

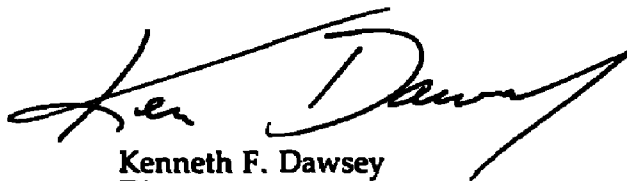


# Guidance for the Selection of High-Quality Managers



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Your cooperation in assisting the Agency in this important initiative is appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Dawsey", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kenneth F. Dawsey  
Director  
Office of  
Human Resources Management

# To all EPA Supervisors, Managers and Executives

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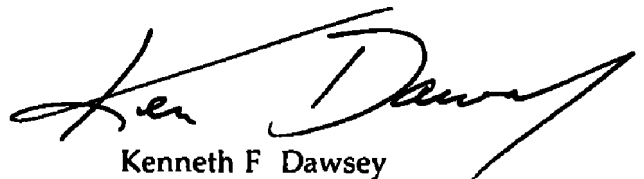
I am pleased to provide the enclosed guidance to assist you in selecting the most qualified applicants for managerial positions in EPA.

EPA's comprehensive approach to management development recognizes that an outstanding management corps results from the selection of people with the right skills, followed up by appropriate training and development and reinforced by the criteria used to evaluate and recognize performance.

This guidance addresses the first step in the process: selection of the most qualified candidates for management positions. More than ever, EPA needs leaders with a balance of management skills, technical competence and a broad base of experience to meet the complex environmental challenges ahead. These challenges range from dealing with pollutants with cross-media impacts, to negotiating with multiple levels of government, to managing teams of highly skilled, diverse professionals.

As you face the difficult decisions inherent in filling management positions in the future, I encourage each of you to use this guidance in conjunction with your human resources officer to carefully analyze the mix of skills and personal qualities required for the job.

It is an investment of time and energy that will pay large dividends for you and EPA in future years



Kenneth F. Dawsey  
Director  
Office of  
Human Resources Management

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# Guidance for the Selection of High-Quality Managers

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## Purpose

This guidance establishes specific selection criteria that should be utilized when filling supervisory, managerial and executive positions in EPA, and outlines methods for incorporating the criteria into Merit Promotion Announcements. This guidance is part of EPA's continuing effort to foster management excellence throughout the organization.

## Background

EPA has a comprehensive management development program which focuses on the three systems that directly impact the quality of the Agency's supervisors, managers and executives:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Training and Development
- Appraisals and Awards

This program, called Framework for Achieving Managerial Excellence (FAME), is based upon extensive studies of thousands of successful supervisors, managers and executives in the federal government and many hours of hard work by a cross-section of EPA employees concerned about management excellence. These efforts have led to the identification of a set of consistent criteria most important for success at each management level.

These criteria, hereafter referred to as "Management Excellence Criteria", reflect the Agency's position that a *balance of technical and management skills* is necessary for effective management at EPA. This mix of skills incorporates "what" functions a manager performs, "how" they are effectively accomplished, and the background and experience needed to have a broad perspective.

## Objective

Our objective is to institutionalize a more consistent approach to identifying and selecting supervisors, managers and executives with the skills needed to manage a complex, technical, decentralized federal agency.

# What is a Manager?

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**A** manager is someone who gets work done through others, which is very different from doing the work oneself as a technical analyst. Managing people involves a set of skills distinct from those required to do the programmatic work of the organization. An effective manager must perform competently in major functional areas such as supervision, representation and monitoring; must use certain characteristics to perform these functions effectively such as communication, interpersonal awareness and results focus; and finally must have varied experiences to have a broad perspective and strategic view.

As general guidance, there are three levels of management identifiable in EPA:

**Supervisor**—generally first line - team, unit, section or equivalent level organizations. A supervisor needs technical competence to review the work of the group; and communication skills for motivating, coaching, counseling and keeping work relationships running smoothly.

