Dress to Kill!

There are lots of dos and don'ts checklists on what to wear / not to wear to the interview, how much make-up to apply, should one wear their religious identities, whether tie and blazer are mandatory, how to deal with sweat, how much perfume, etc.

The simple rule to apply to these questions is – does it draw away attention from what you are saying to what you are wearing? If the answer is yes, then that attire is not a good idea.

So automatically, one concludes the following from this simple rule:

- Not bright but mild shades
- No bangles that will jostle and distract as you gesture with your hands
- No large sized 'bindis'
- No eye shades nor lipstick that is too bright
- No super bright ties
- No reflecting surfaces on your attire
- No checked shirts that can hypnotise the interviewer!

- A collared shirt that is neat, plain, mild and recedes to the background
- A tie or a blazer without a tie is also perfectly good (watch for how company executives dress in this area) – remember pacing and leading!
- No shoes or high heels that produce a loud sound as you walk
- Subtle perfume
- Combed hair, not one flying about or funny shaped that can distract the interviewer
- Clean socks

Video-shoot mock-interviews and play-back your video resumes and comment on body language to each other. Use the tips above to make your observations.

This is best done between Jan to April and helps you fine-tune in time for facing the selection processes from May or June onwards.

8.8 PRACTICE 7: CREATE AN INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN USING THIS BOOK

Each individual needs to develop a 10-point rating on the following key indicators. Where the score is 4 or below, attempt must be made to bring minimum credible capability on weaknesses and develop alternative mechanisms to mitigate them. Where the score is 7 or above, attempt must be made to develop this into a key strength and differentiator. One must also think how to showcase one's strengths throughout the job hunting to job presentation phase and further on the job.

A deeper understanding of each of the indicators can be had from the many chapters in this book and from the exercises in that chapter.

Table 8.1 The Individual Development Planning Template

Area of Assessment	Source of Assessment	Score (1 to 10)	How will you develop yourself?
Job market awareness & Job hunting skills	Exercises in job hunting chapter & Practice 4		
Understanding the positions	Exercises in job literacy chapter		
Technical Testing Areas	Exercises in selection process chapter & practice 3		
GD & Interview Readiness	Exercises in selection process chapter & practice 5		
Communication Skills	Exercises in selection process chapter & practice 5		
Personality and Intent	Practice 5, Practice 6 and Exercises in selection process chapter		
Employability competencies- Operating in a dynamic environment	Exercises in employability competencies explained, Practice 5 & Evidence from one's life		
Employability competencies – Savviness	Exercises in employability competencies explained, Practice 5 & Evidence from one's life		
Employability Competencies – Vigorous pursuit	Exercises in employability competencies explained, Practice 5 & Evidence from one's life		

This plan is continuously updated by going through this student companion right from the end of second year, if in an engineering course, or at the end of first year, if one is in a three year degree course.

8.9 IDEAS FOR THE LARGER EDUCATIONAL AND POLICY ECOSYSTEM

It is possible that students, student placement committees and training and placement offices with high initiative may be able to implement some of the recommendations here. This section is prima facie meant for the larger educational and policy ecosystem.

Much like the national talent search examination frameworks in India or the MENSA framework that exists for high IQ in the world, we need to create a 'most employable student' framework. In the classroom, in the wider college/university/institution and expand that to the city, state and country, we need to recognise the presence of employability through awards and certificates.

Every year, we must declare a Mr. Employable and Ms. Employable in the classroom, institution, district, state and country. We must telecast these contests live on TV and give them wide coverage in newspapers. Not only, should it select the best student, but also grade several students at the 'A' levels of employability.

Every institution or, in case infrastructure does not permit, a consortium of institutions must mandatorily have an employability coach or counsellor in the placement office. Over time, we should be tracking the ratio of coach or counsellor to students in the final year.

In the local district, we should be conducting seminars and workshops that address in a practical way the method to increase one's employability quotient in the immediate context. It should have portals and content that accesses the experience of senior students in their quest for employment and now as a recent professional. The district education officer should directly review this programme in every district.

