



CONTENTS >

- 1 Promotion of evidence-based decision-making**
- 2 Building and maintaining relationships**
- 3 Communication and influencing skills**
- 4 Service initiation and innovation**
- 5 Resilience and composure**
- 6 Integrity and ethical stance**
- 7 Sustained personal commitment**
- 8 Practitioner competence and professional credibility**

Nursing services are now being delivered in a service environment characterised by

- a) rapid rate of change
- b) increasing levels and volume of service demand
- c) a greater complexity in nursing tasks and duties
- d) a greater complexity and interconnectedness in service delivery systems
- e) services which are increasingly delivered through multi-disciplinary teams
- f) an emphasis on resource justification in terms of the linking of service outcome with the activity levels and resources used by the service.

Although we worked with three distinct representative samples at the different levels of nursing management, nevertheless the research indicated that there were a number of core competency domains that are critical to effective management across all three levels. We have described these level-spanning competency areas as the eight generic competencies requisite for effective nursing management.

The figure below conveys the message that nursing managers in all service areas are challenged to

- a) demonstrate the value and highlight the contribution of the evolving nursing capability
- b) organise and structure work to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of services
- c) play a lead role in the facilitation of service co-ordination and clarity (for both inter-disciplinary colleagues and clients)
- d) ensure that service standards and consistency are sustained.

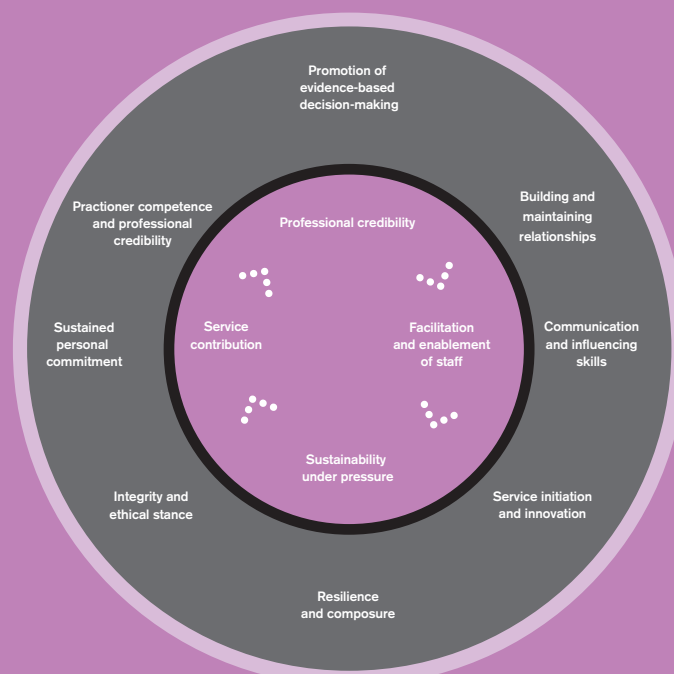
These generic competencies for nursing management can be used in two ways:

- 1> as a core skill set which nursing managers will need to continuously refine and build on as they develop their careers
- 2> as an initial set of basic building blocks indicating the potential to pursue a career in nursing management.

With the increased opportunities for the development of specialist or expert practitioner nursing roles, front-line nurses will now have greater options in terms of career paths and developmental opportunities. These generic competencies will be helpful as a template against which to assess or review suitability for progression along a management career path. They should also be used as a developmental framework so that capable nurses can be given opportunities and guidance on the job that develops their contribution in each of these critical performance areas.

Generic competencies for nurse managers

- 1> Promotion of evidence-based decision making
- 2> Building and maintaining relationships
- 3> Communication and influencing skills
- 4> Service initiation and innovation
- 5> Resilience and composure
- 6> Integrity and ethical stance
- 7> Sustained personal commitment
- 8> Practitioner competence and professional credibility



