

Making Effective Decisions: The Essential Challenges & Actions Framework Plus, Example Questions

If you haven't had a chance to watch my short video on MED yet, it's a great way to bring this framework to life, here is the link:

<https://youtu.be/5a0UYt6EnLY>

As you may know I coach ST**C**AR - where **C** are the key challenges you faced and identified in your task. You must tell the interview panel that you considered these before embarking on your actions – after all diving straight into any challenging situation and task before considering the challenges typically results in a dismal outcome!

To get a deeper insight into STCAR watch this video:

[STCAR - Why and How it delivers better results](#)

The challenges I set out below are typical of those that anyone might face in a tough MED situation. I have developed these frameworks during several years coaching clients across the Civil Service – and they work!

I am often asked if these frameworks depart from the written descriptions in the Success Profiles document. In short, no, they bring the descriptions to life and no matter what grade you are, AA to SCS 3, the principles remain the same, it is simply the level of complexity and challenge faced within the example and strategic impact which increases with greater responsibility.

TYPICAL MED CHALLENGES:

Here is a list of the typical reasons why a MED scenario could be challenging – think about which ones you faced in your example – the more you can include the better!

- You don't have all the information you will need, and you might not be able to source it, or it's incomplete and not robust
- There are significant risks associated with possible outcomes, which could be:
 - Political
 - Legal
 - Financial
 - Operational – Change might be required – it will impact people in different ways
 - Technological
 - Reputational
 - Health & Safety
- There is already a groundswell of opinion about what should happen – what the decision should be
- Time is short, you can't dwell on this for too long
- You might not be familiar with the subject matter and therefore must upskill

Faced with such challenges, and possibly others unique to your situation, you must now demonstrate that you 'behaved' in the right way, in other words you understand **HOW** to approach this task and to do that you should consider this framework. Good decisions usually happen when this framework is followed, its simply nothing other than sound decision making.

MED ACTIONS FRAMEWORK:

The framework I have developed to help explain and provide the foundations upon which clients structure their MED examples is of course based on an interpretation of the descriptions provided in the Success Profiles document. The problem many clients face is how to interpret the description so it can be demonstrated in a real-life situation.

Across all roles in the public and private sectors I believe these actions - this framework, mirrors what people do to successfully deliver and this is how you might think about taking a panel through your actions:

1. Compile as much information as possible – accepting that it might not all be available, which makes the task challenging. Be rigorous in your research

interview performance

2. Involve others, seek input from subject matter experts, colleagues – share the problem and ask others for ideas – e.g. ‘Has anyone faced this before?’ We like people who involve others where tough decisions need to be made
3. Use this mass of information to develop options, you must demonstrate and communicate to a panel that you considered options / alternatives. Each option will have presented risks because this is a difficult decision. It doesn’t matter if the decision was going to impact the entire country or your single customer, risks are always present when making difficult decisions
4. Select what you consider to be the most workable option and invite pushback, be prepared to refine, further research and mitigate risks if possible
5. Think about implementation (depending on your level / grade). How will you take this into your work?

Remember these key elements:

Involve others, consider options, assess risks.

QUICKFIRE SBP QUESTIONS:

How well do you understand the behaviour?

Test your knowledge of the behaviour with the quick-fire questions and then reflect on the longer interview style behaviour-based questions categorised into positive, negative, and experience-based questions below.

So here goes (hint: refer to the framework):

When faced with a tough decision how do you assess the potential risks?

When you don’t have all of the information you need to make a decision what do you do?

When you have made a poor decision why do you think it was?

How do you bring others onboard with a decision you need to make when you know they are negative?

Are you a person who involves others in difficult decision making?

MED EXAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Positive:

Tell us about a time when you had to analyse and evaluate complex information and competing options before making a decision or recommendation?

Can you tell us about a time when you had to make a difficult decision at work?

Take us through a situation when you had to consider the risks and their impact on an important decision?

Please give us an example of when you have made a difficult decision or recommendation using unclear or conflicting evidence

Negative:

When have you made a decision and realised it was the wrong one?

When have you realised that the information you based a decision on was not robust? What action did you take?

Experience:

(Policy Profession) In what way is evidence important in policy making? Can you tell me about a time when you changed your mind or changed policy advice based on evidence?

How would you approach a decision where you knew there was a groundswell of opinion as to what should happen.

Matt Eastlake : Founder and Coach at Interview Performance. Matt has successfully coached over 1000 civil servants across all grades and departments through applications and interviews since 2018.

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