



EXCEED THE BAR

CAREER NAVIGATOR SERIES

A close-up photograph of a hand with a black watch strap, overlaid with a white circuitry pattern. The circuitry consists of various icons and lines, including a laptop, a thumbs-up, a network diagram, a magnifying glass, and a circular arrow, all connected by lines that resemble a circuit board.

COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

STRATEGIC THINKING

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This competency development guide is designed to take a closer look at yourself, **help you explore strengths and development opportunities** for a particular competency that is important for successful performance in a work environment, and provide practical guidance and tasks to help you develop a particular competency.

Whether you are at the start of your career, exploring opportunities for promotion within your current organisation, or in a period of career transition, this guide will to **help focus and guide your efforts**. It provides you with a **structured approach to increase your self-awareness** and to craft a personalised action plan.

Competency

Strategic Thinking

Strategic Thinking means applying big picture thinking through a holistic and integrated view, in order to provide a long-term growth plan aligned to the organisation's present and future business objectives

Behaviours

- ✓ Plans and prepares for future events
- ✓ Develops clear action plans
- ✓ Explores possibilities and outcomes
- ✓ Is flexible and is adaptable to changing circumstance
- ✓ Understands and applies aspects related to economic, business, social, political, and technological trends
- ✓ Formulates strategies, goals and objectives
- ✓ Determines strategic priorities
- ✓ Integrates and systematically compares growth-opportunities
- ✓ Identifies what is required for the organisation to continue to be viable and competitive in changing social and business environments
- ✓ Develops clear medium to long-term strategy for the organisation to support its vision
- ✓ Considers options to enhance long-term value creation
- ✓ Provides long-term recommendations and solutions
- ✓ Creates synergy across the business

Self-Assessment

Self-awareness is the first step in proactive career management. This process starts with a **sound assessment of your development needs**. You will benefit from acknowledging your own weaknesses so that you can actively plan for how you intend to overcome them. Use the questions below to guide your thinking and reflection.

How relevant is this competency and how does it apply to your job/role/career?

How does this competency contribute to success in your job/role/career?

Rating Scale

Based on the above behaviours, what rating would you give yourself for this competency, and why? Try to identify specific practical examples for each behavioural indicator in your work environment, or even in your private life.

1 – Limited (needs significant development)	2 – Basic (development area)	3 - Competent	4 - Potential Strength	5 - Clear Strength
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Reflecting on the above examples in demonstrating this competency, what behaviours are supporting you in achieving success and which behaviours might be sabotaging your success with this competency?

Based on a recent performance review, assessment results or other feedback you received, what observations and/or recommendations were made in relation to this competency?

If you have not received feedback recently, it may be helpful to ask a trusted advisor for constructive feedback and ask them to clarify and elaborate on their observations. It is **important to understand and learn from their feedback to help guide your future development**, rather than to challenge it. The aim here is to learn how your behaviour is perceived by others. Remember that input from others which challenges your own self-perceptions can be extremely valuable in opening you up to new developmental opportunities that you have not previously recognized. During this discussion, consider asking the following kinds of questions:

- ✓ Can you tell me exactly what your impression is of my ability in relation to this competency?
- ✓ What is this observation based on?
- ✓ What do I do that you feel is less effective?
- ✓ Why do you feel that it was less effective?
- ✓ What do you feel I could have done instead?
- ✓ How do you feel that I could best develop my competence in this area?

Self-Reflection

Following on your self-assessment you will now conduct further reflection to enhance your self-awareness and to establish a clear mental image of your accomplishments in relation to this competency. It serves to **identify your strengths**, to celebrate your achievements **and to give you clarity and direction about what you need to develop**.

1

Give an example of a situation where company goals and priorities influenced your day to day decision-making.

- Why did it impact your decision?
- What was the impact?

2

Recall when you had to align your team's efforts to company strategic objectives.

- How did you determine which strategies were important?
- What did you do to ensure alignment?
- What was the overall result?

3

Describe a time when your ability to translate strategy into your team's day to day work had a positive impact. What helped to cascade the intent and objectives down? What challenges did you face? How did you overcome these?

