General Questions/Communication Skills/Soft Skills

1. a) Tell us a bit about your background  - @ 3 minutes highlighting experience relevant to the position

I joined Fannie Mae in mid 2006 and worked in guarantee fee accounting, loan accounting. In 2010, I did project management professional certification and then took a manager position in modeling and analytics team.

There I have designed, developed and tested guarantee fee and loan accounting applications. I designed and developed both GFAS and PLAE data models and databases. I created and used SQL and UNIX scripts extensively for various data validation and reconciliation.

In M&A I helped them to resolve audit findings and significant deficiencies for 24 applications and EUCs.

After moving to Modeling and Analytics team, I streamlined and automated key production and testing processes in Loss Forecast, Loss allowance and Home Price area. I created and used SAS scripts and spreadsheets for data analysis and validation. I analyzed loss forecast production model inputs /outputs/results for trends and outliers, and present to internal and cross functional groups.

I was able to bring together different groups across the organization and establish an integrated production schedule. I organized and documented key procedures and job aids along with key contacts and stakeholders. I negotiated and established SLAs with key business and technology partners. I brought significantly by taking initiative to automate many manual production execution, data transfer and data validation. Then I built a high performing team almost from scratch. Recently me and part of my team moved to IT although our roles remained same.

Later I did CISM certification with ISACA and moved to enterprise data and established analytics Center of Excellence (COE) components from the ground up which is mostly formed by internally developed people. I created the COE strategy, training programs, user forums, best practices and governance models. I have also completed and Machine Learning specialty certification with AWS to help Fannie Mae the best advantage of AWS cloud services for Fannie Mae. Now Analytics COE has platform and COE services both on-premise and on cloud.

Requirements of this position grabbed my attention as they match closely to my skills and interest.

2. How do you acclimate yourself to a new work environment/project?

-- I do not wait for others to tell me what I need to do. I read existing documentations and knowledge sources.

-- I set up meetings with existing SMEs (subject matter experts) to get their input

-- I look to my manager to identify his or her priorities and those becomes my priorities

-- For technical staffs, I jump right in and look at existing architecture/design and other documentations.

3. What do you value the most in your job?

-- Challenging work

-- Good team environment

4. Tell me about a time when you worked on a project with competing priorities—where everything was high priority. How did you approach it?

6. Strengths

* Fast learner and hard working
* Depth of Technical and business experience
* Highly flexible with work scope and schedule. Can easily cope with multiple tasks and prioritize effectively
* Very organized and very efficient in planning, execution and monitoring
* Highly Team oriented, committed to knowledge sharing, skill building and self-development
* Positive attitude
* Enjoy coaching, mentoring, and developing high performing teams.
* Highly effective in driving a culture of innovation, cost-effectiveness and delivery excellence.

Weaknesses

* Sometimes I pay more attention to details to make sure that my work is perfect. It takes some extra time but I want to make sure that my process is well-thought out.

7. Tell me about a time when you had conflict in the team?

a) As an individual contributor:

Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person’s perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, and then I seek to work out a collaborative solution. I discuss the benefits of alternative options. At the end, I am open to others idea and always like to move to the solutions that brings the most positive outcome for the company.

b) Handling a conflict:

Yes, I handled conflict in the past. When any conflict happened in the team, first, I tried to analyze the nature and type of conflict. Then I met and asked questions to both parties. Most cases, I always tried to find either a collaborative (win-win) or compromising (mid range of both assertiveness and cooperativeness) solution. In some cases, I try accommodation or competition strategy if that are appropriate for the situation.

Not all conflicts are bad. Some task related conflict can improve team performance. One example is that there was a conflict about how the HPI comparison chart should be created and updated on monthly basis. Two persons prepared the slides in two different ways. Each person thought his one was the best. So, there was a conflict and I requested both to present their chart in the meeting. I encouraged each of them to listen others and give feedback. At the end we were able to choose a better solution that took input from both of them.

8. What is the most challenging situation you faced and how you handed.

There are some cases. There are challenging situations at quarter-end when more works need to be done with same amount of resources. Two things I do. First, I prioritize task as per urgency and importance. And then, I manage expectations about timing for the low important and non-urgent deliverables.

9. Why should I hire you?

You should hire me because I’m the best person for the job. I realize that there are other likely candidates who also have the ability to do this job.