**Mid-Level Manager**—someone who directs subordinate supervisors - usually branch chief or deputy division director level. In addition to the skills of a supervisor a manager must demonstrate leadership and flexibility in planning and coordinating the work products of several organizations.

**Executive**—division directors and above - an executive at EPA must have a broad perspective of various environmental and management issues, be able to represent his or her organization inside and outside the Agency, and show the ability to balance a variety of legislative and technical concerns in making policy and programmatic decisions.

**NOTE:** The generic term “manager” is used when referring to supervisors, mid-level managers and executives as a group.

## Distinctions between Management Levels

The concept of different levels of management with distinct functions and skills is the basis for the Management Excellence Criteria presented below. It is important to note, however, that these distinctions between the three management levels should not be used in a rigid fashion. They are based on a study of thousands of federal managers across government, and therefore must be applied to the requirements of each specific management position in EPA.

For example, although *in general* the representation function (i.e., presenting, explaining, selling the work unit's activities to management in the agency, and/or persons outside the agency) is more important at the executive level than the supervisory level, a *particular supervisory job in EPA* may have representation as a critical function.

The distinctions are useful as general guidance, but they do not preclude the need to carefully analyze the particular functions and skills required for each management position.



# Management Excellence Criteria

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## The "What" and "How" of Management

There are twelve criteria which reflect the "what" or functional responsibilities of management positions, and nine criteria describing "how" managers are effective in performing these roles.

As a guide, the list below represents each of the criteria, and identifies those which have been found to be most important at each level, i.e., (S) for supervisors, (M) for mid-level managers, and (E) for executives.

<b>"What" Managers Do</b>		<b>"How" Managers Are Effective</b>	
Human Resources Management	(E,M,S)	Communication	(E,M,S)
Supervision	(E,M,S)	Interpersonal Awareness	(E,M,S)
Work Unit Guidance	(E,M,S)	Leadership	(E,M)
Work Unit Monitoring	(E,M,S)	Flexibility	(E,M)
Coordination	(E,M)	Action Orientation	(E,M)
Work Unit Planning	(E,M)	Results Focus	(E,M)
Budgeting	(E,M)	Broad Perspective	(E)
Contracts/Resources Administration	(E,M)	Strategic View	(E)
Program Evaluation	(E,M)	Organizational Sensitivity	(E)
External Awareness	(E)		
Interpretation	(E)		
Representation	(E)		

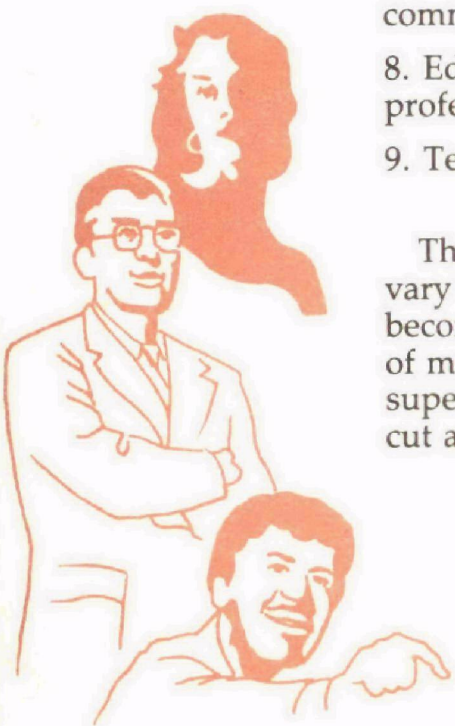
Appendix A provides definitions of each of these criteria

## Broad-Based Background

In addition to the functions and skills which describe "what" managers do and "how" they are effective, a broad-based background is of particular importance in a complex, decentralized agency with multiple cross-cutting issues like EPA. The following are examples of the types of experiences which provide such a background:

1. Headquarters and field experience.
2. Policy and operations experience.
3. Staff and line experience.
4. Experience in more than one environmental program.
5. Experience in more than one administrative field (budget, finance, human resources).
6. Experience in more than one organization (Federal, state and local government, executive, legislative and judicial branch, private sector, academia).
7. Participation in agencywide task forces or committees.
8. Education, training, or experience with professional associations.
9. Teaching courses in the EPA Institute.

