



EXCEED THE BAR

CAREER NAVIGATOR SERIES

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a black watch, with a white circuitry overlay. 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 white lines. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

MANAGING STRESS

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

Managing Stress

Managing Stress means maintaining optimum performance whilst effectively handling multiple sources of stress in a demanding environment

Behaviours

- ✓ Develops and applies stress reduction strategies to cope with long exposure to stressful situations
- ✓ Demonstrates resilience
- ✓ Maintains focus under pressure
- ✓ Demonstrates effective coping strategies in dealing with pressure
- ✓ Reduces levels of anxiety in self and others by managing emotions and behaviour
- ✓ Handles stress in an acceptable manner to others and the organization
- ✓ Maintains stable performance under pressure
- ✓ Maintains composure and shows self-control in the face of challenges
- ✓ Adapts to prolonged stress by modifying work methods
- ✓ Understands personal stress triggers and takes steps to limit their impact
- ✓ Keeps own emotions from interfering with stressful situations
- ✓ Adjusts to temporary peaks in stress levels

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

Describe a time when you received negative feedback from your manager about your response and decision making during peak stress periods.
- How did you handle this?

2

Give an example of a difficult time when you experienced a considerable amount of stress.

- How did you manage and reduce your stress in your job?
- What did you do to maintain your focus?
- What did you do to remain effective and efficient?
- What was the result?

3

Work can be physically demanding.

- Describe a time you were able to do a job in spite of difficult conditions?
- How did you manage the stress?
- What was the result?

4

Every job produces different levels of stress.

- What is the most stressful aspect of your job?
- How do you react to this?
- What is the impact?

5

Think about an important project you were working on that had an unreasonable deadline.

- How did it affect you?
- How did you react?
- What was the outcome?

6

Refer to the recommended reading resources below and read the article "When to take initiative at work and when not to".

In the context of your role, when should you take initiative and when should you not?

7

Refer to the recommended reading resources below and read the article “17 Tips on how to take initiative at work”. List 5 things you can do to take initiative in your role that will not add to your current levels of stress. Which is your favourite motivational quote on taking the initiative?

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

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress and reflecting on the impact these have on you. While it's easy to identify major stressors such as loss of a loved one, moving house, changing jobs, going through a divorce, and more, pinpointing the sources of chronic stress can be more complicated. It's all too easy to overlook how your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours contribute to your everyday stress levels. You need to pay attention to these thoughts and feelings and evaluate what impact they have on your emotions and behaviour. To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

- ✓ Do you tend to rationally explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?
- ✓ Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I am an A-type personality with a lot of energy, that's all”)?
- ✓ Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining the stress in your life, your stress level will remain outside your control.

Tip number ②

Breathing is a great way to reduce the activation of your sympathetic nervous system, which controls the body's response of fight or flight to a perceived threat. Deep breaths taken in for a count of five seconds, held for two seconds and released for a count of five seconds, can help activate your parasympathetic nervous system to rest and digest, which helps reduce the overall stress and anxiety you may be experiencing.

Tip number ③

Manage your own energy, being mindful that others respond to your level of energy. Find what energizes and refreshes you, and do more of that during stressful times. Focus on outcomes rather than problems. For example, “I want to be less stressed” could be reframed as “I want to be relaxed. A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the thoughts you have about it and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal or use a stress tracker on your phone. Keeping a daily log will enable you to see patterns and common themes. What caused your stress (make a guess if you're unsure). Reflect on the following:

- ✓ How you felt, both physically and emotionally
- ✓ How you acted in response
- ✓ How you can reframe the situation to make yourself feel better

Development Activity number ①

Find something you can do in your current role to **manage stress** that will make a positive impact at your organisation?

- Describe what you did.
- 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 **manage stress** to improve things at 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?

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.

Describe the most stressful aspect of your current job. Give an example of how it affects your performance?

- Why is this particularly stressful for you?
- What you have done to overcome this?
- What was the outcome?

① *Situation:*

② *Task:*

③ *Action:*

④ *Result:*

Everybody endures some stress in the workplace. Give a specific example of a stressful time at work.

- What caused the stress?
- What did you do to handle the stress?
- What did you do to reduce the feelings of stress?
- What was the outcome?

① *Situation:*

② *Task:*

③ *Action:*

④ *Result:*

Recommended Resources

Learning by Reading

- ✓ When to take Initiative and when not to
<https://hbr.org/2019/08/when-to-take-initiative-at-work-and-when-not-to>
- ✓ 17 Tips on how to take initiative at work
<https://www.thriveyard.com/17-tips-on-how-to-take-initiative-at-work/>

Learning by Watching or Listening

- ✓ Dawa Steven Sherpa: Initiating Action [18:27]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-WH3mVPsUI>

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 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