

WHY AREN'T WOMEN GETTING THE JOBS THEY DESERVE?

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SUMMARY

This paper has come about as a result of FIG advertising for a General Manager for its office in Denmark.

Many applications were received from around the world from both men and women. Every applicant was asked to address the Key Selection Criteria as part of their application. Unfortunately many didn't, which considerably reduced their chances of being short listed for interview. However of major concern was that only one female applicant properly addressed the Key Selection Criteria

In filling any job vacancy there are three key components that need to be considered:

- the Position Description;
- the application; and
- the interview.

The paper addresses how to interpret a detailed position description and how to respond to it, in particular the Key Selection Criteria. Suggestions are made about preparing for an interview on the assumption the application was good enough to be short listed for interview. It also provides guidance on the process an organisation should go through when wishing to fill a job vacancy.

As a result this paper should be of interest to both female and male applicants as well as organisations with a job vacancy, but at the same time hopefully providing the opportunity of allowing women to be on a more equal footing with men, thus increasing their chances to be considered for interview.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008 FIG advertised internationally for a General Manager for its office in Copenhagen, Denmark. In excess of 100 enquiries were made about the position and over 60 applications were received from men and women in 27 countries.

Of these only 25 applicants addressed the Key Selection Criteria as requested in the Position Description document and of these only 2 were female, yet more than 25% of the applications were from females. Some of the female applicants were known to the author, who if they had addressed the Key Selection Criteria it may have provided the possibility for their inclusion on the short list for interview.

It was generally considered that many of the women applicants were putting themselves at a disadvantage by not making an application as requested in the Position Description. In particular not addressing the Key Selection Criteria and if they did address them not addressing them in sufficient detail or thinking about the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained through whole of life experiences.

In filling any job vacancy there are three key components that need to be considered:

- the Position Description;
- the application; and
- the interview.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

For an organisation to successfully fill a vacant position they must have a detailed job description, usually known as a Position Description (PD). If they do not put significant effort into preparing a PD there is an increased risk of not getting the right person for the job. On the other hand potential applicants will have insufficient information to know if the job is the right one for them to succeed in.

An example of a PD is given in Appendix 1. This PD starts with an Attraction Statement which is what you would expect to see in the advertisement. It then sets out some of the key details with respect to the job. This is followed by some background information on the organisation including its role, and an organisational structure showing where the vacant position is placed in the organisation. The PD should then detail the key roles and responsibilities of the vacant position followed by the Key Selection Criteria (KSC). It is these criteria which each applicant will be evaluated against. A potential applicant needs to seriously analyse each criterion and if necessary break it down into its various components. For example criterion 2 in the PD in Appendix 1 has 4 components (finance, supervision, policy, service) which will be evaluated as part of the assessment process.

The organisation has spent a lot of time and effort in preparing the PD and it is most important that an intending applicant really understands its contents and responds to what is requested.

As a potential applicant don't just rely on the job advertisement, always seek further specific information about the position. For example, compare the information contained in the job advertisement in Appendix 2 with the significant more information contained in the PD in Appendix 1.

If an organisation cannot provide a detailed PD seek as much information as possible and ask for the selection criteria that candidates will be evaluated against.

THE APPLICATION

The application is the key step in getting short listed for an interview. Sometimes there maybe 100's of applications for a vacant position and the only way that a short list can be prepared is by using the information in the application. If there are numerous applications some organisations will not even consider an applicant if they have not addressed the KSC. A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is an important part of an application but it is usually not enough on its own.

The first step in preparing the application is to obtain as much information as possible about the organisation that has the vacancy. Use the Position Description, the internet, annual reports, the contact person who is named in the advertisement, people you know who may work or have worked in the organisation, etc. to be as informed as much as possible.

As mentioned above, study the position description in detail, carefully noting the Key Selection Criteria. Analyse each criterion, breaking each down into their components. Jot down any points you believe you can offer on each of these components – thinking about the experiences you have gained both at work and outside work. Many applicants, in particular

women who have brought up families, in addressing criteria such as management, supervision, negotiation often overlook the fact they probably have developed good skills in this type of criteria just from running a household. Go back over the jottings that have been made, add to them, delete what may not be really relevant and develop them into a concise, easy to understand response to each criterion. It is important to get the right balance with respect to length of response – too much and the reader loses interest, not enough and the applicant may miss out on making the short list. For some important criterion, particularly if there are components requiring addressing, half a page to a page would not be considered excessive. Some criterion may only require a fairly brief response

Having finalised the responses to each criterion, it is important to make sure your CV is up to date and relevant to the job vacancy. Reorganise the CV if necessary to give greater prominence to those parts that maybe more relevant to the job being advertised.