A separate focus group in associations like the CII must be set up to address employability. This must be a rallying point for corporates to come together to contribute to this cause.

Currently working senior professionals – 7 to 10 plus years of experience – must be encouraged to be employability coaches associated with a college through the CII or other similar forums. Even if the number of qualified coaches is lower, one must not succumb to the temptation of calling everyone an employability coach.

Organisations like AIMA and NHRDN must build capability in professionals to be employability coaches. They must run certifications for working professionals much like the model of Accredited Management Teachers programme they so successfully run today.

Placement consultants and other head hunters must be especially encouraged to be employability coaches.

At least in the bigger districts, polling of recent professionals about their teachers to recognise those teachers who added employability skills to their students must become a practice.

Also, new practices, projects, programmes that were structured by the institution to promote employability need to be presented for recognition district-wide and state-wide in the form of a contest. Each of these submissions must have at least a 3-stage evaluation of perusing the submissions in a well-defined format, an in-context audit that is able to observe the practice or programme as live as it is possible and finally a presentation of a few chosen entries in public view and their evaluation and ranking by an eminent jury.

A monograph of details of these best practices must be available in the public domain for other institutions to benefit from them and adapt them.

These forums must not only encourage employability towards large enterprises but to the several small enterprises which can be built to scale with the employable talent on their rolls. These are firms which do not have the bandwidth or resources to systematically go and recruit from campuses and, therefore, will benefit immensely from this effort.

I am sure there can be much more ideas and experiments that will help us get this right as a country and society. I hope later authors would explore these aspects in great detail in an industry-specific manner and bring forth many more valuable perspectives.

I also hope that the student placement committees, as well as the training and placement offices get some ideas to implement that will deliver the 10 AHA moments to corporate executives by reallocating resources and within all the constraints that they operate in.

Take Aways

After completing the chapter, we have learnt:

1. To strategise to give at least 6 of the 10 AHA moments as described in this chapter to the recruiter interacting with you or your campus.
2. To ensure you start early enough to implement the 10 practices in your group or college. Create feedback loops to help you course correct or focus on any aspect of the preparation or any of the practices.
3. To synthesise and pursue the individual employability development plan.

Points to Ponder

1. If a recruiter refuses to come to your college due to lack of time, but asks you and the interested students to come to another campus where the selection process is happening, what would you do?
2. If a recruiter says that he or she does not want students from Civil Engineering background to take the test and you are from that background, how would you respond to him or her?

Try this Activity

Pair up with a friend who has also read this chapter and provide mutual feedback on strengths and weaknesses with reference to Practices: 2,4,5 and 6, as covered in this chapter.

CHOOSING MY CAREER WISELY

"The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play"

—*Arnold J Toynbee,*
distinguished British historian, 20ᵗʰ Century

"If you do the job that you like then you do not have to work a day in your life", goes a wise saying.

The primary driver for choosing a career option in India is livelihood. We look at careers that can guarantee us lots of financial security and often overlook if we will be happy doing the job for the rest of our lives. It is likely that we will not shine in the career that is not to our liking and one that does not call upon our core strengths.

While the economic reality of India is slowly changing to afford us the luxury of choosing the careers we like, it is still a far cry. Nevertheless, this section is relevant in as much as it helps us take the best decision from the options available to us. Even if temporarily, our career choices are dictated by livelihood and immediate opportunity available, this chapter can help you think through the best career path for you. What you are super fit for might start as a hobby or even as a parallel career and if it exercises your strengths and aspirations, may prove to be the one in which "you do not have to work a day in your life".

As a person who has not worked anywhere, how do I know what kind of work is right for me?

To answer this question, we will ask you to perform certain mental exercises. These exercises will also use the contents of various previous chapters. We will be using chapters 3, 5 and *Your performance in the* "On Your Mark Pre-Quiz" along with the different exercises you did throughout the book.

In our life so far, we could have experienced an "Aha" moment or a peak moment. These are moments when you felt you were at your best as well as enjoyed it intrinsically. Could you close your eyes and recall two such peak or "Aha" moments? Please make sure you write them down before you scroll down to read further contents of the chapter.