4

Describe a strategic change you recently initiated in your organisation.

- Why was this necessary?
- How did the business react?
- What was the overall result?

5

Describe a strategic initiative you managed from inception to execution.

- What brought about the need to implement this initiative?
- What impact did it have on the business?

6

Watch the video: *How to Improve Strategic Thinking* by Simon Sinek in the recommended resources below.

- Write down 3 strategies that have been communicated to you by the person you report to at work.
- If it is not clear, then using the method in the video, how would you rephrase the strategy so that it is workable and doable?

Refer to the recommended reading resources below and read the article *How to Demonstrate your Strategic Thinking Skills*.

- Think of at least one innovative idea you can share with your team at the next staff meeting. Write it down.
- How did the team respond?
- If they liked the idea have, they tasked you to get it implemented? Are you owning it and going to lead the process?
- If not, what can you do better in persuading them next time to try the idea out? Use your strategic thinking for this exercise.

Practical Development Tips and Actions

Now that you have a better idea of the specific aspects relating to this competency that may be an area of development you can **start exploring some practical tips and actions**. The majority of the recommendations in this guide are self-directed. However, if you have any questions about how any of these activities may be undertaken within the context of your work environment, **we encourage you to consult your manager, mentor or coach**.

Tip number ①

Formulate your future strategic position in terms of critical benchmarks. Consider the following:

- ✓ How do your daily activities contribute to the achievement of the future strategic position?
- ✓ Will you reach your strategic goal if you are doing things the way you do now?
- ✓ What change is necessary to make the strategy a reality?

Tip number ②

To develop your strategic thinking and your ability to integrate strategic, tactical and operational aspects when making decisions, you should reflect on the following:

- ✓ Are you making effective use of resources to tackle more of the “important” and less of the “urgent”?
- ✓ Are you able to pin-point the key elements of issues or opportunities?
- ✓ Are you open to alternative courses of action?
- ✓ What is the value you are adding to the organisation?
- ✓ Are you able to focus more on key results and less on activities?
- ✓ Are you able to present a strong case for things you want as a result of strong thinking skills?
- ✓ Are you able to see and communicate the “big picture” clearly?
- ✓ Are you able to see and capitalising on opportunities?
- ✓ Which areas do you need to improve?
- ✓ What is holding you back?

Tip number ③

Developing strategic thinking skills requires you to gain exposure to strategic roles, synthesize broad information, participate in a culture of curiosity, and gather experiences that allow you to identify patterns and connect the dots in novel ways. Consider the following:

- ✓ In which area of business can you gain some experience in that would give you better insight into the problem and potential solution?
- ✓ Which senior leaders could be a mentor to you?
- ✓ Which projects could you join or even introduce to improve this area?
- ✓ Apply a strategic model (i.e. SWOT, value chain, resource-based view etc.) to test your ideas.

Development Activity number ①

Find something you can do in your current role to **apply strategic thinking** that will make a positive impact at your organisation.

- What opportunity did you identify?
- What did you do?
- What impact did it have?
- How did it make you feel?

Development Activity number ②

List 5 things your team or department can do to **apply strategic thinking** to improve things in your organisation.

- Now write down what you think can be done to put these ideas into action.
- Discuss your ideas with your team or department. Write down what feedback you received.
- How did it make you feel?

Development Activity number ③

To develop your strategic thinking, you need to ask more strategic questions. This will enable you to spot opportunities, and developing a more strategic mindset which you can leverage throughout your career. Questions can relate to a challenge, opportunity, or ambiguity you face in your current situation. strategic thinking to improve things in your organisation. Observe and reflect on the examples given of strategic questions below:

- How can we strategically position ourselves to enter a new market?
- What's the direction for growth for each of our products or services?
- Where will the organization's growth come from in the next five years, and how does it compare with where growth has historically come from?
- How should the organization respond to the threat presented by potentially

Preparation for Interviews

It can be difficult to answer a question like “what is your greatest weakness?”—especially when you expected to be discussing your strengths and what makes you better qualified or suitable for a particular role than others.