The final important part of the application is the covering letter. It not only needs to clearly refer to the job being advertised, but must contain sufficient information that will cause the reader to feel positive and want to continue to read the rest of the application. Just as the advertisement had an attraction statement, the applicant needs to have their attraction statement. Again, the length of this covering letter is important, more than a page would be considered too long. Send off your application before the closing date - being covering letter, responses to the KSC and CV. However, please ensure there are no spelling mistakes in any of the documents, use the spell and grammar check that is available on most computers.

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

The person responsible for receiving the applications should ensure on receipt of the application an acknowledgement is forwarded to the applicant, ideally with some indication of when a decision may be made. A database of applications would normally be created with a summary of what has been received.

To ensure a successful filling of a vacancy the organisation would have in the developing of the KSC established the importance of each criterion and given a weighting or a maximum score an applicant could achieve. Appendix 3 gives an example of weighting and scoring for each of the criterion and their components for the KSC in Appendix 1. Each applicant's application is evaluated and scored against the criteria. Where necessary the CV and covering letter are used to create a short list that is manageable. The applicant does not have access to the weighting and scoring information when putting the application together, but need to make their own judgement as to the importance of each criterion and how they may be evaluated.

INTERVIEW

Having made the short list, the next important event is the interview, usually before a selection panel. Sometimes preliminary interviews are held to assist the organisation in finalising the short list for formal interview. Questions for a preliminary interview may not be based on the KSC and could be more general in nature, but would be such that the interviewer could still make an assessment against relevant KSC.

In preparing for an interview, reread the PD, your application; check the organisations web site for the latest information, etc. Dress appropriately for the interview and arrive a few minutes early. Remember the receptionist maybe asked for her or his thoughts on the chat you had on arrival.

Questions at the interview would normally follow the order of the KSC and for some criterion there could be a number of questions. The questions should be prepared before hand and agreed by the interview panel. For example in the case of the position in Appendix 1, criterion 2 was broken down into 4 components, 'finance' where 4 questions were asked, 'supervision' where 2 situation scenarios were given and a question asked as how you would deal with such a situation, 'policy' had one question as did 'service'. Criterion 3 was broken into 5 components – 'management/supervision', 'initiative', 'interpersonal skills', 'tasks' and 'general' which had a number of questions to assist in the evaluation of both criterion 2 and 3. Criterion 4 had 2 components and a number of questions to allow evaluation.

Each applicant needs to have given thought to who they may wish to nominate as referees, a possible starting date if successful, and a possible question on salary, could be asked towards the end of the interview.

Following the interview the panel make their evaluation and determines a score, having regard to the previous agreed maximum score for each criterion. Appendix 4 gives an example of an interview scoring sheet for the KSC in Appendix 1.

A final decision is usually made having regard to the interview, the written application, referees comments and any other requirements that may have been stipulated in the PD, e.g. some jobs may require psychological testing.

Once the short list has been finalised, all candidates should be advised of the situation. If you are interviewed and are unsuccessful you should be advised as soon as the successful candidate has accepted the job. When you receive this advice seek feedback from the organisation as to where you may be able to improve with respect to the interview and the application.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been prepared as a result of a lack of well documented applications from a much higher percentage of women than men for a position advertised in the office of FIG. There is a perception that women are not getting the jobs they are qualified for and possibly deserve. However comments provided in this paper apply to any applicant for an advertised job vacancy. Organisations who are intending to advertise a job may also wish to take into account comments contained within this paper.

In summary, obtain as much information as possible about the job being advertised and the organisation with the vacancy, ensure all requirements in the Position Description are addressed particularly the Key Selection Criteria in sufficient detail utilising whole of life experiences and aim to be well prepared for the interview so you can be as relaxed as possible. By structuring your application as above you are at least on a much more equal footing with other candidates and have a much better chance of the job you consider you deserve.

Good luck with your future job applications.