Yet I bring some additional qualities that set me apart from others. I am very organized and able to gain credibility very easily. I am a team player and people like me for my openness and sincerity.

I am a fast learner and self motivated.

I have depth of technical and business experience especially on data management and quality controls.

I am very detail oriented but always maintain strategic focus.

I am highly flexible with work scope and schedule. I can easily cope with multiple tasks and prioritize effectively

I am very organized and very efficient in planning, execution and monitoring.

I am highly team oriented, committed to knowledge sharing, skill building and self-development

Above all I always have positive attitude.

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| **Specialized Skills** | **Examples** |
| Proven leadership, influencing and negotiation skills. | I built a high performing team from scratch. Negotiated and established SLAs for business and technology partners. Negotiated software and training costs. Negotiated consultant rates with vendor. |
| Easily able to build credibility across all levels of the organization and among staff and peers. | I built trust across internal and external team through high quality of services. I plan ahead and I never miss deadlines. I am very open and candid. I follow through what I commit. |
| Ability to delegate effectively to ensure execution against goals. | I know the strength of individual team members very well and I use that knowledge to delegate tasks effectively. I provide clear instruction and follow up the progress. I spend time to make sure that the team member has needed knowledge, resource and time to complete the task that I delegate. |
| High level of self-initiative required. | Integrated production schedule. Weekly updates of all non-routine tasks. Automation of manual work (Autosys implementation, Shell scripting, Accounting rule generation), |
| Ability to balance and execute multiple projects at once and deliver results under tight time constraints. | Manage 26 different application and EUCs. Supported many ad-hoc request in tight deadlines. |
| Exceptional project management and organization skills | PMP certified. I am reputed for my organization skill. I set reminders for me in the outlook. I plan ahead and set the deadlines in the outlook for my team so that nothing falls through crack. |
| Ability to organize and prioritize workload. | I use importance and urgency criteria to prioritize workloads. High important and urgent request gets 1st priority. If there is an important work but not urgent, or urgent but low impact task, I manage expectations and get agreement on a realistic date when the task can be completed. |
| Detail oriented and strong focus on data integrity and understanding. | Input file reviews. Production result reviews, performing controls, and certifying data. |
| Intuitively identifies process improvement opportunities through use of metrics and reporting. | Tableau dashboard. Reports on incidents, change requests, execution time. |
| Excellent communication skills. |  |
| Ability to manage conflict professionally and effectively. | When there is a conflict I try to understand both the parties involved in the conflict. I stay neutral. I ask question and listen both parties with respect without hurting their feelings. Then I summarize their perspectives. Then I try to find a collaborative solution. |
| Business Knowledge - strong understanding of NUC processes and data preferred; working knowledge of Fannie Mae budget process with focus on expense management. | QAS Quality control process. Loan data. Fannie Mae budget and expense management (61xxxx accounts), training, software purchase, software maintenance, travel exp. I am very good at excel and I used excel for budget forecast, tracking expense & accruals and finding variance. |

With my direct approach, I deal very candidly with people about performance, about things that need to be done. As a result of these I am able to build a high performing team. The other things that can set me apart are my strong analytical skill, and a real interest in business. As I know both Finance and IT, I can use a variety of tools to perform financial analysis faster than others.

Throughout the 15 years of my career, whenever I see a repetitive manual process, I use my IT skill to automate in simple way. For example, accounting matrix generation, sub-ledger set-up process (initializing a new user acceptance environment), SMS solution etc.

Achievements:

Error free execution for HPFA, LFM and ELRM for multiple months without any incidence  
• All production activities are planned and monitored using integrated schedule  
• There is no control lapse for any of the production execution.  
• Worked on building common understanding on LFM configuration files  
• Initiated discussion on understanding the impact of the changes in the LFM input files  
• Risk metrics are reviewed in advance and appropriate steps are planned for mitigation  
• Production procedures are updated with the recent changes. New procedure is developed for LAF.  
• Comprehensive list of controls are available for all EUCs.  
• Steps in the runbooks are reduced significantly using automation for file transfer and using Autosys for executions

Significantly improved LFM analysis capabilities  
• Started analysis on ELRM data and results  
• Performed ADW and TDR reconciliation for ELRM  
• Performed input file analysis and result validation for HPFA  
• Helped Credit Bureau database to reclassify into FR database  
• Guidance for improving peer review quality.  
• Developed thorough understanding on ELRM, HPFA, LFM, P-chart related controls.