Definition

Makes decisions in a well judged and timely manner bringing all relevant information to bear when addressing problems or issues. Uses logical analysis to break complex problems into their component parts. Applies research findings to improve nursing practice and processes.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Evaluation of service needs and new service proposals
- › Allocation of scarce resources across multiple demand areas
- › Making judgements in complex disputes
- › Evaluation of adequacy of service provisions
- › Evaluating trends from service data
- › Integrating research findings into nursing practice
- › Problem solving in crisis situations
- › Finding solutions to complex client service issues
- › Makes unpopular decisions on the best evidence available
- › Day to day gathering of information in the clinical setting, accessing, probing and observing behaviours and actions

1



Promotion of evidence-based decision-making

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Uses analysis and logic in considering problems and issues
- › Promotes and expects evidence based decision-making process to be used by all staff
- › Uses a wide range of information sources and knows how to access relevant information to address issues
- › Can break complex problems down into component parts and address these in a systematic fashion
- › Takes an overview of complex problems before generating solutions; anticipates "knock on" effects of different solutions
- › Differentiates the critical features of an issue from the more minor or irrelevant and focuses attention on the essential nub of a problem
- › Ensures that he/she consults widely on difficult issues and probes the facts and data presented, including looking at a situation from different perspectives
- › Generates a number of options, often in consultation with others, and evaluates these for adequacy before deciding on a particular solution

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Able to process a lot of material, either written, oral or quantitative data, quickly and accurately in order to evaluate an issue or a situation
- › Can make decisions in a timely manner in a crisis and will be comfortable making a decision with incomplete information (albeit not necessarily a final one)
- › Most of own solutions and suggestions turn out to be correct and accurate when judged over time. Is often sought out by others for advice and solutions
- › Intervenes quickly when there is a problem with direct reports and is able to make difficult or negative decisions when all other efforts fail
- › Demonstrates a sound knowledge of procedures and protocols in operational matters
- › Shows the confidence to take decisions up to own level of discretion but will also recognise when to take an issue to the next level.

1



Promotion of evidence-based decision-making

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- Tends to be overly intuitive or jump to conclusions
- Is unclear in own expectations of subordinates in terms of how systematically they address problems and issues; allows too much intuitive and non-evidenced decision-making from subordinates
- Tends to take 'the given' as correct and may be somewhat uncritical in approach to the information or situation that is presented
- Has difficulty breaking down complex problems and may miss significant sub-components or points when doing so
- Tends to jump into solutions without adequately evaluating their implications and knock-on effects
- Finds it difficult to 'see the wood from the trees' in complex problems and can get distracted into dealing with the peripheral or largely irrelevant while neglecting the core issue
- Tends to see a situation only from one perspective and may neglect to consult people who would have relevant information or an important perspective on the situation
- Generates a single option and neglects to evaluate it fully before coming to a conclusion

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- Slow to make decisions, will tend to dither. Requires an excessive amount of time or can be inaccurate when consolidating and evaluating management-level information, be it written or quantitatively presented (NB one would expect individuals to have relative strengths and weaknesses within this indicator)
- Tends to dither or refer to others in a crisis situation; may become disorganised in response to a crisis and own responses may lack coherence
- Shows a track record of inconsistency in terms of qualitative decision-making. Tends to be disregarded by others when they need advice on complex issues
- Takes too long to intervene when there is a problem with direct reports; finds it difficult to assert self sufficiently to make negative or tough decisions regarding subordinates, seen as ineffective in handling trouble makers
- Has significant knowledge gaps in terms of operational procedures and protocols, which adversely affect quality or speed of decisions
- Takes too many problems or issues to the next level of manager when they should be dealt with at this level.

Definition

Forms strong positive working relationships across all areas of the service, builds on a common understanding. Demonstrates a supportive and reciprocating work style including strong empathy with service users.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Building reciprocal working relationships at all levels and across service areas
- › Providing support to staff and service users in distress
- › Being accessible to others with sensitive issues
- › Handling employee relations issues and conflict diplomatically
- › Provision of support in service setting to nursing staff, other healthcare professionals, management and service users

2



Building and maintaining relationships

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Relates well to people of differing styles and at all levels in the organisation
- › Has strong empathy and puts self into the shoes of the other person
- › Helpful and offers support to colleagues on a regular basis
- › Reads people well and can access how they are feeling and thinking
- › Makes it easy to be approached and talked to; builds rapport and is a patient listener
- › Demonstrates a strong understanding of why groups do what they do, is good at 'early sensing' of agenda in terms of positions, intentions and needs
- › Uses diplomacy and tact in fraught situations and can diffuse tense situations comfortably
- › Addresses conflict situations positively, showing respect, listening to the involved parties and achieving common ground in most cases
- › Shows self-awareness in terms of how people are coming across and also as to how well they are working with significant others

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Shows personal concern for direct reports, is interested in them as 'whole people'. Spends time on their concerns and questions and is available to listen to problems
- › Anticipates and listens to staff worries and concerns and follows them through.