EXERCISE 1 – PEAK MOMENTS METHOD

Peak Moment 1

Peak Moment 2

Edgar Schein came up with 8 career themes that are individual specific and seem to inform their career choices. He called them individuals' career anchor. He defined them as following:

1. Technical/functional competence: The peak moment is about solving a problem with one's expertise and getting recognised as an expert.
2. General managerial competence: The peak moment is about being the head of a hierarchy and controlling many moving parts.
3. Entrepreneurial Creativity: The peak moment for such people is about seeing a need and starting something to meet that need and moving on after setting it up.
4. Pure challenge: These individuals are motivated by overcoming a challenge that others have considered impossible to overcome.
5. Security: The peak moments are about knowing with great certainty how future would unfold.
6. Autonomy: The descriptions of peak moments are about how there is lots of freedom to do what it takes and there is no supervision.
7. Service: The descriptions are about helping others and dedication to a cause larger than oneself.
8. Lifestyle: The peak moments are when individual achieves a perfect balance between work and life – personal needs, family needs and career needs are well-balanced in the lifestyle anchor.

See if you can identify the dominant theme in your peak moment. There may also be a secondary theme, but do not go beyond a primary and a secondary theme.

Search for work and career contexts that meet your primary and secondary career theme.

For example, a highly Standard Operating Procedure driven and repeatable back office profile speaks well to the security career theme. If the work organisation is also a systematic and predictable place, it doubly meets the security career theme. Back office of government set-ups, which have the need to be scalable, procedure driven align well to those with a security career anchor.

However, in voice processes and serving international customers, it does not speak to the lifestyle career theme.

Table A1.1 summarises the right fit work context and content for the different career themes.

Table A1.1 Right Fit for the Different Career Themes

Career Theme	Choice of Work Context: Where I work? Organisation characteristic and Relationship with Manager	Choice of work content: Job Archetypes, Jobs and Career Paths
Technical/Functional	Company known for R&D, peers are technical experts and manager is a source of technical learning	Product Engineering specialist jobs and technical career paths

General Managerial	Company known for execution excellence, peers coordinate well with each other and manager teaches how to manage scale	Any entry level job that is not too technically inclined with a managerial career path
Entrepreneurial Creativity	Company known for risk taking and bringing new things to the market. Manager allows experimentation and encourages it	Jobs with lots of room for experimentation
Pure Challenge	Company known for high competitiveness, work context has stretch goals taken by entire team, and manager supports ambitious goals	Jobs which have a well defined but stretch goal, e.g. sales
Autonomy	Company known for empowering its front line to take decisions and manager does not micro-manage, on the contrary encourages decision making	Jobs which are not at all procedure oriented, timelines for completion are not short term and strict, but work output of high quality expected, e.g. video game designer
Security	Company known for well-defined and stable systems, culture is not hire and fire, but conservative. Manager provides predictability	Jobs that belong to the processing archetype, well defined rules, the classical back office jobs
Lifestyle	Company known for flexible work schedules, attractive benefit packages and manager respects personal time	Jobs that are more long term and R&D oriented
Service	Company known for CSR activities, ethical sourcing and in the business of helping others	Jobs that involve helping others or problem solving for others like customer service, helpdesk support

Some of you who have not been exposed to work-like situations may not be able to analyse their peak moments using Schein's 8 career themes or anchors.

So, we will also use another popular career counseling framework called the 'Holland's inventory' to answer the same question – What is right for me?

Holland inventory is used to characterise occupations using 3 of the 6 career dimensions as he called them. He also characterised individuals' affinity towards these career dimensions by asking them to choose between statements that describe these dimensions.

Please do the following two exercises and transcribe the output into the scoring sheet as instructed before you proceed further. Please answer the questions as candidly as you can.

