

# Office managers

Management & Leadership framework · Management & leadership level · 5 competencies · approx. 75 minutes

## How to use this guide

- Focus on these 5 competencies — the behaviours that matter most for this role — not a chronological career history.
- Ask every candidate the same core questions, then probe. Allow around 15 minutes per competency.
- Ask for real examples and use STAR — the Situation, the Task, the Action they took, and the Result.
- Stay neutral, capture what they say, and judge later. Gather evidence on one competency at a time.
- Rate each competency 1–5 against the positive and negative indicators, and note the evidence.

5 Outstanding 4 Good 3 Acceptable 2 Marginal 1 Poor

## 1. Effectively Executing the Task

Translates strategic goals into clear objectives and plans. Focuses on key priorities and ensures these are clear to others. Delivers high quality outcomes to time and budget. Regularly reviews progress and ensures appropriate risks and controls are in place

**Why this matters for Office managers:** Operational delivery is the role. CMI 'executing operational delivery'; Operations/Departmental Manager Apprenticeship Standard 'delivering performance'. Office managers run the day-to-day — facilities, supplier coordination, team workload, office events, budget tracking. Position 1 reflects the defining feature.

**Even the most organised of us may overlook some of the details when planning an initiative. Tell me about a time when this happened to you.**

- What was the situation? What were the consequences of this omission?
- How did you rectify the issue? What was the outcome?
- What have you learned from this?

**Describe a situation where you had to translate a broad directive into tangible and specific goals.**

- How did you go about doing this – take me through the steps?
- How did you communicate the goals/objectives to others?
- How did you manoeuvre between the detailed plans & the bigger picture?
- How did you manage the risks? What contingencies did you put in place?

**We are often faced with conflicting demands on our time. Give an example of when you have had to really prioritise?**

- How do you know you what to prioritise/that you were effective?
- How could you have increased your effectiveness?
- How did you ensure that others remained focused on the right things?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS                                                        | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fails to appreciate the importance of planning and review to task delivery |                   | Creates comprehensive plans to support the delivery of the wider goal – is clear on the why, what and how |

|                                                                                                                                                                          |  |                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No evidence of contingency planning for changing circumstances/unforeseen issues or managing risk                                                                        |  | Includes detailed contingency plans for delivery. Anticipates and mitigates risk to plans                                          |
| Limited ability/willingness to flex/deviate from plan in the light of new information and/or changing circumstances                                                      |  | Rethinks plans in the light of new information                                                                                     |
| Fails to communicate changes to others in a timely manner. Leaves individuals without clarity on the plan                                                                |  | Keeps others informed and involved with necessary changes to plans so objectives remain clear and relevant                         |
| Struggles to translate strategic goals/broader directives into tangible and workable operational plans                                                                   |  | Translates strategic goals into operational plans and objectives                                                                   |
| Is more inclined to focus on the bigger picture or the detail of the plans – struggles to move between the two                                                           |  | Able to manoeuvre between the bigger picture and the detailed plans                                                                |
| Fails to manage conflicting demands– lets priorities slip or becomes overloaded/ can't see the wood for the trees                                                        |  | Able to (re)prioritise and juggle priorities on the basis of new information/changing circumstances                                |
| Promotes relentless activity with no means of ascertaining the value of tasks                                                                                            |  | Establishes clear measures to ensure that self (team) are focused on value adding activity                                         |
| Fails to manage self/use of own time                                                                                                                                     |  | Manages self and own time effectively                                                                                              |
| Fails to communicate changes in priorities to others                                                                                                                     |  | Communicates changes in priorities for others                                                                                      |
| No processes evident for managing progress/ measuring performance to time, budget and quality                                                                            |  | Puts clear structures and processes in place for monitoring and managing progress/performance                                      |
| Loses cool when things do not progress as expected – increases effort without tackling the source of the issue or checking the expected return on the increase in effort |  | Responds calmly when things go off track. Creates time to take stock and review when feeling under pressure to respond and deliver |

Summary of evidence:

Rating (1–

5): \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Relating to Others

Adapts style to interact effectively with a diverse range of people. Treats people fairly, showing interest in and respect for their ideas and opinions. Demonstrates concern for the needs of others

**Why this matters for Office managers:** Office managers sit with diverse stakeholders — execs, admins, suppliers, IT, building services, external consultants. Operations Manager Standard names 'inclusive, customer focused, supportive'. Sustained interpersonal adaptability across grades and functions is the defining people-skill of the role.

