

Questions to Get You Started

Back to basics

Think junior high English class and the basic construction of a complete sentence. Think nouns, verbs, and so on. Apply the same principles to the elements of the task statement.

Subject Matter Expert

Meet and discuss the position with the Subject Matter Expert (SME)
The PL and SME should meet and discuss the position. As the SME talks, make notes of what sounds like key points, actions, verbs, and ideas. These may be the key to developing your task statements.

Example: You may be discussing the verb but out comes some Executive Order or tool that sounds like it may have some impact on a task statement. Make note of the information and discuss with the SME to determine if it is needed in the duty statement.

Simple is good

Sometimes just a meeting where you say to the SME "Tell me about the position." "What do you need this person to do?" "What are your expectations?" At the very least it will get you a starting point.

Suggestions for Questions

Here are some suggestions for questions broken down by each element of the task statement. **Note: There are no 'magic' questions.**

Subject: Who?

This one's easy. It is always assumed to be the incumbent. One element done, five to go!

Action Verb: Performs what action?

What do you want the incumbent to do?

What action do you want the incumbent to perform?

What is the person suppose to do in this position?

What is your expectation of the person/position?

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Questions to Get You Started, Continued

Suggestions for
Questions
(continued)

Object of the Verb: To whom or what?

To whom or what are they doing the action?

Use the verb and ask: Designs what?

Interviews whom?

Makes what?

Consults with whom?

Output or product: in order to ---

In order to do what?

Why are they doing this action?

What is the purpose of this action?

What do you expect the result to be?

What is the reason they do this?

What's the purpose of this action?

How work is done: using what tools, equipment, and/or methods

How do you expect the incumbent to accomplish this action?

What do you expect them to use to accomplish this action?

Are there any specific tools or pieces of equipment that you would want the incumbent to use?

Do you care how they do it? Yes? Tell me how.

Instructions/directions: How is work initiated?

Who is asking for this?

Is this by someone's request?

Is there a policy or procedure that directs this action?

What tells them to do this?

Who is the owner of the policy, procedure, or direction? DGS?, DPA?, Finance? An industry standard?

Example: The manager may request a budget report. The manager is asking for it but who/what is driving the manager? Exec, Finance or another source.

Without stating the bigger picture need, the expectation is different and so the outcome will be different.

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Questions to Get You Started, Continued

Additional Questions

There are a few questions to ask to clarify the elements of the task statement. If there are expectations beyond the basic elements they need to be included.

- How often is this to be done? Monthly? Daily? Weekly? Annually?
Example: Prepares monthly tour status reports for Bon Jovi fan club. . .
 - How is it to be done? Manually, verbally, physically, visually? This links to the physical requirements of the job. Example: Reports on status on repair work by visually inspecting sight and recording findings in manual journal. Reports on Bon Jovi tour by personally attending each concert . . .
 - Is there a time factor? Delivers daily outgoing fan mail to Post Office by 4 p.m. each day . . .
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