The importance of a broad base of experience will vary for each particular job. As a general rule, it becomes increasingly important at each higher level of management. However even first-line supervisors are likely to be involved in issues that cut across media, headquarters and regions, etc.



## Technical Competence

At EPA, technical competence is critical to achieving the agency's mission. There are two aspects to technical competence. First, there is the specialized expertise required for certain positions, such as engineering, law, accounting, and contract administration. The second aspect of technical competence is specific programmatic knowledge needed to be effective, such as knowledge of RCRA, drinking water standards, or clean air standards.

Applicants for positions which have specific technical requirements are not considered unless they meet these standards, as established by the Office of Personnel Management and EPA for each position.

This guidance recognizes that *effective management requires a set of skills in addition to the technical expertise required for a managerial position*. For example, a technically brilliant chemist will not be an effective manager if he/she is poor at communicating to staff or planning the work of the division.

Likewise, it is recognized that an individual with outstanding communication and planning skills will not be an effective manager if he/she does not understand the technical issues at hand.

There is no magic formula for determining the appropriate balance of technical and management skills for a job, although as a general rule technical expertise tends to be relatively more important at the supervisory level than at the mid-level manager and executive level. The most important message in this guidance is that close attention must be paid to both types of skills when identifying the requirements for a managerial position and assessing the capabilities of applicants against these standards.

# Selection Procedure

## Use of Management Excellence Criteria in Quality Ranking Factors and Rating Plans



The specification of quality ranking factors (commonly referred to as Knowledges, Skills and Abilities - KSAs) for a vacant position is one of the keys to incorporating the Management Excellence Criteria in the Agency's hiring process for supervisors, managers and executives. Quality ranking factors are determined by a subject matter expert, designated by the selecting official, in consultation with the servicing human resources office.

Quality ranking factors are used to differentiate between those applicants who have met the minimum technical requirements for the job. For example, consider a division director job in an EPA research laboratory. The job announcement first lists the qualification requirements, which are the minimum official technical standards set by OPM (e.g. biology degree), and any minimum requirements set by EPA (e.g. knowledge of research methods).

The next section on the job announcement lists the factors to be used in selecting the best applicant from those meeting the minimum technical requirements. This is the point at which this guidance recommends incorporation of appropriate Management Excellence Criteria, such as:

1. Supervision
2. Communication
3. Work Unit Monitoring

These criteria would then be developed into quality ranking factors by developing a rating plan for each criteria which assigns points based on the expertise demonstrated in an applicant's SF-171. In addition, each quality ranking factor is assigned a weight, reflecting the relative importance of each factor to the job.

## Flexibility in Use of Management Excellence Criteria

Although there is no set of mandatory or prescribed ranking factors for any supervisory or managerial position at EPA, this guidance reflects the Agency's expectation that the human resources specialists and the selecting official work together to ensure an *appropriate balance of technical and management skills* needed to do the job.

As a guideline, the following model should be used to ensure the desired balance:

**"Rateable"  
Management  
Excellence Criteria**

Use of *at least two* of the rateable Management Excellence Criteria as quality ranking factors. .

Although there is a total of twenty-one management excellence criteria listed on page 4, not all of them are easily "rateable" or lend themselves to being quantified in a rating plan. The thirteen rateable criteria are designated in Appendix A.

For example, the rateable criteria that are typically most important at the supervisory level are human resources management, supervision, communication, and work unit guidance and monitoring. At least two of these (or others on the list that may be appropriate for a particular job) should be selected and developed into quality ranking factors.