**Describe the last time you felt real empathy for a colleague.**

- Why did you feel such empathy? How did you let it show?
- How did your behaviour towards this individual compare with your behaviour towards others
- What was the impact (positive and negative) of this?

**Describe a situation where you wished you had acted differently with someone at work?**

- What made you respond as you did?
- What do wish you had done differently? Why?
- How did you know your approach had not hit the mark?

- How have you adjusted your approach in the light of this experience?

### Who are some of the key people with whom you need to establish working relationships?

- Tell me about how you adjust/modify your style to meet their needs?
- Who do you find easiest/most difficult to engage with? Why?
- How does your approach to others compare with your peers?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS                                                                                                                                    | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No evidence of seeking to understand the needs/ concerns of others. Fails to appreciate the value of engaging at this level with others                |                   | Demonstrates empathy & concern for the needs of others. Sees the value of engagement and effective relationships building                     |
| Lacks awareness/understanding of the impact of their actions on others                                                                                 |                   | Shows high levels of self-awareness and an understanding of the impact of their behaviour/ actions on others                                  |
| No evidence of seeking and responding to feedback and cues from others regarding the impact of their style                                             |                   | Picks up and responds to cues from others, adjusting their style accordingly                                                                  |
| Fails to adapt style to suit the needs of the audience or the situation – what you see is what you get approach                                        |                   | Consciously adapts style to suit the needs of the situation and audience                                                                      |
| No evidence of being able to engage with a diverse range of people                                                                                     |                   | Interacts effectively with diverse range of people. Knows who they need to engage with and how best to do this                                |
| Style may create barriers between self and others                                                                                                      |                   | Puts other people at ease                                                                                                                     |
| Fails to engage others and seek their ideas/opinions and contributions. Tends to transmit rather than encourage a two way dialogue/flow of information |                   | Respects the ideas/opinions and contributions – proactively seeks input from others                                                           |
| May engage others but no evidence of actively listening to their ideas/views and opinions                                                              |                   | Is genuinely interested in the attitudes/views and opinions of others. Evidence of listening and responding to these                          |
| No evidence of modifying approach/plans to accommodate the needs, ideas and opinions of others                                                         |                   | Adjusts course of action in the light of feedback and input from others – takes ideas and opinions on board                                   |
| Favours the opinions/views of some over others                                                                                                         |                   | Is fair and unbiased in the treatment of others                                                                                               |
| Is not interested/concerned about how they are perceived by others or appreciate the importance/ impact of creating a positive first impression        |                   | Makes a strong positive first impression with others – appreciates what is needed to make a positive impression and conducts self accordingly |

Summary of evidence: \_\_\_\_\_ Rating (1–5): \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Being Dependable and Taking Accountability

Takes personal accountability for achieving goals and seeing things through to completion. Delivers what they commit to and can be trusted to maintain standards and quality.

**Why this matters for Office managers:** Operations Manager Standard names 'takes responsibility' explicitly. Office managers carry operational accountability — facilities, supplier contracts, expenditure within delegated authority, compliance with multiple internal policies (IT, H&S, security, GDPR).

**Give me an example of a time when you did more that was asked of you/exceeded expectation/went that extra mile.**

- Why did you do it? How did this make you feel?
- What was the result of your efforts?
- What did you have to give lesser priority to in order to make that happen?
- With hindsight, what if anything would you do differently?

**At times we all fail to deliver what is required or struggle to keep our motivation to see things to completion. Describe a time when this has happened to you?**

- Why were you unable to deliver/what caused you to lose motivation?
- How did you feel? What did you do to try to overcome the problem?
- What feedback did you receive? What did you learn?
- What have you done to prevent the same situation occurring?