EXERCISE 2 – HOLLAND'S CAREER DIMENSIONS METHOD

Order the following statements into – I am most like this (5 points) to I am least like this (1 point). It could help you ascertain your career dimensions

Given a choice……I would like to

1. Do puzzles

1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

2. Work on cars

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

3. Attend concerts

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

4. Work in teams

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

5. Set goals for myself

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

6. Organise things like files, articles and activities

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

7. Build things

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

8. Do experiments

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

9. Read poetry, fiction or plays

   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

10. Help people solve their problems

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

11. Sell things

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

12. Have clear instructions to follow

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

13. Take care of animals

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

14. Figure out how things work

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

15. Do creative writing

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

16. Teach or train people

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

17. Influence or persuade people

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

18. Pay attention to details

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

19. Cook

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

20. Analyse things like problems, situations or trends

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

21. Act in plays

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

22. Heal people

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

23. Be a leader

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

24. Keep records of my work

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

Sum your scores on the following items and record them as given here.

R = (2,7,13,19)	I = (1,8,14,20)	A = (3,9,15,21)	S = (4,10,16,22)	E = (5,11,17,23)	C = (6,12,18,24)

The top 3 highest scoring dimensions represent your Holland profile. Do refer to Table A.1.2 below on occupations that match your profile from a standard list of jobs that require a higher education – an undergraduate degree or equivalent diploma in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

EXERCISE 3 – HOLLAND CAREER DIMENSIONS – POPULAR JOB CONNOTATIONS

If I were to choose life all over again and all professions would give you equal financial and social status, I would rather be

(5 if you strongly agree, 4 if you agree, 3 if you neither agree nor disagree, 2 if you disagree and 1 if you strongly disagree).

1. An Accountant
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

2. A doctor
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

3. A middle school teacher
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

4. A clerk in a government office
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

5. A detective
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

6. A pilot
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

7. A captain of a ship
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

8. A psychologist
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

9. A scientist
   1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

10. A Minister in government
    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

11. A painter
    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

12. A librarian
    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

13. A farmer
    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

14. A programmer
    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

15. A carpenter
    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

16. A writer

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

17. A deal maker

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

18. A Civil Engineer

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

19. A Reporter

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

20. A Videogame designer

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

21. A family social worker

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

22. Education administrators

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

23. Event Planners

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

24. Auditor

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

25. Proof Reader

    1. ◯   2. ◯   3. ◯   4. ◯   5. ◯

To find your scores – Perform the operations as per instructions in the given cells of Table A1.2.

Sum the scores you gave for the listed occupation no's and divide by the number 12 or 15 as indicated. For example, to get your score in the Artistic career dimension, sum the score you have given for item no's 11, 16, 19, 20 – let us say these were 3, 4, 4, 5; the sum is 16 and 16 divided by 12 is 1.33. If you further subtract 1, the score is 0.33.

Table A1.2   Right Fit for Different Holland Codes

R = Sum (6, 7, 13, 15, 18) and divide by 15 and then subtract 1	I = Sum (2, 5, 8, 9, 14) and divide by 15 and then subtract 1	A = Sum (11, 16, 19, 20) and divide by 12 and then subtract 1	S = Sum (2, 3, 8, 21, 22) and divide by 15 and then subtract 1	E = Sum (5, 10, 17, 23) and divide by 12 and then subtract 1	C = Sum (1, 4, 12, 24, 25) and divide by 15 and then subtract 1

In this third exercise, jobs that we all intuitively understand have been listed. These jobs involve a combination of Holland job dimensions to create a best fit.

Take the top 3 dimensions in Table A1.2. This represents the kind of work you would like to do.

Let us describe each career dimension and dominant occupations that align to the career dimension as following:

I. **Realistic:** Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others. It includes the following:

1. Civil Engineers
2. Construction Managers
3. Airline Pilots and Flight Engineers
4. Manufacturing Engineers
5. Museum Technicians and Conservators
6. Foresters
7. Remote Sensing Technicians
8. Surveyors

II. **Investigative:** Investigative occupations frequently involve working with ideas and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally. It includes following:

1. Biomedical Engineers
2. Business Intelligence Analysts
3. Computer Systems Analysts
4. Network and Computer Systems Administrators
5. Software Developers
6. Robotics Engineers
7. Transportation Planners
8. Water Resource Specialists

