



HSL In-Tray: Exercise Description

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Home Store Ltd

Background

HSL is an in-tray exercise which requires participants to be able to prioritise, organise, and action plan around a series of typical events in general management. The scenario is located in a retail context with participants taking the role of Acting Store Manager in a large out-of town retail outlet. The in-tray is set at a medium level of difficulty, and is therefore suitable for use with actual or aspiring store managers and those with supervisory or managerial responsibilities in a number of sectors where there is some customer and delivery focus. This is a written exercise that is completed individually, but can be administered to a group of candidates simultaneously.

The competencies that are relevant to this exercise and can be used as rating dimensions are as follows:

Analysis & Problem Solving Skills

Written Communication Skills

Drive

Organisation

Team Orientation

Users may substitute versions of the competencies above from their own existing competency framework as desired.

A short set of Administration instructions describes the task for candidates. Candidates have 60 minutes in which to review their papers and construct their responses. The exercise can comfortably be administered to groups of up to 12 provided there is ample desk space available for each.

Exercise Content

The initial Participant Brief consists of 1 page of instructions for how to complete the task and 1 page of background materials describing the current situation at the Halton branch of Home Store Ltd. The task for candidates is to:

“a. Indicate the topic groupings for each item in the in-tray and the relative priority of each topic. The priority of a topic is determined both by its importance and its urgency. You should classify each topic in one of the three following bands of priority:

H = High Priority

M = Medium Priority

L = Low Priority

Use the attached forms to record your decisions.

b. For each topic indicate in note form WHY you have allocated it to a particular priority band and HOW you would deal with the matter.”

An overview of the current situation is provided, including the following extract:

“It is Tuesday 18th August at 10.30 am. For the next hour you will assume the role of Store Manager at the Halton Rise Home Store superstore. The superstore has been open for about 4 years and is one of only 2 outlets currently trading on an out-of-town retail park designed for 8. The park is 1.5 miles from the centre of Halton, the major town within Radcliffe Metropolitan Borough. The Borough has some 300,000 residents...”

The brief goes on to explain that the candidate has to take over from the current Store Manager who has suddenly been taken ill. The urgency to work through the in-tray is enhanced by the candidate needing to leave shortly to stand in for the Store Manager at a key national sales conference. It is therefore to identify and handle matters that are likely to arise during the next few days.

There are 15 individual items (letters, phone messages, etc.), relating to 9 topics. The topics range from arrangements for environmental health and supplier visits to issues over unpaid invoices, product recalls, staff management and marketing opportunities.

Candidates are provided with a structured Participant Report Form in which to record their responses.

Assessor Manual

The Assessor Manual provides full background information (i.e. an Overview, Relevant Competencies, Timing, Materials Checklist and Scoring). A separate set of Administration Instructions with a full administration script is provided.

The in-tray has been designed to be scored more quickly and efficiently than most. The scoring process is supported by a detailed scoring guide, structured Assessor Report Form and a straightforward rating scheme. Full information about each topic and their relative priority is provided in the Assessor Manual along with detailed examples of appropriate and inappropriate actions for each topic.

Quantities

The Administration Pack contains the following items:

- 12 Participant Briefs
- 12 sets of Participant Materials
- 12 Participant Report forms
- 2 sets of Admin Instructions
- 12 Assessor Report Forms
- 2 Assessor Manuals

After initial purchase of the Admin Pack, a Refill Pack may be purchased which contains the following consumable items:

- 12 Participant Briefs
- 12 sets of Participant Materials
- 12 Participant Report forms
- 12 Assessor Report Forms

Current pricing can be determined by reference to <http://www.sr-associates.com/pricing.html>

If desired, further queries as to the exercise demands and content can be made to:

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