

Skill and Trait Cluster Profiles

What is the difference between a Cluster Profile and a Job Description?

A job description tends to describe a role in terms of the specific deliverables that must be achieved by the person doing the job. In addition they often stipulate certain skills, knowledge or qualifications a jobholder must possess to be considered competent. Some job descriptions ask for evidence of personal qualities, key traits or character strengths, often which are desirable if the individual is to 'fit' within the organisation.

In some regard, skill and trait clusters do a similar thing to job descriptions – they summarize the groups of skills or traits required in order that people may come together to achieve a goal, a project or piece of work. The difference is that often a skill cluster is describing what's needed from multiple people – not just a single jobholder. The terminology originated in the world of information technology, and was often used to denote how servers connect to one another to create technology networks.

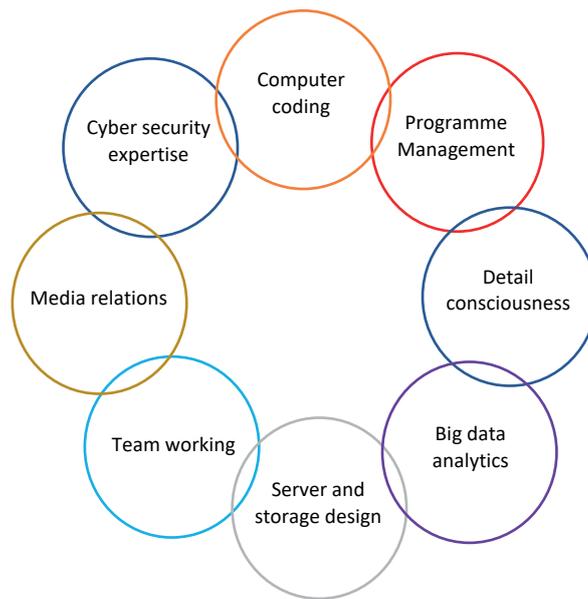
Skill and trait cluster profiles are useful when businesses want to bring a mixed group of people together, with a variety of skills and competencies, such that a maximum amount of 'brain power, creativity and innovation' collaborates to achieve desired outcomes.

For example, this could include:

- ◆ A group interested in diversity who will work together to make the organisation more inclusive
- ◆ A group of entrepreneurs all interested in making the workplace more human centred
- ◆ Customers of a product coming together to share how the product might be improved
- ◆ A group of commercial executives coming together to design a new marketing campaign
- ◆ New graduates from across different disciplines redesigning an induction programme

The list is as long as your imagination!

Modern employers are beginning to think about organisational working not simply in terms of 'capability' to do a single job, but also in terms of the clusters of skills, or the traits different people bring to multiple pieces of work. For example, a cluster profile for a group working on developing a new product might look like the following:



It's possible that one person could possess all of these skills and traits. It's more likely that the skills and traits required to complete the project could be done by a group of people – whose complimentary skills complete the cluster.

Here is another example for a group working on a new secure online banking system:



Clusters can be small and niche or much larger than the examples above.

When are cluster profiles particularly useful?

Cluster profiles are particularly useful when projects need multiple skills and traits to be successful.

They are useful if as a leader or manager you are trying to establish a team to collaborate on a unique or one off piece of work. They are also useful for small business that cannot afford multiple employees and instead are looking for those with broad based backgrounds, who can flex and fit into a variety of roles.

Millennials often think of themselves as more fluid and flexible entrepreneurs. With this in mind it's sometimes useful to describe skills and traits in this clustered way – showing the breadth and scope of what you are capable of. Remember though if you have specific qualifications and knowledge, it's often good to share this too.

Your skill and trait cluster

Have a go at creating a skill or trait cluster. This could be a representation of you – all the skills and traits you bring to work. Alternatively this might be about the skills and traits you need to bring together to achieve a project or collaborative piece of work.