III. **Artistic:** Artistic occupations frequently involve working with forms, designs and patterns. They often require self-expression and the work can be done without following a clear set of rules. It includes the following:

1. Architects
2. Art Directors
3. Choreographers
4. Editors
5. Elementary School Teachers
6. Graphic Designers
7. Technical Writers
8. Video and Game Designers
9. Creative Writers
10. Training and Development Specialists

IV. **Social:** Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others. It includes the following:

1. Child, Family and Social workers
2. Health Educators
3. Education Administrators
4. Middle School Teachers
5. Recreation Workers
6. Training and Development Specialists
7. Emergency Management Directors

V. **Enterprising:** Enterprising occupations frequently involve starting up and carrying out projects. These occupations can involve leading people and making many decisions. Sometimes they require risk taking and often deal with business. It includes following:

1. Construction Managers
2. Human Resources Specialists
3. Branch Financial Managers
4. IT Project Managers
5. Logisticians
6. Sales Managers
7. Personal Financial Advisors
8. Event Planners

VI. **Conventional:** Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow. It includes the following:

1. Accountants
2. Actuaries
3. Auditors
4. Database Administrators
5. Library Technicians
6. Proof Readers
7. Social Service Assistants
8. Document Management Specialists
9. Information Security Analysts

This is my own Holland's score and codified as ISA (Investigative, Social and Artistic)

Fig. A1.1 Author's Holland graph

This qualifies me for the occupations below – I seem to have chosen more or less the right vocation or at least pursuing this as a hobby! From the US job standards database, the following are suggestions for me – Clinical Psychologists, Naturopathic Physicians, Neuropsychologists and clinical Neuropsychologists, Psychiatrists.

What is common to all these professions is the following:

1. Careful study
2. Interest in problem solving
3. Interacting with people
4. Wanting to help

In my Human Resources professional career and in my organisation, I have specialised in talent and leadership development which involve study of human beings and helping them develop, creating new social HR models for people practices, compensation frameworks in tune with business and employee needs. At the larger professional level, I have tried to work on employability and specifically with reference to IT and ITES, bring a new body of knowledge on organisational effectiveness in the theory and practice of HR and contribute to digitally connecting my fellow professionals. If I look carefully, I have gravitated to work in alignment with my career dimensions, though I cannot become a neurologist at this stage of my career today!

Now that we have done the introspections, let us see how to interpret them in the context of the IT and ITES industry

Refer to Chapter 5. We had listed four primary job profiles in the industry – Back Office Associates, Application Development and Maintenance Engineers, Product Engineers and Infrastructure administrators.

Combination of RIASEC (degree of match indicated as ***, **, *	Back Office Associates	Application Development & Maintenance Engineers	Product Engineers	Infrastructure Administrators	Remarks: Variant profiles with closest match and typical matches from other industries
RIA	*	*	**	*	System engineers
RIS	**	**	*	*	
RIE	**	**	*	**	Hardware troubleshooters
RIC	***	***	***	***	Infrastructure – Network and server administrators ITES – Knowledge Process outsourcing (KPO) System analysts, application and web developers Software developers
RAS	*	*	*	*	
RAE	*	*	*	*	
RAC	*	*	*	*	
RSE	*	*	*	*	
RSC	**	*	*	*	

(Contd.)

REC	***	*	***	***	Back office transaction processing without much customer interface Infrastructure and application support specialists Hardware engineering specialists
IAS	*	*	*	*	
IAE	*	*	*	*	
IAC	**	**	***	**	UI designers Product Manual writers
ISE	*	**	**	*	
ISC	***	***	***	***	Customer service involving approvals in ITES or technical helpdesk profiles Database administrators with customer interface Business analysts User documentation specialists
IEC	**	***	**	**	Web administrators
ASE	*	*	**		
ASC	**	*	*	*	Back office for media
AEC	**	*	***	*	Back office for media Video game designers
SEC	***	*	*	*	Customer service profiles in the ITES sector

I hope you got a good idea of your own interests through the three exercises you did. Based on these, I would recommend you list down the three jobs that you would be most happy at, and the three jobs that you would be least happy doing. If you have the opportunity to make choices among multiple job options, then this would serve as a ready reckoner to make this choice both easily and correctly.

