

# PIE'S GUIDE TO COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

# PIE

# WHAT IS A COMPETENCY?

A woman with short, curly hair, wearing a patterned dress and a pearl necklace, is shown from the chest up. She has a thoughtful or questioning expression on her face, looking slightly to the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

Competencies are behaviours that you demonstrate at work which make you effective. A blend of knowledge, skills, motivations and personal characteristics. In demonstrating your competencies, you'll be showing the skills and the background knowledge necessary for you to perform a particular task effectively, together with the motivation or drive to make things happen. They can broadly be classified as behavioural questions or situational questions.

## WHY ARE THEY USED?

Our individual skills, attributes and behaviours make us unique and influence the way we react and respond to events in our lives - and consequently how we perform at work. It makes sense for interviewers to ask candidates about their competencies and see how their answers 'match' the role requirements. Candidates can also assess whether the job matches their competencies and make a judgement on whether they would be happy in that role/business.

## WHAT IS A COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW?

Each candidate will be asked the same broad questions which are designed to obtain information about the match between the candidate's competencies and those required for the job. The questions will concentrate on the most important parts of a candidate's past experience, enabling the interviewer to draw from each candidate his or her ability to demonstrate successful performance in the job.

# PREPARATION IS KEY



It's vital you prepare your evidence in advance by identifying your best examples of when you have demonstrated the key competencies for the role.

In considering this you need to focus on two key areas - the role you're interviewing for and your own background.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Make sure you've got as much information about it as possible. Then pretend you're the Line Manager and think through the important factors you'd be looking for - and then look for how these match those you've displayed in your current job.

## YOU

Self knowledge is key to your prep. You need to make a good impression and differentiate yourself. The interviewer may see several people - you want to stand out from the others by showing you have something interesting to say or showing you can make a unique contribution to the role.

You could start by thinking about your past achievements:

- Things you've done which you are most proud of
- Situations you've handled well
- Ways you've contributed to the success of the business as a whole

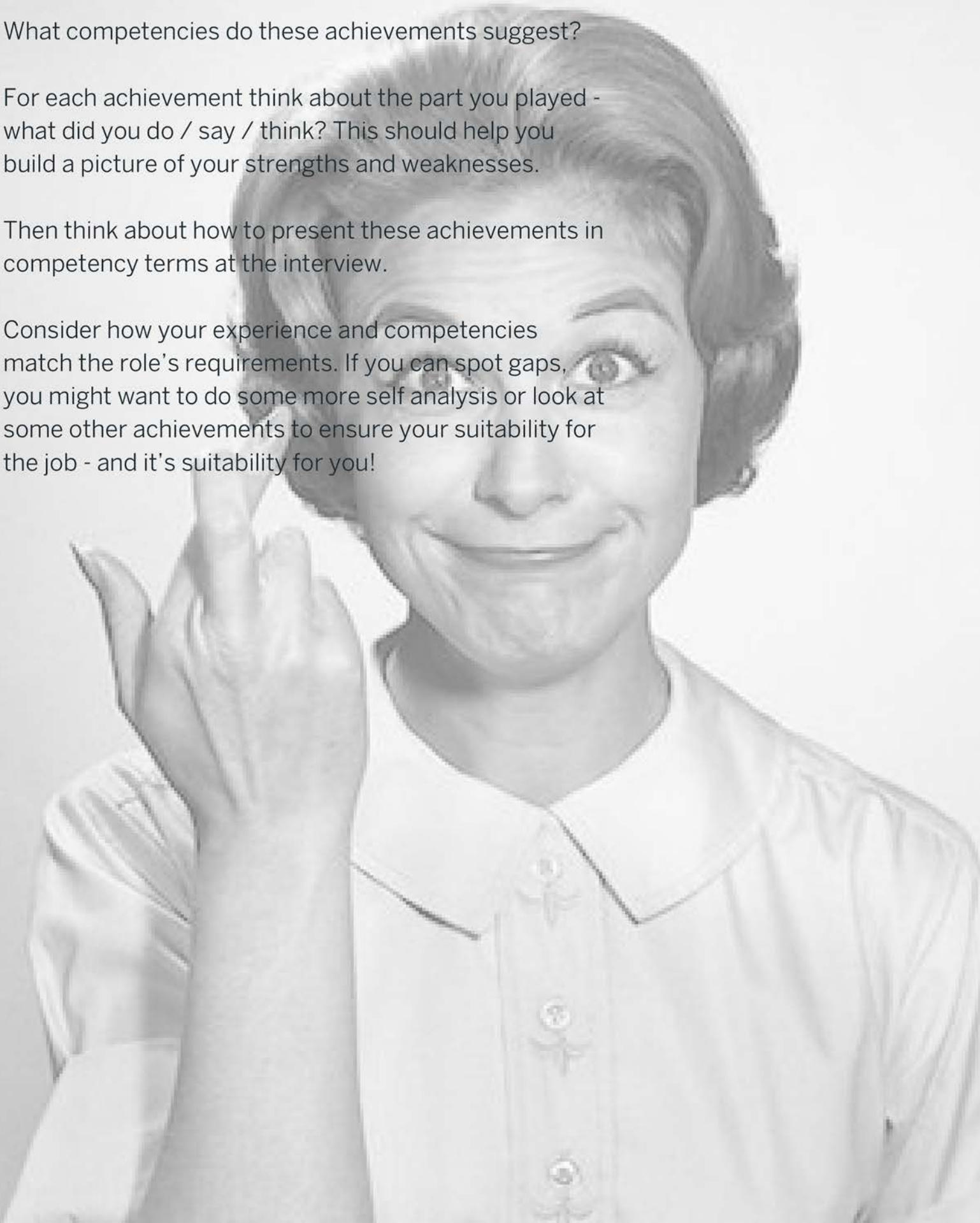
# MATCHMAKING

What competencies do these achievements suggest?

For each achievement think about the part you played - what did you do / say / think? This should help you build a picture of your strengths and weaknesses.

Then think about how to present these achievements in competency terms at the interview.

Consider how your experience and competencies match the role's requirements. If you can spot gaps, you might want to do some more self analysis or look at some other achievements to ensure your suitability for the job - and it's suitability for you!



# THE STAR MODEL

You can use the STAR model to frame your answers.

S: Situation

T: Task

A: Action

R: Result

Situation: briefly describe the situation or background of your example

Task: Explain the task / activity

Action: Outline the action you took

Result: Summarise the result of your action

You might then be asked to reflect on what you could have done differently or what you learnt.

# DURING THE INTERVIEW

Initially you'll be asked some general questions about yourself and your background. These will be followed up by questions about the key competencies - which often begin with the following:

"Tell me about a time when..."

"Describe an occasion when..."

"When has it been important to..."

Keep in mind the interviewer is interested in finding out about you and your achievements - not your teams or managers. Focus on your own contribution.

Answer as specifically and spontaneously as you can - you can have notes with you to remind you of your examples but don't sound like you're reading from a script. And if the interviewer stops you from expanding on a point don't worry - it's to ensure you have the opportunity to concentrate on the areas of greatest interest to them.

At the end of the interview there will be opportunity to add any information you feel is relevant and hasn't already been covered. You can also make sure you ask any outstanding questions - ideally you will have prepared 3 or 4 prior to the interview to show you've given it some thought and are keen!

**GOOD LUCK!**