APPENDIX 1

Example of a Position Description of a job advertised in 2008

Position Title: General Manager FIG

Attraction Statement

This role provides an exciting opportunity to work with stakeholders in over 100 countries delivering services as set by the Council of the **International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)**. The position is responsible for the management and administration of a small office based in Copenhagen Denmark.

Are you

Enthusiastic and self-motivated?

Dynamic and forward looking?

Looking for a challenge and variety?

Someone who likes working with people in other countries?

POSITION DETAILS

Title:	General Manager
Organisation:	International Federation of Surveyors, FIG
Work location:	Kalvebod Brygge 31-33 DK-1780 Copenhagen V, Denmark
Tenure:	Ongoing
Employment type:	Fulltime
Salary Range:	Euros 75,000 – 90,000 Total package
Closing date:	10 November 2008
Further information:	John Parker Consultant
Phone:	+61 408 364 159
Email:	jp@fig.net
Position reports to:	President

Work Environment

The International Federation of Surveyors (**FIG**) is the premier international organisation representing the interests of surveyors worldwide. It is a federation of the national member associations and covers the whole range of professional fields within the global surveying community

FIG is an UN-recognised non-government organisation (NGO), representing more than 100 countries throughout the world, and its aim is to ensure that the disciplines of surveying and all who practise them meet the needs of the markets and communities that they serve.

In general, FIG will strive to enhance the global standing of the surveying profession through both education and practice, increase political relations both at national and international level, help eradicating poverty, promote democratisation, and facilitate economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The objectives of the Federation include, providing an international forum for the exchange of information, to collaborate with the United Nations and other international and regional

agencies, to promote the disciplines of surveying and the role of the surveyor, to promote the development of national associations of surveyors and to promote high standards of education and training.

The FIG office is housed in a modern building with similar type organisations in the city centre of Copenhagen. It has a staff of 2 to 3 people with a number of contracted service providers. English is the working language of the Federation.

An overview of the profile of FIG is available at <http://www.fig.net/general/profile.htm>.

Further information about the FIG activities can be obtained by visiting our website at www.fig.net

Organisational Values

FIG is committed to the following organisational values that are essential for employees to exhibit when dealing with international agencies, governments, member associations, the community and colleagues. These values are:

Responsiveness; Integrity; Impartiality; Accountability; Equity; Leadership; Commitment; Flexibility.