2



Building and maintaining relationships

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Has a 'one size fits all' style or has significant difficulty relating to different types of people
- › Tends to see things from own perspective; struggles to understand different view points
- › Is very transactional in style, only offers help on an opportunistic basis. Too engrossed in own concerns
- › Has difficulty 'sensing' how people are. Avoids feelings and remains somewhat distant
- › Is difficult to access due to 'business'. May be aloof or status conscious, overly formal style puts off others
- › Doesn't understand group dynamics well. May stereotype groups or avoid dealing with them
- › May take difficult situations too personally or may be too uncomfortable with expressed negative emotions. Gets anxious
- › Avoids conflicting situations until they are inescapable, may take on overly pushy style or accommodate too easily
- › Doesn't think about (or care) how he/she affects others. Doesn't care about the needs of others. Has a one-way benefit style

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Works with direct reports on a more formal basis. Devotes insufficient time to their issues and to offering support
- › No open channels of communication to staff. Distances self from staff.

Definition

Gets a message across fluently and persuasively in a variety of different media (oral, written and electronic). Makes a compelling case to positively influence the thinking of others. Is strategic in how he/she goes about influencing others; shows strong listening and sensing skills.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Making a proposal for resource allocation or new services
- › Presenting at national or local fora on professional topics
- › Arguing the case on a complex service issue
- › Making motivational presentations and selling new ideas to staff
- › Briefing of staff and other professions
- › Explanation of complex and sensitive information to service users and their families
- › Writing formal correspondence and reports
- › Will be a member of influential committee/task group

3



Communication and influencing skills

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Marshals information cogently to make a persuasive case; communicates information clearly in the spoken word; makes well-structured and persuasive presentations
- › Can communicate in a rational, emotional mode as appropriate in order to engender enthusiasm in the audience. Can make memorable interventions
- › Thinks in advance who and how to influence; puts in place a communication strategy for complex issues; shapes or adjusts message to suit the needs of the target audience
- › Builds and uses networks across sectors and disciplines; regularly builds coalitions of interest around new proposals
- › Is comfortable using more than one medium to present a message; is skillful in adjusting the level of communication to suit the audience
- › Has strong two-way listening skills; is able to elicit information from others in a non-threatening way and can read between the lines
- › Writes authoritatively and clearly in terms of memos, directives and reports

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Develops fluent and cogent written proposals and papers to suit a variety of audiences (i.e. professional, managerial, general public and service)
- › Can put a message across to the public media in a confident, clear and composed way; is comfortable yet astute in dealing with the media on sensitive issues
- › Chairs meetings with structure, clarity and strong positive facilitation; can use humour and ensures meetings achieve a purpose or result
- › Able to use body language appropriately, e.g. eye contact, having a strong physical presence
- › Able to articulate needs of client clearly and passionately. Is a strong advocate.

3



Communication and influencing skills

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Presents a case in a poorly structured or incoherent way
- › Makes presentations in an overly factual or formal way; lacks impact and the ability to grab attention in presentation style
- › Doesn't think about the audience in anticipation of presentation or communication; fails to anticipate audience requirements
- › Tends to use formal channels in a more conservative and conventional way; neglects to build interdisciplinary platforms for proposals
- › Has significant weaknesses in at least one of the main communication modalities (spoken, written, or electronic); has difficulty adjusting the level of communication to suit the audience
- › Tends to have too much of a 'push' style in communication; does not listen carefully or closely enough to others and misses vital nuances
- › Writes memos, directives and reports in an overly laborious or confused manner. Memos lack structure or have either too much or too little detail to suit the requirements of the issue