**"Non-Rateable"  
Management  
Excellence Criteria**

Use of *model interview questions* in assessing best qualified candidates' abilities related to the non-rateable criteria

As noted above, eight of the excellence criteria do not easily lend themselves to rating plans (e.g. interpersonal sensitivity, flexibility, strategic view), and will not often be used in the initial ranking of applicants. If a selecting official chooses to interview applicants, however, information about their abilities with regard to these qualitative criteria can be elicited.

Appendix B provides model interview questions designed by the FAME Subcommittee on Recruitment and Selection which should be used when interviewing candidates.

NOTE: According to the Merit Promotion Plan, the selecting official has the option of interviewing the Best Qualified candidates. However, if he/she chooses to interview one Best Qualified candidate, then all must be interviewed.

*Because of the importance of these qualitative criteria to effective management, selecting officials are strongly encouraged to use the interview option.*

**These questions should also be used as a guide when discussing applicants with previous employers, colleagues and references.**

These model questions are written so that they can easily be used to structure discussions with an applicant's previous employers, colleagues and references. *These discussions are an invaluable source of information on applicants and should be weighed heavily.*

### Broad-Based Background Criteria

A quality ranking factor should be used that addresses the variety of an applicant's background and experience

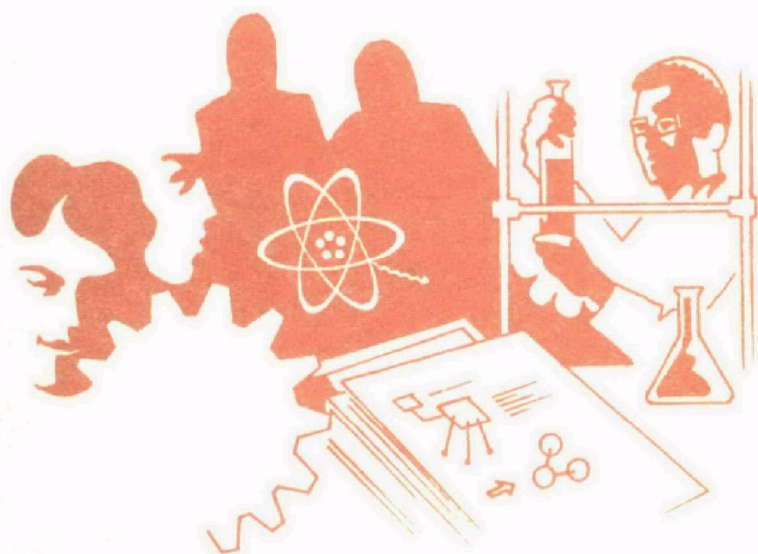
Because of the importance of this criterion at EPA, it should be represented in the quality ranking factors. The rating plan should demonstrate a broad base of experience by satisfaction of any one or a combination of the examples provided on page 5.

### Balance of Technical and Non-Technical Ranking Factors

Use of a rating plan that assigns *at least 25%* of the total VALUE of all ranking factors to non-technical management excellence criteria.

While recognizing the importance of technical competence at EPA, and the need for flexibility in determining the relative balance between technical and management skills for each management position, it is expected that *at least 25% of the total weight of the quality ranking factors be assigned to the management factors.*

This 25% "floor" means that *higher* relative weight should be assigned to the management factors if the subject matter expert in the servicing human resources office judges that it is appropriate. The floor approach is intended to reinforce the importance of the management factors regardless of the position, while avoiding a debate over the relative importance of technical and management skills at each level of management.



**Use of  
Other Criteria  
as Quality Ranking  
Factors**

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While this model should be followed, *additional factors may be used, as appropriate.*

Adherence to the above model will result in the use of at least three of the Management Excellence Criteria in every announcement for a management position in EPA (two factors from the rateable criteria, and one from the *Broad-Based Background* criteria). This guidance does not preclude adding additional ranking factors that may be important for a particular job.

**Supplemental  
Statement**

For each vacancy announcement filled under this guidance, a supplemental statement addressing each of the quality ranking factors should be required. This requirement will reinforce the need for applicants for EPA management positions to provide evidence of their competence regarding the Management Excellence Criteria, and will assist selecting officials in their assessments.

