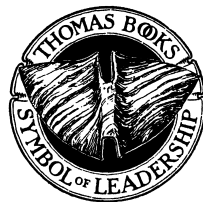


**A PREPARATION GUIDE FOR THE
ASSESSMENT CENTER METHOD**

A PREPARATION GUIDE FOR THE ASSESSMENT CENTER METHOD

By

TINA LEWIS ROWE



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*In memory of the late Joanne Wright, Denver Civil Service
Commission promotional process coordinator. One afternoon in 1986
she told me I should write a book on assessment centers
and dedicate it to her.*

Thank you, Jo!

*With deepest thanks for the encouragement and assistance provided by
Geoffrey Adams, Ph.D., my friend in high school
at Arkansas City, Kansas, now the pastor of
Kansas City Baptist Temple, Kansas City, Missouri.*

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**A PREPARATION GUIDE FOR THE
ASSESSMENT CENTER METHOD**

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

WHY YOU MUST READ THE ENTIRE BOOK

The purpose of this book is to help you understand the assessment center method, how to apply the method in every aspect of your professional development, what your assessment center will involve, what preparation you need for maximum effectiveness and how to use your assessment center to show you are ready to be promoted. To gain the full benefits of the material you must study it, not skim through it. All of it was written with you in mind.

There is more to this book than you may have anticipated—and more than you might have thought you wanted. This is a preparation guide and a mini-library of supervisory and management concepts, rather than a brief manual with a few tips and techniques. I wanted to offer you information that could make a dramatic difference in your assessment center performance and that you could apply personally and professionally, long after you are promoted to the next rank and the next. If you work to apply every concept, you and your organization will benefit immeasurably.

Whether you are preparing for your first assessment center or what you hope will be your last one, or if you are studying as part of a professional development plan, read all of this book, including the introduction, as a way to ensure you do not overlook information that will assist you in reaching your goals.

COMPONENTS OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER METHOD

An assessment center is a process employing multiple techniques and multiple assessors to produce judgments regarding the extent to which a participant displays selected competencies.¹

If you have participated in an assessment center or read anything on the subject you have likely read or heard that definition. The rest of this book will help you meet the challenges presented by that one sentence. Look at the seven key components of that sentence:

1. An assessment center is a process
2. employing multiple techniques
3. and multiple assessors
4. to produce judgments
5. regarding the extent to which a participant
6. displays
7. selected competencies.

The introduction and every chapter will give you information about those components so you can place yourself within the definition rather than feeling like a visitor in strange territory.

Starting and Staying Organized

The introduction will help you begin your preparation in the same organized way you want to continue. If you are already studying, it will refocus your thinking. If you are on a short timeline, the information in the introduction will help you focus your thoughts so you can maximize the time you have available. You will also find ways to get the most from your study as well as to stay positive and energized about your promotional process goals. In addition, there is information about how to avoid some of the issues that can stall your forward progress and make you feel like giving up.

It may seem logical to put the majority of your preparation time and effort into practicing sample exercises—the multiple techniques mentioned in the definition of an assessment center. That should be only one part of your preparation. This book is designed to encourage you to put the exercises in perspective, so you will make gaining knowledge and skills your number one priority.

1. International Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines. (Endorsed by the 28th Congress on Assessment Center Methods, San Francisco, CA., May 4, 2000), *Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operation*, 10.

A KEY CONCEPT: KSA

You will read a great deal in this book about KSAs, which I will briefly define here so you can understand the term when it is used in the rest of the introduction and text. It is a key concept that is woven throughout the text and discussed in detail in Chapter Seven. Studying that chapter and fully applying the material could make the difference between a mid-range score and a high score.

KSA refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and traits required for competency and effectiveness in a task or job.² It is what you know and can accomplish with your knowledge, as well as the traits and demeanors that affect how others perceive you. Your preparation focus should be on developing and demonstrating KSAs.

That is not to say practicing exercises is unimportant. I believe it is a crucial part of your preparation. It is a way to become more comfortable speaking and writing about the knowledge and skill areas you possess, in the format in which you are likely to be assessed. However, if you have not developed high levels of knowledge and skills you will not be as effective as you would like, no matter how much you practice role-playing, presenting a verbal resume, or working through sample in-basket items.

AN ASSESSMENT CENTER IS LIKE FIREARMS QUALIFICATION

I often use firearms qualification as an analogy for an assessment center: If you only take three bullets with you, you cannot get a high score—even if you get those three bullets in the middle of the ten-ring. This book will help you gather all the ammo you can carry and have the skill to use it, so your assessment center target is blasted by hits in the ten-ring.

You are the Weapon. The weapon is you and the delivery methods you use to demonstrate your KSAs verbally and in writing: Your thought processes, words, gestures, expressions, decisions, judgment, style and effectiveness. On the pistol range you must pull the trigger to deliver the ammunition to the target throughout the course of fire. In your assessment center you must think, speak, and write effectively to demonstrate your KSAs throughout each exercise.

Learning Aids are Your Sights. PACTSFID and the ACTION ARROWS, which you will read about later, are the super-sights that allow

2. Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1986), 9.