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Lacks confidence when fronting for the organisation and dealing with the media; lacks fluency or seems disjointed and ill at ease when dealing with sensitive issues in public fora; can be indiscrete when dealing with sensitive public relations issues
- › Has difficulty writing formal papers in a fluent way; written work is dull and uninspiring in tone and content
- › Chairs meetings in a poorly structured or inadequately assertive way; does not achieve clear results from meetings
- › Lacks awareness of how to project an image non-verbally – does not maintain eye contact, e.g. reads notes during formal presentations
- › Relies heavily on hierarchy to force an issue. Lacks the confidence to assert the client needs.

Definition

Drives to achieve positive results at all levels of the service. Takes initiatives to move the service forward and shows a willingness to try out new ideas.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

At top-management level

- › Promoting new service initiatives
- › Promoting new applications for professional skills
- › Broadening and deepening the contribution of nursing
- › Initiating quality systems, audit and interdisciplinary initiatives

At middle-management level

- › Develops a new project team to address a specialist need within the service
- › Creates new expanded roles to develop team members
- › Organises multidisciplinary 'think tank' to address waiting-list problem and uses problem solving techniques with the team
- › Gets clients ideas/suggestions as to ways the service might be improved

At front-line level

- › At the forefront of clinical practice leading the team in new areas of innovative treatment and care

4



Service initiation and innovation

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Puts focus of energy into a few core areas or initiatives, doesn't get overloaded by too many issues. Personally 'champions' a small number of significant projects or service initiatives
- › Promotes nursing as a significant contributor or leader in interdisciplinary service improvement projects or constantly challenges and questions how nursing can add more value to service provision
- › Looks to nursing managers (at both front and middle level) to develop service improvement and quality initiatives
- › Sees the research-based practice and new specialty developments as positive opportunities for the contribution of nursing
- › Shows strong project management skills in developing new ideas. Personally tracks and monitors progress toward project/initiative goals
- › Brainstorms with team on a regular basis to develop solutions to service issues and problems
- › Uses patients' suggestions to look at issues in a fresh way. Tries out new ideas and ways of working. Has a flexible approach and welcomes change
- › Is actively sought out as a good 'ideas' person for working parties and project teams. Comes up with many ideas for service improvement.

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Gets swamped or overloaded and doesn't use role or position of power sufficiently to push new ideas or service initiatives forward
- › Has a more steady state and conventional image of nursing; concentrates totally on current models of service provision; liable not to take risk (no matter how well justified)
- › Allows nursing to play a subsidiary or peripheral role in new initiatives; leaves interdisciplinary leadership to other disciplines
- › Is slow to originate new practices or apply new techniques; plays safe in terms of own service contribution
- › Doesn't put sufficient structure into new service initiatives, overloads the operational system with extra demands. Leaves project progression to others without checking on progress; allows projects to lose momentum
- › Authoritarian approach with team and does not involve them in brainstorming solutions
- › Does not seek patients' views unless having to deal with a complaint. Tends to stick to the tried and trusted. Rigid in the face of change and dislikes being out of routine
- › Tends to be overlooked when setting up new projects and is not regarded as an 'ideas' person. Comes up with few ideas for service improvement.

Definition

Maintains a disciplined and professional level of performance under sustained or situational pressure. Can bounce back from adversity or setbacks. Shows persistence and flexibility in achieving goals.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Maintaining calm and providing leadership in a crisis
- › Handling a wide variety of demands in a time-limited environment
- › Maintains composure in pressurised negotiations for resources when confronting service accountability issues
- › Dealing with negative emotions when confronting poor performance or other contentious issues
- › Dealing with irate clients or other stakeholders in highly charged situations