T a k e   A w a y s

After completing the chapter, we have learnt:
1. All our career decisions are anchored to one or two of the 8 themes presented in this chapter. Having understood your dominant themes, you can look for work content (the job itself) and the work context (the organisation, manager and colleagues) that best fit you.
2. Another popular way to analyse your career interests is to profile yourself on the 6 Holland career dimensions. The top three dimensions indicate the kind of job that you would enjoy doing. You can discover your top three dimensions by the help of exercises provided in the chapter.

3. The ready reference table that maps the Holland dimensions (the top 3 letter combinations) to job profiles in the IT and ITES industry could help you discover the jobs that you would be most happy doing and given a choice, exercise this interest based preference.

Points to Ponder

1. Do the career anchors or career dimensions be constant throughout our lives or do they change based on experience, exposure and role modelling others?
2. Is it a good idea to use the output of this interest discovery to even make a case for you to get your job?
3. How to ensure that you have answered these questions truly and not to make a particular impression on others?

RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND THEIR FIT

"Only strengths produce results. Weaknesses produce headaches, and the absence of weaknesses produces nothing"

—*Peter F Drucker,*
foremost management thinker of 20th Century

In Appendix 1, we tried to locate our true north career profile through the lens of what interests us. In Appendix 2, we are going to do the same through the lens of strengths. With a particular strength pattern, you might most easily qualify for a particular profile compared to another. The knowledge about the profile and your strengths will help you focus on the organisations with a massive demand for such profiles and will eventually lead you to get hired faster.

There are threshold requirements for every profile. These requirements are the minimum abilities failing which the candidate will not be shortlisted to further stages of the job. These are aspects of elimination. Certain areas would have higher thresholds in certain profiles.

After crossing the thresholds, if you are strong in certain areas, you would figure higher in the shortlist. When an organisation has a large number of applicants, all of those who cross the threshold, then essential strengths help you get ahead in a shorter list. Essential strengths are highly weighted aspects of the selection process. Sometimes, an essential strength may also be a threshold requirement.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Different areas of scrutiny for an applicant were identified in Chapters 5 and 6. These were also clarified with the help of several real-life examples of people and their selection experiences.

In the upcoming sections, we discuss each of these profiles and have outlined the areas of evaluation or scrutiny, whether that area of evaluation is a threshold requirement and if yes, what is the minimum proficiency that is expected and also whether the area is important to come at the top in the shortlist, i.e., what is the importance of a particular area.

We have used the four typical job profiles to detail the strength-fit of yours for the job. By going back to how you did in the exercises, you would get an idea of your chance of getting hired for these jobs.

I. Back Office Associates

Table A.2.1   Strength Based Fit for Entry Level IT Enabled Back Office Profiles

What is tested?	Exercises in the book that map this aspect	Remarks: Threshold scores required in the exercises
Listening skills	Is the interviewee answering the question asked for? Is the candidate repeating himself/herself in the GD	3 instances of error is likely to disqualify the candidate on this count
Fluency and Vocabulary	Verbal ability test	A 30% score is considered threshold for this profile
Diction (for voice processes)	Word reading test in the case example in the selection preparation tips chapter	25% diction error is likely to disqualify the candidate on this count
Typing speed (for chat processes)	Typing test	Typing speed of 40 words per minute with not more than one error per 100 words
Empathy & Overall interpersonal savviness in the savviness cluster	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Test of savviness questions	Test of conflict handling, perseverance Display of negative markers on savviness disqualifies
Communication clarity & Overall Informing in the Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	GD HR Interview – test of communication questions	Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Response to situation & Overall timely decision making in the operating in a dynamic environment cluster	GD HR Interview – operating in a dynamic environment cluster	Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Patience & overall Perseverance in the vigorous pursuit competency cluster	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD	Test of conflict handling, perseverance Display of negative markers on vigorous pursuit cluster disqualifies
Tools – Can learn to operate computer equipment	Simulation of real life (call from your phone or chat through this window kind of exercises)	Basic comfort. Should not be fumbling in the handling of tools
Awareness – Common sense understanding of process and about the organisation interviewing at	How big is the company? Names of key personnel? What kind of clients? How do you understand this process as a lay user?	Ability to display awareness and being able to explain the process as a lay person sequentially
Overall	HR Interview – Flexibility questions HR Interview – Test of intention to stay	Not being flexible on shifts disqualifies in most instances