Although re-framing your weaknesses into a positive light can be challenging, in regularly conducting self-reflection and combining self-awareness with a clear plan of action, you will be able to deal with these difficult questions with ease.

The key to preparing for this question is to identify aspects that could be perceived as a weakness but could also still communicate strength. This will show the interviewer you are self-aware enough to acknowledge your weakness, know your areas of development, and appreciate the opportunities it presents too.

The following are examples of typical interview questions for this competency. Spend some time reflecting on each and make notes of specific examples to prepare for these curveball questions and ensure you can frame your weaknesses in a positive light and showcase how you are improving in each area.

<p>Describe a time where you had to collaborate with other key stakeholders in the organisation to develop, design and integrate a new strategy, or adapt strategies to meet changing business demands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Which aspects or strategies were identified that would lead to business growth?- What did you do to create synergy and alignment of the objectives in order to develop and implement the new strategy?- What was the result?	① Situation:
	② Task:
	③ Action:

<p>Describe a strategic initiative you have managed from inception to execution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What brought about the need to implement this initiative?- What challenges did you face with implementation?- How did you overcome these?- What impact did it have on the business?	① Situation:
	② Task:
	③ Action:

Recommended Resources

Learning by Reading

- ✓ How to Demonstrate your Strategic Thinking Skills
<https://hbr.org/2019/09/how-to-demonstrate-your-strategic-thinking-skills>
- ✓ “Predicting your competitor’s reaction” by Kevin Coyne and John Horn, Harvard Business Review
- ✓ “Scanning the periphery” by George Day and Paul J. H. Schoemaker, Harvard Business Review

Learning by Watching or Listening

- ✓ How to Improve Strategic Thinking – Simon Sinek
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnwvd_TtWmw
- ✓ “How we can predict the next financial crisis” by Didier Sornette – TED Talk
https://youtu.be/C_eFjLZqXt8

Personal Reflections

Reflection helps create and clarify the meaning and value of your learning experiences. You have an opportunity now to review your learning and progress. This section is about turning the learning and insight into actionable steps to support your personal development goals. Answer these questions before you create your individual development action plan.

Which of the above activities or resources did you find the most useful and why?

Briefly describe what you learned that was new, insightful, and gave you new thoughts and ideas.

Make a list of things you can do based on your newly acquired knowledge, insights, thoughts and ideas.

Make a list of things you still need to focus on.

Development Action Planning

Without a clear plan, it is difficult to track progress and measure your successes and accomplishments in relation to your career aspirations. Focus initially on your short and medium-term plan.

Consider specific work experiences, activities, actions that can be taken within the context of the current role that will enhance this competency. , relationships to leverage, other self-development strategies, including formal development solutions. Note 1) specific actions (2-3), timeline and milestones to maintain momentum and 2) concrete expected outcomes.

Identify the opportunity

List the development opportunity that will enhance performance in your current role in relation to this competency

Identify why it is important

State the reason why this particular development opportunity will make a difference in your career

Identify what good looks like

State what you would like to accomplish and achieve with this competency. This should be aspirational and what you would like to achieve over the medium-term

Identify learning experiences

List activities, assignments, and meaningful experiences that you pursue that will offer an opportunity to develop you develop, enhance, and apply this competency

Identify your stakeholders

Identify those people in your life and relationships you can leverage to provide you with honest feedback, support, information on what is required, and help you along the way in developing this competency

Identify training courses

Identify any other training courses, further relevant reading, podcasts or blogs that can provide the knowledge base that one can then apply to strengthen this competency

Identify support required

State what support you need and who you need it from in order to successfully develop and apply this competency

Identify support required

State what support you need and who you need it from in order to keep you on track, successfully develop and apply this competency

Identify tracking methods

Define your goal clearly, especially how you will know when you have achieved it and then indicate specific measures you will use to monitor and track your progress

Identify accountability

State who you can I share your goals with. Sharing your goals with someone will help you stay on track and help you stay accountable

Identify possible derailers

Consider what challenges you may face in trying to achieve your goal and define how you will manage possible setbacks to ensure sustained effort and perseverance