5



Resilience and composure

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Acts coolly in a crisis situation and retains composure; gives staff the confidence of being led in a crisis
- › Puts coherence and a structure on the response to crisis situations; calms down other staff and models a composed response
- › Maintains an objective and detached stance when dealing with conflict. Does not become defensive or irritated when dealing with conflict or a negative presentation from others
- › Is usually turned to or counted on to hold things together during difficult times or crises
- › Deals with unexpected situations or crisis in a flexible and fluent way; isn't knocked off balance by the unexpected
- › Maintains composure and calm outlook when one's efforts or initiatives are resisted or blocked; takes stock before reacting on an emotional level
- › Bounces back from setbacks and will persist with efforts even against strong resistance
- › Puts time into supporting and coaching one's staff on how to react appropriately in crisis or difficult circumstances; promotes a professional response in times of stress

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Can sustain an exceptional degree of performance and effort for a considerable period of time under pressure but also recognises when it is time to take a break; knows how to recognise and manage own stress levels
- › Knows how to switch off from stressful work situations; tries to achieve a positive balance and quality of life between work demands and overall life experience; pays deliberate attention to own stress management.

5



Resilience and composure

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Gets flustered or disorganised in a crisis; gives impression of lack of leadership in crisis situations
- › Reacts incoherently in a crisis situation; has a contagious confusing effect on other staff and is unable to reassure
- › Becomes overly defensive or personally upset when dealing with negative views or emotion from others. Fails to maintain an objective and detached stance
- › Tends to get bypassed or sidelined when there are difficult times or crises to be dealt with
- › Is easily thrown off balance or knocked out of stride by the unexpected situation; is slow to readjust to new circumstances
- › Easily shows frustration when blocked or initiatives are rebuffed; takes it personally when does not get initiatives accepted and will show this in an easily read or public way
- › Is easily put off own goal or intentions by strong resistance; gets discouraged or demotivated when efforts are resisted or rebuffed
- › Does not support staff in a structured way when there is a crisis or difficult situation to be dealt with; doesn't keep close enough to staff or colludes in dysfunctional responses

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Will persist with effort under stressful conditions for too long without taking a break; does not recognise or monitor own stress levels and demand systems
- › Fails to achieve a reasonable balance between demands of work and quality of life; allows him/herself to get into a stress rut and fails to develop a range of stress management techniques.

Definition

Holds an appropriate and effective set of professional and managerial values and beliefs and behaves in line with these. Promotes and consistently supports ethical and value-based staff practices.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Ensuring that professional ethics and values are disseminated through all levels of the nursing service
- › Articulating an ethical and values-driven stance at corporate level
- › Contributing to the formation of organisational ethics and values
- › Dealing with complex ethical client and service dilemmas
- › Acting as a role model for other staff in the handling of complex or sensitive issues

6



Integrity and ethical stance

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Makes a positive contribution to the development of ethics and values at both professional and organisational levels; ensures that there is an active and ongoing debate in these areas
- › Tries to ensure that personal values are consistent with those of the organisation and will strive to air and reconcile any significant differences; will positively address possible compromise of values due to organisational needs or exigencies
- › Makes efforts to develop and promote a set of organisational values and the climate that is consistent with these; is a champion and articulator of values at organisational level
- › Is looked to for guidance on standards, norms and values by others; stays solid on values during crises or other close calls on ethics; seen to project a consistent set of values
- › Articulates client needs and the primacy of positive client services over and in counter-balance to a service needs driven agenda
- › Always follows through on issues and behaves in a manner that is consistent with own and the organisation's espoused values and practices; will check back to others where there are value or integrity issues

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Shows fairness and consistency in dealing with direct reports and other staff; doesn't generally operate hidden agendas and doesn't give preferential treatment
- › Is able to treat personally sensitive information with confidentiality; is careful not to speak in an indiscrete or hurtful way about others
- › Admits mistakes and is willing to take responsibility when things go wrong as a result; doesn't misrepresent self for personal gain
- › Is generally honest and truthful in dealing with individuals; elicits trust from others on this basis.