II. ADM Engineers

Table A2.2 Strength Based Fit for Entry Level Application Development and Maintenance Profiles

What is tested?	Exercises in the book that map this aspect	Remarks: Threshold scores required in the exercises
Listening skills	Is the interviewee answering the question asked for? Is the candidate repeating himself/herself in the GD	3 instances of error is likely to disqualify the candidate on this count
Fluency and Vocabulary	Verbal ability test	A 40% score is considered threshold for this profile
Analytical thinking and systematic approach	Analytical ability test Technical interview – puzzles	A 40% score is threshold How candidate is approaching puzzles in real time
Communication clarity & Overall Informing in the Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	GD HR Interview – test of communication questions	Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Problem Solving skills & Overall Dealing with ambiguity in Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	Quantitative ability test GD HR Interview – operating in a dynamic environment cluster	A 40% score is threshold Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Vigorous pursuit competency cluster Perseverance – solving complex problems Drive for results – pursuing results in different ways	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Vigorous Pursuit	Candidate should be able to explain how problem was identified and solved cogently Display of negative markers in vigorous pursuit cluster disqualifies
Interpersonal savviness – in team working	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Test of savviness questions	Test of conflict handling, perseverance Display of negative markers on savviness disqualifies
Awareness – About the organisation interviewing at	E.g.: Size of organisation, key personnel, city presence	Awareness (can answer 2 out of 3 questions)
Overall	Technical Interview – General IT awareness Programming Questions in case had a computer science course	Able to answer 2 out of 3 questions

III. Product Engineers

Table A2.3   *Strength Based Fit for Entry Level Product Engineering Profiles*

What is tested?	Exercises in the book that map this aspect	Remarks: Threshold scores required in the exercises
Listening skills	Is the interviewee answering the question asked for? Is the candidate repeating himself/ herself in the GD	3 instances of error is likely to disqualify the candidate on this count
Fluency and Vocabulary	Verbal ability test	A 30% score is considered threshold for this profile
Analytical thinking and systematic approach	Analytical ability test Technical interview – puzzles	A 50% score is threshold How candidate is approaching puzzles in real time
Communication clarity & Overall Informing in the Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	GD HR Interview – test of communication questions	Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Problem Solving skills & Overall Dealing with ambiguity in Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	Quantitative ability test GD HR Interview – operating in a dynamic environment cluster	A 40% score is threshold Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Vigorous pursuit competency cluster Perseverance – solving complex problems Drive for results – pursuing results in different ways	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Vigorous Pursuit	Candidate should be able to explain how problem was identified and solved cogently Display of negative markers in vigorous pursuit cluster disqualifies
Interpersonal savviness – in team working	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Test of savviness questions	Test of conflict handling, perseverance Display of negative markers on savviness disqualifies
Awareness – About the organisation interviewing at	E.g. Size of organisation, key personnel, city presence	Awareness (can answer 2 out of 3 questions)
Overall	Technical Interview - General IT awareness Programming Questions in case had a computer science course	Able to answer 2 out of 3 questions

IV. Infrastructure Administrators

Table A2.4   Strength Based Fit for Level 2 Administrators in IT Infrastructure Management