**Additional  
Assistance**

Contact your servicing Human Resources Office for more information and assistance in the use of this guidance.

## APPENDIX A

### Management Excellence Criteria Definitions

**E** = Executive

**M** = Mid-Level Manager

**S** = Supervisor

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#### Rateable Criteria

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| <p><b>(E,M,S) Human Resources Management:</b> Projecting the number and types of staff needed by the work unit, and using various personnel management system components (e.g. recruitment, selection, promotion, performance appraisal, EEO, Affirmative Action) in managing the work unit.</p> <p><b>(E,M,S) Supervision:</b> Providing day-to-day guidance and oversight of subordinates (e.g. work assignments, coaching, counseling, etc.), and actively working to promote and recognize performance</p> <p><b>(E,M,S) Communication:</b> Speaking, writing, listening.</p> <p><b>(E,M,S) Work Unit Guidance:</b> Converting plans to actions by setting short-term objectives and priorities, scheduling/sequencing activities, and establishing effectiveness and efficiency standards/guidelines</p> <p><b>(E,M,S) Work Unit Monitoring:</b> Keeping up-to-date on the overall status of activities in the work unit, identifying problem areas, and taking corrective actions (e.g. rescheduling, reallocating resources, etc.)</p> | <p><b>(E,M) Coordination:</b> Performing liaison functions and integrating work unit activities with the activities of other organizations.</p> <p><b>(E,M) Work Unit Planning:</b> Developing and deciding upon longer-term goals, objectives, and priorities, and developing and deciding among alternative courses of action.</p> <p><b>(E,M) Budgeting:</b> Preparing, justifying, and/or administering the work unit's budget</p> <p><b>(E,M) Contracts/Resources Administration:</b> Assuring the availability of adequate supplies and equipment, ADP hardware/software, facilities, overseeing procurement/contracting activities, and/or overseeing logistical operations</p> <p><b>(E,M) Program Evaluation:</b> Critically assessing the degree to which program/project goals are achieved and the overall effectiveness/efficiency of work unit operations, to identify means for improving work unit performance.</p> <p><b>(E) External Awareness:</b> Identifying and keeping up-to-date with key agency policies and priorities and/or external issues and trends (e.g. economic, political, social, technological) likely to affect the work unit.</p> |
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- (E) **Interpretation:** Keeping subordinates informed about key agency and work unit policies, priorities, issues and trends and how these are to be incorporated in work unit activities and products.
  - (E) **Representation:** Presenting, explaining, selling and defending the work unit's activities to the supervisor in the agency, and/or persons and groups outside the agency.

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### **Non-Rateable Criteria**

- (E,M,S) **Interpersonal Awareness:** Self-knowledge and awareness of effect on others; sensitivity to needs, strengths, and weaknesses of others, negotiation, conflict resolution; persuasion, selling.
- (E,M) **Leadership:** Willingness to lead and manage individuals and groups.
- (E,M) **Flexibility:** Openness to new information; behavioral flexibility; tolerance for stress, ambiguity and change; innovativeness.
- (E,M) **Action Orientation:** Independence and proactive attitude; calculated risk-taking; accepting responsibility; decisiveness.
- (E,M) **Results Focus:** Concerned with goal achievement; follow-through; tenacity
- (E) **Broad Perspective:** Broad, long-term view; balancing short and long-term considerations.
- (E) **Strategic View:** Collecting, assessing and analyzing information; diagnosis and problem solving; anticipation and judgement.
- (E) **Organizational Sensitivity:** Being "tuned in" to the Agency and its environment; awareness of the importance of non-technical factors.

## APPENDIX B

# Model Interview Questions for Non-Rateable Management Excellence Criteria

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These interview questions should be used in the interview process and when discussing applicants with previous employers and references to gain insight into the qualitative or personal characteristics important for effective management in EPA.

### Broad Perspective

*(Broad, long-term view; balancing short and long-term considerations)*

1. What do you consider to be the day-to-day tasks associated with your present job?
2. What are the longer range considerations? How have you planned to accomplish them? Which did you consider most important?
3. What do you do to balance these competing considerations?