6



Integrity and ethical stance

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Tends to go along with whatever ethics or values are currently in place, either organisationally or professionally, without questioning or evaluating these seriously; doesn't see ethics as a high priority for personal role
- › Will allow self to be compromised by values and conflicts without addressing these
- › Allows ethics and values to be downgraded in importance when a crisis arises; tends to be sidelined or avoided by others when there are serious ethical issues to deal with; would be seen by others as inconsistent in personal set of values and practices
- › Tends to operate primarily from a service driven agenda and will subordinate the client experience to service expediency at times
- › May be inconsistent in living up to own or the organisation's espoused values and practices; may tend to hid difficult issues, sweep them under the carpet and not refer back to relevant parties
- › Tends to treat direct reports and other staff inconsistently; shows favouritism towards some staff and may operate inconsistent or hidden agenda

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Shows poor judgement in terms of maintaining confidentiality; may be indiscrete or talk inappropriately in a way that affects others
- › Tries to avoid the blame when things go wrong; may try to direct the blame towards others inappropriately and may misrepresent situations for personal gain
- › Can be evasive and less than truthful on many occasions; may not be widely trusted as a result.

Definition

Is personally committed to achieving end goals and the continuous improvement of the service. Shows enthusiasm and a high level of motivation in leading and completing projects. Highly committed to the nursing profession and keeps abreast of current issues.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Continuous improvement focus on personal role and that of the service
- › Champions and promotes nurse education throughout the service
- › Initiates systems to capture learning and debrief staff
- › Attends conferences, meetings and other professional fora

7



Sustained personal commitment

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Takes a positive view of nursing and its future
- › Personally committed to, and actively works on, self-development and performance improvement
- › Ability to work hard, showing drive and positive energy in bringing the service and staff to a higher level
- › Sets realistic but challenging goals and constantly reviews these
- › Constantly challenges and questions how and what nursing 'can do' to improve and better the service
- › Has a vast amount of clinical knowledge and expertise. Continuously updates and shows willingness to share this
- › Shows a strong degree of self-awareness, seeking feedback from colleagues
- › Accepts both negative and positive criticism
- › Learns quickly from experience. Ability to reflect on incidents and situations and to debrief self and others in order to learn and find better ways of doing things
- › Sees new developments in nursing practice and research as opportunities for developing the nursing services and profession

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Works well with others and enjoys facilitating learning, mentoring or coaching others. Will use a variety of learning resources.
- › Actively sees nursing as involving and leading interdisciplinary services to improve and better the service as a whole.

7



Sustained personal commitment

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Holds a negative view of the future nursing profession and articulates same
- › Self-development and performance review are low on the list of personal priorities
- › Finds it difficult to maintain a sustained effort. Is less focused on service improvement and bringing staff to a higher level
- › Only sets comfortable targets and goals for staff
- › More comfortable in a steady state where there is no element of risk taking. Concentrates on the here and now
- › Limited amount of knowledge and experience. Does not impart this to others and thus neglects keeping others informed
- › Lacks self-awareness and avoids/does not actively seek feedback from others
- › Finds it difficult to accept any criticism
- › Too busy focusing on the next task. Does not stop to look at what is happening or spend time reflecting on incidents. Avoids seeking new approaches
- › Sees research and practice initiatives as threatening the status quo. Will play safe in terms of developing the service

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Avoids teaming up with others and facilitating learning. Will leave this to the formal systems that are in place
- › Allows nursing to remain peripheral to the interdisciplinary services, leaving other disciplines to lead.

Definition

Has the functional and technical knowledge and skills to make a credible contribution to nursing practice.

AREAS OF APPLICATION

- › Applicable as an underpinning foundation for most core activities at all levels of nursing management

8



Practitioner competence and professional credibility

Indicators of MORE effective performance

- › Demonstrates a sound grasp of core nursing issues from a functional or technical perspective
- › Shows sound professional judgement in decision-making on functional areas
- › Shows the capacity to follow a more detailed presentation on a particular functional area
- › Picks up on functional or technical points quickly
- › Is good at learning about new practice development or technical knowledge
- › Takes steps to regularly update professional knowledge base
- › Has a track record of making a substantial professional contribution.

Indicators of LESS effective performance

- › Shows a lack of understanding in core functional or technical areas
- › Makes marginal or poor judgements due to lack of professional knowledge
- › Loses the thread of an issue once it gets into functional or technical detail
- › Is among the last to learn or adapt new technologies
- › May be stuck in past skills and technologies
- › May show no interest in functional or technical areas
- › Lacks the credibility of a substantial practice achievement or contribution.