



Selection & Assessment

Challenging Myths about Selection and Recruitment. Which selection methods do really make a difference?

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Executive summary

Many organizations use selection methods that are not valid based on myths surrounding selection and recruitment. This CQ Dossier describes and challenges those myths. Then, the dossier presents several valid selection methods that predict effective job performance. The dossier provides a general overview of the main selection methods that are well validated through research and science.

Introduction

Selection and Recruitment is one of the most important areas for organizations for investment in talent management. [Hiring talented individuals provides organizations with a competitive advantage](#). Organizations have become complacent about the impact of employees on organizational effectiveness yet one of the biggest assets they have is through the people who work for them; this leverage of people provides organizations with a competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994).

In recent years, Human Resources Management (HRM) has become more sophisticated in its scientific methods, particularly regarding data analysis (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). These techniques allow researchers and practitioners to identify and design effective selection and recruitment models to recruit talented employees. In recent years, the field of HRM has adopted quantitative-based methods to justify and validate prescriptions for recruitment and selection. These methods help challenge myths about selection and recruitment through demonstrating solid concurrent and predictive validity. This dossier describes those tools and methods that are effective for creating highly effective recruitment and selection procedures.

Myths of selection and recruitment

It is unfortunate that many organizations still rely on illogical and poorly tested assessments to evaluate candidates for job positions (Pulakos, 2005). It is important that organizations use methods that are proven to be scientifically valid in choosing candidates that will be excellent performers. There are also myths surrounding the

frequency of use of assessment tools like graphology which purports to reveal a candidate's character through their handwriting; however, there is little evidence that this method is a popular tool in Europe (Bangerter, Konig, Blatti, & Salvisberg, 2009). It is unfortunate that a large number of organizations use haphazard approaches to select job incumbents particularly as scientifically valid assessments are linked to organizational outcomes that enhance the financial wealth of the firm (Pulakos, 2005). One of the reasons for this is that there are several myths surrounding recruitment and selection that foster poor choices in assessment methods (Rynes, Colbert & Brown, 2002). Rynes and colleagues identified five major myths that Human Resource professionals believe about effective human resource practices.

First, HR professionals believe that screening applicants for conscientiousness yields better performers than screening applicants for intelligence. This is a fallacy because there is a preponderance of research demonstrating that tests of cognitive ability demonstrate the highest validity for job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). The second myth is that screening applicants for their values will yield better performers than screening for intelligence yet there is little evidence to support this view (Rynes et al., 2002). Third, HR professionals view integrity tests as not useful because job candidates misrepresent themselves on these types of tests. However, research has shown that integrity tests are valid predictors of job performance and remain valid even if candidates do fake their answers. Moreover, it is unclear how many applicants fake their responses (Berry, Sackett, & Wiemann, 2007). Fourth, despite evidence that the structured interviews are the best assessment of job performance, many HR professionals still believe that unstructured interviews with candidates yield better information than structured assessment processes (Rynes et al., 2002). Finally, HR professionals believe that the use of selection tests can create legal problems for organizations rather than to help them solve them and this is little evidence to support this myth (Rynes et al., 2002).

Predictors for recruitment and selection

The process used to evaluate job candidates and to select which ones to hire is called Personnel selection and has been an integral part of HRM practices since the beginning

of the twentieth century (Farr & Tippins, 2010). The best selection practices utilize a series of instruments or predictors to determine those candidates who are best suited for the job. Common predictors include biographical data (application forms, work history, past experience, and biographical information), cognitive ability tests, interviews, work samples, personality tests, job knowledge or aptitude tests, honesty/integrity tests, letters of recommendation, simulations, academic prowess (GPA and education level), and reference checks (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). In utilizing best assessment methods, organizations need to first conduct a job analysis to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are needed to perform the job affectively (Brannick & Levine, 2002).

Cognitive ability tests

Cognitive ability tests measure a variety of abilities including verbal, quantitative, reasoning and reading comprehension. As mentioned earlier, they are valid predictors of job performance and so are excellent choices for recruitment and selection because they can be utilized across a wide range of occupations and across industries (e.g., Ree, Earles, & Teachout, 1994). Cognitive ability tests typically consist of multiple-choice items that are administered via a paper-and-pencil instrument or computer.

Job knowledge tests

These tests are used to assess knowledge that is critical for the job (Pulakos, 2005). Typically, they are used to assess technical knowledge and can only be utilized if the person already has knowledge prior to starting the new job. They are not suitable if the applicant will be trained in job knowledge areas after hiring. Similar to cognitive ability tests, job knowledge tests can be administered using a computer or paper and pencil.

Personality tests

[Personality tests that assess traits relevant to job performance have been found to be valid measures of subsequent job performance](#) (Raymark, Schmit & Guion, 1997).

Utilizing the traits within the Big Five Personality Model is the optimal tool for prediction

of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Research has shown that conscientiousness is the best predictor of job performance yet some of the other traits are also predictors for specific types of jobs (Hough, 1992).

Biographical data

Resting on the idea that past behavior is a predictor of future behavior, biographical data utilizes questionnaires that ask job candidates questions that cover their backgrounds. These types of biographical inventory have also been shown to be valid predictors of job performance (Schoenfeldt, 1999).

Integrity tests

Integrity tests measure attitudes and experiences to evaluate a candidate's honesty, trustworthiness, and dependability (Sackett & Waneck, 1996). As mentioned previously, integrity tests are valid predictors of job performance and can be administered via paper and pencil or computer. Integrity tests utilize a multiple-choice format.

Structured interviews

[Structured interviews utilize a specific set of questions to determine whether candidates have the KSAs to perform the job effectively.](#) Unlike unstructured interviews, they are a valid predictor of job performance if interviewers receive training in how to conduct them effectively (Judge, Higgins & Cable, 2000).

The selection methods described in this dossier are valid predictors of job performance. There are other methods that can also be utilized, such as physical strength tests and situational judgement tests. These methods can be used if they are related to the criteria that is applicable for the organization. In choosing assessment methods for selection, organizations also need to consider the cost, validity, adverse impact (whether the test discriminates against protected groups) and applicant reactions. In conclusion, this dossier challenges the myths surrounding selection and recruitment methods and provides information on valid predictors of job performance.

Key take-aways

- Many organizations rely on poorly tested assessments to evaluate candidates for job positions
- There are several myths surrounding recruitment and selection that foster poor choices in assessment methods
- The best selection practices utilize a series of instruments or predictors to determine those candidates who are best suited for the job

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