**Sometimes getting a task finished on time means that quality is compromised. Can you give an example of a time when this has happened to you?**

- What were the issues that you anticipated as a result of this?
- What did you do to address these issues? Who did you consult/inform?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS                                                                                                                               | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lacks personal accountability – let things slip /leave issues requiring additional/discretionary effort unresolved                                |                   | Takes personal accountability for performance and is prepared to go the extra mile/put self out when needed                                         |
| Passes the buck on issues – hides behind systems or processes or places blame/accountability on others                                            |                   | Owns issues – does not hide behind systems or processes or devolve accountability for others                                                        |
| Misses the knock on implications of taking work on. Fails to re-prioritise other activity & may become over loaded                                |                   | Appreciates the impact of choices on capacity to deliver across all aspects of the role. Clearly/ effectively prioritises                           |
| Quickly loses enthusiasm or energy for a project/ activity when the going gets tough                                                              |                   | Shows determination to see things through to completion                                                                                             |
| Waits to be told what to do – Fails to take the initiative to resolve issues that may hamper performance                                          |                   | Takes the initiative to resolve issues that may hamper performance                                                                                  |
| Is prepared to cut corners to meet deadlines or lets deadlines slip in the pursuit of perfection – no evidence of getting the balance right       |                   | Appreciates the balance between delivering to time and delivering to quality standards and consciously works to get the right balance between these |
| Fails to consider the implication of decisions on quality/delivery and performance                                                                |                   | Considers the implications of decisions/actions for delivery quality and performance                                                                |
| May over promise or under-deliver and fail to see the importance of delivery/honouring commitments to others                                      |                   | Delivers what they commit to – can be relied upon to deliver on promises                                                                            |
| If focused on quantity rather than quality of output. Completes tasks to tick the box rather than to ensure that quality standards are adhered to |                   | Is focused on standards and quality of output                                                                                                       |
| No evidence of measuring/assessing the quality of outputs either via formal or informal measures                                                  |                   | Keeps a check on the quality and standards of work via formal and informal checks and measures                                                      |

**Summary of evidence:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Rating (1–5):** \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Handling Pressure

Remains calm and in control under pressure, staying focused on delivering results. Stands their ground when challenged and maintains a positive outlook when faced with setbacks.

**Why this matters for Office managers:** Concurrent demands, last-minute requests, exec pressure, peak workload moments (board meetings, audits, office moves, incidents). The pressure is steady-state, not episodic — the office manager's day is reactive by nature.

**Describe a situation where you felt that unreasonable pressures/demands were being placed on you/your team.**

- What did you do to help manage the pressure and demands?
- How successful were you? How do you know (feedback)?
- How did you minimise negative impact on performance?
- With hindsight what have you done differently when faced with demanding/pressurised situations?

**Tell me about a crisis (at work) you have handled recently.**

- What caused it? What did you do to resolve it?
- How were you feeling at the time? How did you manage your emotions?
- How did you ensure yourself/others coped through it?
- How did you know they were coping?

**Sometimes our values and beliefs can be called into question by business decisions and we need to take a stand. Describe a time when this has happened to you.**

- Why was it important for you to take a stand and stand your ground?
- How comfortable did you feel doing this? How successful were you?
- What made you successful? What got in the way of success?
- What have you learned about yourself from this experience?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS                                                                                                         | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Becomes ruffled or emotional when under pressure – loses control when under stress                                          |                   | Remains calm and collected in difficult circumstances. Keeps control in stressful situations                               |
| Takes eye off the ball and becomes distracted/ preoccupied when under pressure                                              |                   | Maintains performance under pressure                                                                                       |
| Uses a limited range of coping strategies or maladaptive coping strategies when under pressure (e.g. diet, exercise, sleep) |                   | Adopts a range of effective coping strategies to deal with pressure (e.g. manages symptoms, re-frames, tackles the source) |
| Fails to spot signs of pressure in self and others                                                                          |                   | Recognises signs of stress/pressure in self and others                                                                     |
| Focuses on self when under pressure. Does not consider how to support others through pressure situations                    |                   | Looks to ensure that others are equipped to deal with and supported through pressurised situations                         |
| Responds disproportionately/inappropriately to challenge or when values and beliefs are called into question                |                   | Responds constructively to challenge or when beliefs and values are called into questions                                  |
| Does not stand ground or fails to challenge constructively                                                                  |                   | Prepared to stand ground in the face of opposition                                                                         |
| Gives up easily – lacks tenacity when faced with setbacks                                                                   |                   | Persists with a course of action despite setbacks – shows tenacity in the pursuit of goals                                 |

