Structuring your Application: The STARR Approach

When approaching your initial application, it is easy to be overwhelmed and not know where to start. If you use this approach, you will be able to structure your examples in an effective way and it will prevent you from making claims about your skills without evidence.

Those assessing you at application are not looking for you just to tell them how great you are or what skills you have. They want solid evidence of actions or experiences and for you to explain how these exhibit those skills. They will look at the examples you have provided in your application and consider if the situation you describe and what you did meets the essential criteria that we are looking for.

Always bear in mind that this is all about you, avoid words like “we” where possible and focus on what “I” did. Even in your Teamwork example, you are focussing on what you did in the team and the contributions you made that made it such a success. For example: anyone can say “I work well in a team”, what we want is an example of you working in a team and for you to explain what you did in that team and why your actions were so beneficial to the team.

Always remember that, if you fail to provide solid evidence in any one of your examples, you will not pass the sift.

Use the STARR approach:

Situation
Task
Actions
Results
Reflection

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<th>Proportion of Answer</th>
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<td>Situation</td>
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<td>Task</td>
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<td>Reflection</td>
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Dignity, fairness, respect.
Situation
- What was the issue/task/project/one off job?
- How did your task relate to any overall aims/objectives of the Department/Organisation (including this shows that you are aware of wider policies and your own contribution towards them)

Task
- What was the expected outcome of your task? Were you given specific targets or objectives to achieve?
- Who else was involved in the task? Look up and down the command chain. Who were you reporting to? Was anyone reporting to you? Were you part of a team? Were you in contact with different departments or people outside of your immediate workplace? (This highlights your awareness of internal and external networks)
- What was your deadline? (It is important to include this where possible and refer to it where necessary as it shows your awareness of the importance of efficiency)

Actions
- This is where you detail HOW the desired outcome of your task was achieved.
- What did YOU do to achieve your objectives/outcome?
- Give specific actions and activities you undertook and explain how they contributed to success.
- Be careful not to write this like a process flow: Instead of just explaining what you did you always want to include why this was beneficial and contributed to the overall outcome.

Results
- What did your actions achieve?
- Did you succeed in meeting your initial targets or objectives? Did you go beyond these?
- Refer back to your deadlines – did you achieve your target within this?
- How did you know it was a success? Where applicable – was there specific numbers/statistics available to show how successful you were.

Reflection
- What did you learn in the process of this task? Did you gain new skills?
- Did you seek feedback? Was it constructive? In what way did it change the way you do things going forward.
- Is there anything you would have changed with hindsight and do differently next time?

Additional Advice
Do not spend too much time explaining the situation and task, these are only to provide context and wasting too much time/words on them prevents you from achieving your true objective of exhibiting your talents. The majority of your answer should be taken up by Actions and Results as this is where you exhibit your abilities and experience.

Dignity, fairness, respect.