### Strategic View

*(Collecting/assessing/analyzing information; diagnosis, problem-solving; anticipation, judgement )*

1. Describe a technical problem in which you had to use your analytical skills.
2. Describe a special project/task assignment that you feel required you to make a major decision. How did you go about arriving at your decision?
3. Describe a major obstacle which you have had to overcome in any of your past jobs. How did you deal with it?
4. Describe a situation when you had to make a decision or take action on an issue in which no policy existed
5. In a crisis/emergency situation that you might have experienced, how did you go about identifying the causes? What steps did you take in solving it?
6. How far ahead do you anticipate future events? Do your long-range

plans allow for unscheduled events and are they realistic?

### Organizational Sensitivity

*(Sensitivity to and awareness of agency needs and its environment, awareness of importance of non-technical factors, such as organizational dynamics.)*

1. How do you keep yourself informed about what is going on in your organization a level above you? A level below you?
2. What do you consider to be your best sources of information about what is going on in the Agency?

### Leadership

*(Individual, group; willingness to lead and manage.)*

1. Describe your leadership style.
2. Describe what you consider to be a good leader. What changes do you feel you would need to be a good leader?
3. What is your philosophy for delegating responsibility to others? Give an example of when you have delegated responsibility while you were in a leadership role.
4. What would you say are your strengths in leading others? What are your weaknesses?
5. Describe an example of a leadership role you have held that you actively sought.

### Flexibility

*(Openness to new information; behavioral flexibility; tolerance for stress/ambiguity/change; innovativeness.)*

1. How does waiting for an important decision from higher management affect you? How would you cope with it?
2. Would you consider your style as a manager to be formal or informal? Describe a situation where you had

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to use the opposite management style. How did you feel about it?

3. Describe a work situation that required you to work with people you found difficult to work with. How did you deal with the conflict/confrontation?

4. Give an example of your innovativeness in which you successfully resolved a work related problem.

5. Describe a stressful situation you have encountered in your job. How did you cope with it?

6. How do you deal with constant change (program, budget, office environment)?

7. Describe a situation in which your carefully laid plans did not materialize as expected. What strategy did you use to reformulate your plans?

### **Action Orientation**

*(Independence, proactivity; calculated risk-taking, accepting responsibility, decisiveness.)*

1. What kinds of decisions do you make on your own?

2. What sorts of recommendations do you make to your supervisor?

3. Tell me about a difficult problem that you had to solve independently. How did you put together a plan to solve it? What sort of recommendations did you propose?

Were they accepted? If not, why? How did you keep management informed?

### **Results Focus**

*(Concerned with goal achievement; follow-through, tenacity)*

1. What process do you use to set goals? Do you have a specific process that you would use to achieve your goals?

2. How did you get other people (subordinate staff and management) to buy into goals you have set?

3. Describe an example of a goal you achieved and how it related to the mission of your organization.

4. Tell me about a goal you failed to meet. What happened? How did you feel?

### **Interpersonal Awareness**

*(Self-knowledge and awareness of impact on others; sensitivity to needs/strengths/weaknesses of others; negotiation, conflict resolution; persuasion, selling.)*

1. Describe a situation in which a subordinate did some work which you endorsed, but which was ultimately not accepted. How did you communicate to the employee what had happened?

2. Did you ever have to sell an unpopular position (or decision) to your staff? What did you do to prepare yourself to discuss it? What did you feel would be the concerns of your staff? Did you anticipate accurately?

3. How would your colleagues describe your sensitivity to their needs?

4. How do you deal with assigning work to an employee whose weaknesses would likely impair the quality of the product?

5. How do you view the role of staff meetings? How do you conduct a staff meeting?

6. Have you ever had to tell an applicant that he or she was not selected for a job? Someone on your staff? How did you do it? What did you say?

7. Describe examples of employees or colleagues seeking your guidance on career decisions or major problems facing them at work.