|                                                                                              |  |                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tends to dwell on disappointments or setbacks which can interfere with focus and performance |  | Remains a positive outlook in the face of setbacks and disappointments – sees them as an inevitable part of the process but learns and moves on |
| Loses focus when under pressure                                                              |  | Maintains focus when under pressure                                                                                                             |
| Focuses on the wrong things – gets caught up in distractions and loses focus/attention       |  | Manages distractions in the working environment and keeps self focused on performance goals                                                     |

Summary of evidence: \_\_\_\_\_ Rating (1–5): \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Building Positive Working Alliances

Proactively builds a wide network of internal and external stakeholders. Encourages cooperation between different groups, whilst being comfortable expressing disagreement and handling conflict. Ensures the needs of key stakeholders are met

**Why this matters for Office managers:** Cross-functional working, supplier management, peer relationships across the organisation. CMI 'managing relationships'. The office manager often has more cross-functional reach than their formal authority suggests; positive working alliances are how the role gets things done.

**Sometimes it is necessary to enlist the help of others in our network to solve an issue. Describe a time when it has been necessary for you to do this?**

- How did you establish who was best placed to help? How approach them?
- How do you go about building/maintaining your network?
- What feedback have you received on your networking skills?

**Sometimes stakeholders don't really understand what they want, or present us with requests that will not meet their need. Describe a time when you had to ascertain the exact nature of a stakeholder's need.**

- How did you help the stakeholder to articulate the real need?
- How did they respond?
- What would have been the impact of you not acting in this way?

**Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with conflict/frustrations working with a key stakeholder or another team/department?**

- What steps did you take to resolve the problem?
- What was the outcome?
- What feedback did you receive?

| NEGATIVE INDICATORS                                                                                             | 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 | POSITIVE INDICATORS                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Limited networks or reactive approach to networking -doesn't commit time and effort to maintaining networks     |                   | Proactively develops and maintains a network of relationships with key stakeholders                         |
| Networks on a needs basis. No evidence of having strong enough sustainable networks                             |                   | Draws on network when required and with minimum effort as relationships are strong/have been maintained     |
| Tends to withhold information from colleagues or share it widely enough or in an untimely manner                |                   | Regularly/proactively shares knowledge and information with colleagues within their sphere of influence     |
| Responds to wants rather than needs of stakeholders. Fails to question/challenge to establish needs and drivers |                   | Questions/challenges in order to really understand the needs of stakeholders. Is focused on needs not wants |

|                                                                                                                                                               |  |                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fails to respond to requests/feedback from stakeholders                                                                                                       |  | Responds promptly to stakeholder requests / feedback                                                         |
| Treats others as a resource rather than as a person (not as they would like to be treated themselves)                                                         |  | Demonstrates a clear personal code of conduct with respect to how they engage with others                    |
| Fails to surface/deal with conflict and disagreement with different stakeholders. Pursues the task without paying attention to issues of climate/relationship |  | Effectively manages conflict/disagreement between different stakeholders                                     |
| Fails to establish a common goal or purpose to align differing stakeholder groups                                                                             |  | Encourages cooperation across different stakeholders – helps to establish/ascertain a common goal or purpose |
| Expresses disagreement in a less tactful way                                                                                                                  |  | Expresses disagreement tactfully/assertively                                                                 |
| No evidence of building lasting/sustainable relationships with key stakeholders/following up formally or informally                                           |  | Keeps communication channels open. Follows up to maintain relationships with stakeholders                    |
| No evidence of seeking feedback from/following up with stakeholders to ensure their needs are met                                                             |  | Follows up to ensure that the needs of stakeholders (continue to be) met                                     |

**Summary of evidence:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Rating (1–5):** \_\_\_\_\_