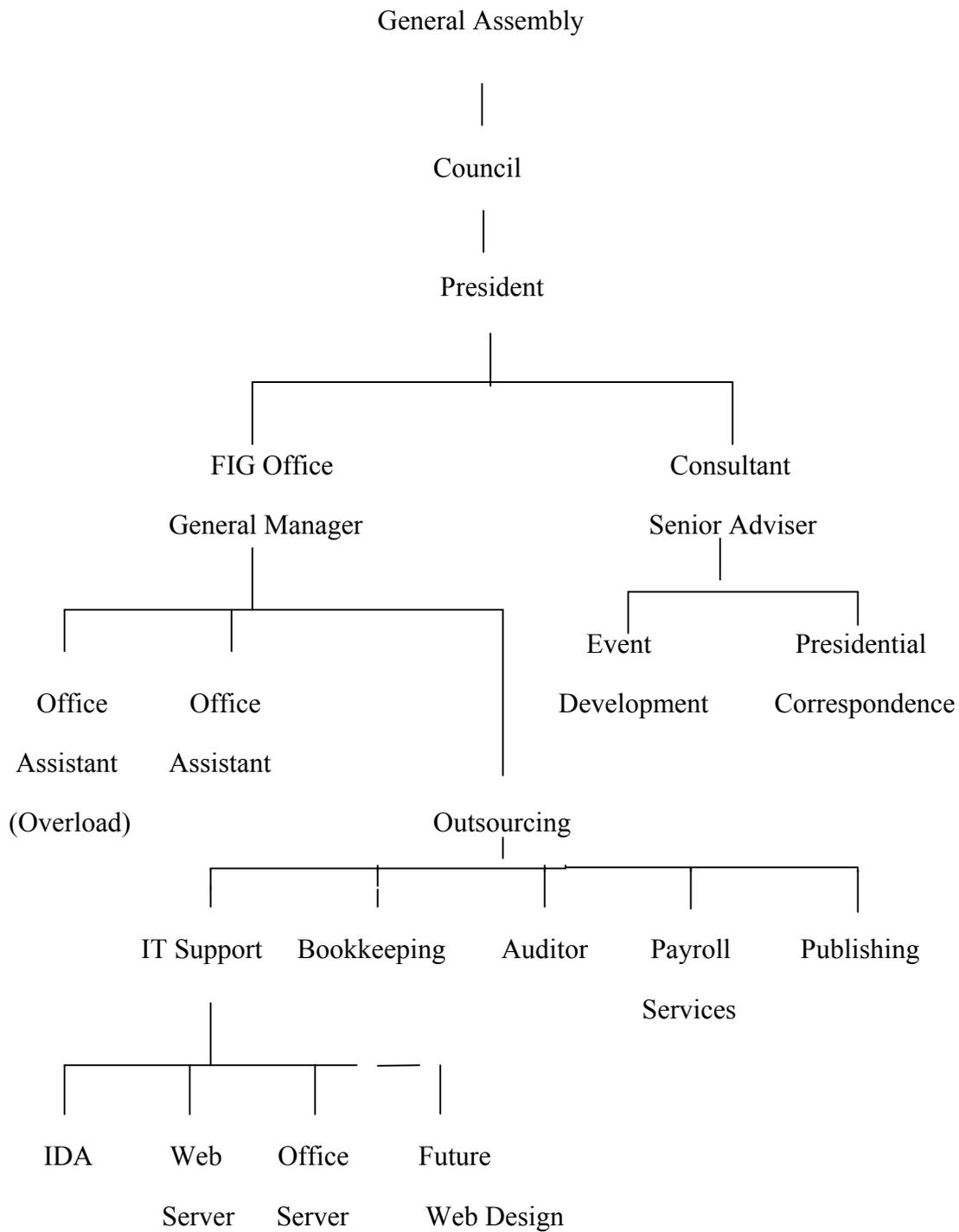
FIG Office

The role of the office includes:

- Administrative support to the General Assembly, Council and ACCO (Advisory Committee of Commission Officers)
- Administration of FIG's finances
- Member administration
- Administrative support to the 10 Commissions
- Management and maintenance of the FIG web site
- Assisting Commissions and the responsible Vice President with the technical program of any event
- Management and maintenance of data bases that support FIG operations
- Editing, publication and distribution of Newsletters and reports
- Publishing and distribution of FIG publications
- Management of service provider and other outsourced contracts
- Event delivery - implementing the requirements of any contract established with any member hosting an event.

Organisational Structure

Set out below is the organisational structure showing reporting arrangements.



General Manager Key Roles and Responsibilities

1. Lead and be responsible for the management and administration of the office, including the supervision of staff and contractors providing services.
2. Organise meetings, venues and events. Prepare and circulate agendas and record proceedings and minutes. Integrate any actions into the relevant plan or project.
3. Provide advice on policy development to Council and implement and ensure delivery of any policy or actions arising from Council.
4. Review and evaluate the delivery and impact of services and projects and provide expert advice to Council identifying gaps and areas for improvement in service development and delivery, in particular the website and office computer systems. Ensure the continuing development and maintenance of the office management system.
5. Negotiate, consult and liaise at a senior level in the public, academic and private sectors and provide authoritative advice and information to Council, Commissions, member associations and other external clients on issues, policies, procedures, guidelines and standards.
6. Ensure an effective and efficient implementation of policy and other activities, develop and maintain an effective relationship with UN agencies and other international organisations, member associations, national organisations, other sister organisations, contractors and other service providers which are key to FIG meeting its objectives.

Key Selection Criteria

Applicants are encouraged to provide a statement of their relevant experience against each of the following:

The successful candidate:

- Must be fluent in speaking and writing English.
- Must have detailed office management and administration experience including demonstrated financial experience, staff supervision, advising on policy development, implementation of policy and provision of services to others.
- Must be able to demonstrate they can work independently without direct management or supervision, using initiative when necessary, have good interpersonal skills and work as a member of a small team being prepared to undertake tasks ranging from the simple to the complex that occur in a small office
- Must be able to demonstrate they have a sufficient understanding of web based systems to be able to supervise and manage the redesign of the FIG web and office computer systems and their ongoing operation and maintenance.
- Must be able to demonstrate a commitment to the international surveying community.
- Must be prepared to be based in Copenhagen or within reasonable travelling distance.