What is tested?	Exercises in the book that map this aspect	Remarks: Threshold scores required in the exercises
Listening skills	Is the interviewee answering the question asked for? Is the candidate repeating himself/herself in the GD	3 instances of error is likely to disqualify the candidate on this count
Detail Orientation, Diagnostic skills & Dealing with ambiguity in Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	Analytical ability test Quantitative ability test GD HR Interview – operating in a dynamic environment cluster	A 30% score is threshold Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Empathy & Overall interpersonal savviness in the savviness cluster	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Test of savviness questions	Test of conflict handling, perseverance Display of negative markers on savviness disqualifies
Communication clarity & Overall Informing in the Operating in a dynamic environment cluster	GD HR Interview – test of communication questions	Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Response to situation & Overall timely decision making in the operating in a dynamic environment cluster	GD HR Interview – operating in a dynamic environment cluster	Display of negative markers on operating in a dynamic environment disqualifies
Patience & overall Perseverance in the vigorous pursuit competency cluster	Questions in the chapter about the college project GD HR Interview – Vigorous Pursuit	Candidate should be able to explain how problem was identified and solved cogently Display of negative markers in vigorous pursuit cluster disqualifies
Tools – Can learn to operate computer equipment, familiarity with tools used to support customers	Familiarity with any tracking tools in the public domain (e.g. email, calendars, etc)	Able to intelligently attempt the questions
Awareness – About the organisation interviewing at	E.g. Size of organisation, key personnel, city presence	Awareness (can answer 2 out of 3 questions)
Overall	HR Interview – Flexibility questions HR Interview – Test of intention to stay	Not being flexible on shifts is a disadvantage

NEXT STEPS

Now that you got an idea of the job profiles for which you would get selected, you could do the following. If your interest fit is high for the job, but you failed a threshold level in an area of evaluation or testing,

re-examine your realistic chance of pulling your strength up. If you feel, it is going to be tough and time is short, go to the next highest interest fit.

However, if your threshold is higher than the minimum requirements for a job of your interest, do practice the exercises, keep a calm demeanor on the day of evaluation, and focus on strengthening your strengths so that you do get hired for the job faster.

Wish you good luck!

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

In a book like this, an in-line cross-reference will reduce readability. For the interested student who wants to delve more, the references below will help. This is also my acknowledgement of the major conceptual and factual sources of reference for this book

Chapter 1: The Indian Employment Context

Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (www.kilm.ilo.org)
Reports published by National Sampling and Survey Organization (NSSO), Government of India (www.mospi.nic.in)
CIA World Fact book (www.cia.gov)

Chapter 2: What Changes from Student Life to Working Life?

Holton, E. (1991), Professional Life vs. Student Life, The Facts of Life in Organizations in the New Professional, Peterson's Guide.

Chapter 3: Employability Competencies Explained

For Your Improvement, Michael M. Lombardo and Robert W. Eichinger Copyright 1996-2006 Lominger International, A Korn/Ferry Company.
Mastery by Robert Greene, 2012, Profile books limited.

Chapter 5: Job Literacy: Concepts & Exercises

International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) (www.ilo.org), onet (onetonline.org), ANZSCO (www.immigration.govt.nz/anzsco), NSDC/IT-ITES Sector Skills Council (nscsindia.org)

Chapter 6: The IT/ITES Selection Process & Preparation Tips

Websites - indiabix.com, careerbless.com, freshers-world.com, Q. Papers of IT Companies.

Chapter 7: Navigating the 1st Year

Trice, H.M., & Morand, D.A.(1989), Rites of Passage in Work Career. In M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall, & B. S. Lawrance (Eds.) Handbook of Career Theory, Cambridge Press.

Holton, E. (1991), Breaking-in-Strategies, Understanding Your Boss, in the New Professional, Peterson's Guide.

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Greenhaus, J.H., & Callanan, G. A. (1994), The Early Career: Establishment and Achievement in Career Management, Dryden Press.

Appendix 1: Choosing My Career Wisely

"www.personality-testing.info/tests/RIASEC

Source: James Rounds. "RIASEC Markers Scales and Items". Interest Item Pool, http://jrounds.weebly.com/riasec-markers-scalesitems.html>

References: Liao, H-Y., Armstrong, P. I., & Rounds, J. (2008), "Development and Initial Validation of Public Domain Basic Interest Markers", Journal of Vocational Behavior, 73, 159-183.

Appendix 2: Relative Strengths and Their Fit

https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/