• Arranged SAS training for the team  
• Held multiple ( more than 4) cross-training sessions for the team   
• Brought Raja, Jeannette, Sasanka and Hossain up to speed in a short time  
• Participated teambuilding events and lunch with the team

Provided and tested automation idea to Oakleaf for file transfer between UNIX to Windows for HPFA  
• Insisted the usage of EPF in HPFA to automate production file transfer to new down streams (CPA and CW). This was later implemented by BA&D Ops.  
• Completed the archiving policy and capacity planning document.   
• Provided following ideas for ELRM execution efficiency that was implemented as part of ELRM release 2.0  
o Rerun capability for data part  
o Moving to database with higher availabilities  
• Coordinated with governance and SOX team to reduce LAF overhead ( SDLC and CLAM )  

**10. What is your long-range objective?**

Within five years, I would like to become the best Financial Analysis director in Fannie Mae. I want to work toward becoming such a leader and the subject matter expert that others can trust. I wan to be a very effective and efficient in my work. And in doing so, I feel I’ll be better prepared to take on any greater responsibilities which might be available in the long term.

**11. Are you a team player?**

Yes, I’m very much a team player. I had always excellent feedback in my 360. Others enjoy working with me. I am a good listener. I am very much aware of team dynamics and always adjust my style individual to individual.

**12. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?**

I would say two words: leadership and vision.

The key quality in a successful manager should be leadership--the ability to be the visionary for the people who are working under him. A successful manager is the person who can set the direction for subordinates. The highest calling of a true leader is inspiring others to reach the highest of their abilities. The true leader creates such an environment where everybody is motivated and contributes their best.

Trustworthiness, integrity, and sound ethics are also key requirements for a successful manager and leader.

13. Imagine that you have been hired for this job. What is the most important thing on your to-do list on the first day of work?

First:

- Know the current objectives, priorities and expectations from the manager.

- Identify stakeholders

- Know the team – understand culture and norms

- Review current process against best practices and find any potential areas for improvement

- Get access to available documentations (SharePoint, hardcopies, archives etc)

- Schedule 1 to 1 with the SMEs and team members

Then:

Make a plan

* Short-term plan
  + Create a detail schedule
* Long-term plan
  + Create a high level schedule

Continue this answer to 14…

14. Based on what you already know what are the key things that you should focus.

Based on my last interviews, I listed down some points.

- Executing the models in production is a very manually intensive process. We can automate many of those tasks.

-Data from some of the interfaces comes as email. There are little control and traceability. For interface control, EPF or Synchrony can be implemented. For traceability or data lineage, source to target mapping should implemented.

- For repetitive production execution tasks, we can create a schedule and execute these tasks using the automated scheduler.

- We should plan risk management. We should identify, monitor and control risks related to change management. Thoroughly test each change before executing in production. SDLC should be implemented.

-There should be segregation of duty. Same person should not execute in production and lower environment. There should be some approval process to migrate the change in production.

15. What is the difference between individual contributor and manager?

As an effective manager, I need the ability to:

* Set team and individual goals
* Lead by example;
* Communicate critical information clearly, succinctly, and in a timely way;
* Respond quickly and decisively to changing situations as well as to others' ideas and needs;
* Motivate others to work effectively both as a team and individually;
* Listen to coworkers up and down the chain of command ;

16. Why do you want to leave the current position?

Requirements of this position grabbed my attention as it matches closely to my skills and interest. I worked in my last position about 3 years, now I am looking for a position where I can utilize my Finance, IT and general management skills.

Questions for them:

1. What are the 3 key priorities for your team?
2. What am I expected to accomplish in my first six months?
3. How will this position interact with other groups in Fannie Mae?
4. Are there existing deliverables and deadlines, and what are they?

One of my key tasks is to interact with various business units to make sure that all **financial data** are validated, certified and approved for production processing and downstream consumption. I understand Fannie Mae’s operational policies and procedures. Also, I know the right contacts in various Fannie Mae business and technology teams like REO, NSO, SIR, ADW, TIO etc, and so, I can get things done in time within Fannie Mae’s controlled environment and procedures. ))