- Must be prepared to travel to virtually anywhere in the world in the course of their duties.
- Having a survey or related professional experience would be considered an advantage.

Other relevant information

FIG is an equal opportunity employer. The office and building are non smoking environments.

Applications addressing the key selection criteria together with a CV are to be forwarded, prior to **10 November 2008**, by email to jp@fig.net or by mail to

Mr John Parker,

C/o The International Federation of Surveyors, FIG

Kalvebod Brygge 31-33

DK-1780 Copenhagen V

Denmark

A contract will be negotiated in accordance with Danish labour laws.

APPENDIX 2

Example of an advertisement for a job advertised in 2008

General Manager

International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) - Denmark

Are you

Enthusiastic and self-motivated?

Dynamic and forward looking?

Looking for a challenge and variety?

Someone who likes working with people in other countries?

The International Federation of Surveyors (**FIG**) is the premier international organisation representing the interests of surveyors worldwide. It is a federation of national member associations and covers the whole range of professional fields within the global surveying community, from land surveying to valuation and construction.

This role provides an exciting opportunity to work with stakeholders in over 100 countries delivering services as set by the Council of **FIG**. Along with delivering services and overseeing international conferences and events for FIG, the position is responsible for the management and administration of a small office based in Copenhagen Denmark.

Your attributes will include office and administration experience, sound financial management, excellent interpersonal skills, a good understanding of web based and office computer systems and having an interest in international travel.

The FIG office is housed in a modern building with similar type organisations in the city centre of Copenhagen. It has a staff of 2 to 3 people with a number of contracted service providers. English is the working language of the Federation.

Specific position details and key selection criteria can be obtained by contacting John Parker at <jp@fig.net>. Applications close on Monday, 10 November 2008.

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Additional information about the FIG activities can be obtained by visiting our website at www.fig.net.

APPENDIX 3

Example of weighting and scoring for job in Appendix 1

Summary of Key Selection Criteria with weighting

Criteria	Sub Weight	Total Weight	Comment
1. English		100	
a) Speaking	50		Minus marks for
b) Writing	50		not being perfect

2. Management & administration	35
a) Finance	10
b) Supervision	10
c) Policy	5
d) Service	5
e) Other	5
3. Independence	35
a) Management/supervision	5
b) Initiative	5
c) Interpersonal skills	10
d) Undertake range of tasks	10
e) Other	5
4. IT systems	20
a) Web	10
b) Office	10
5. Surveying community	5
6. Copenhagen based	Yes/No
7. Travel	Yes/No
8 Survey or related experience	5
Maximum score	100

Key Selection Criteria

- Must be fluent in **speaking** and **writing** English.
- Must have detailed office management and administration experience including demonstrated **financial** experience, staff **supervision**, advising on **policy** development, implementation of policy and provision of **services** to others.

- Must be able to demonstrate they can work independently without direct **management or supervision**, using **initiative** when necessary, have good **interpersonal skills** and work as a member of a small team being prepared to **undertake tasks** ranging from the simple to the complex that occur in a small office
- Must be able to demonstrate they have a sufficient understanding of **web** based systems to be able to supervise and manage the redesign of the FIG web and **office computer** systems and their ongoing operation and maintenance.
- Must be able to demonstrate a commitment to the international **surveying community**.
- Must be prepared to be **based in Copenhagen** or within reasonable travelling distance.
- Must be prepared to **travel** to virtually anywhere in the world in the course of their duties.
- Having a **survey or related professional experience** would be considered an advantage.

APPENDIX 4

Example of an interview scoring summary sheet

Position of FIG General Manager – Interviews 1-2 December 2008, FIG Office, Copenhagen – Applicant Scoring Summary

Interviewee	Criteria																		Total			
		1a	1b	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e	3a	3b	3c	3d	3e	4a	4b	5	6	7		8		
Name	Max. Score	-	-	10	10	5	5	5	5	5	5	10	10	5	10	10	5	Y/ N	Y/ N	5		

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

John Parker was formally Surveyor General of Victoria, Australia. He provides consulting services to organisations, governments, United Nations and World Bank in land administration, geographical names and management including personal selection and quality service.

He has been involved with FIG since the late 1980's, including being a member of a number of Task Forces, Chair of Commission 1 and as ACCO representative on Council.

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