

Assessment Center Trends

Assessment center issues that have emerged and the resulting trends

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Issue: ACs What Are They?

- ◆ Multiple Job Simulation Exercises
- ◆ Opportunity for Candidates to Demonstrate KSAs
- ◆ Standardized Evaluation by Multiple Trained Observers Using Multiple Testing Techniques
- ◆ “Not a Place”

Issue: Why Use ACs?

- ◆ Legal Issues
- ◆ Employee Associations
- ◆ Fairness
- ◆ Validity

Issue: How to Justify the Cost

- ◆ Public Sector: Primarily Consequences of Less Defensible Methods = Fear of Litigation
- ◆ Private Sector: Primarily Cost Benefit Analysis = Return on Investment (300+%)
- ◆ Public & Private = Higher Validity
 - ★ Private More a Utility Issue
 - ★ Public More a Face Validity and Candidate Acceptance Issue

Issue: Purpose of Assessment

or How are the Assessment Results Used?

- ◆ Employee Selection
- ◆ Promotion
- ◆ Career Development and Training
 - ★ Organizational Development
 - ★ Individual Development
 - ★ Skills Banking/Workforce Reallocation
 - ★ Targeted Training “Rifle vs Shotgun”

Issue: Candidate Orientation

- ◆ Reduce Test Anxiety
- ◆ “Level the Playing Field”
- ◆ Undo Misconceptions

Issue: Goals of Orientation vs Career Development vs Candidate Training

- ◆ Orientation = Reduce Test Stress
- ◆ Career Development = Skills Development
- ◆ Candidate Training = Make Money for Trainer

Issue: Candidate Orientation Methods

- ◆ Written Information
- ◆ Live Orientation Session(s)
- ◆ Video Tapes
 - ★ Viewed During Live Orientation
 - ★ Viewed at Work Sites
 - ★ Viewed at Home

Issue: What ACs Don't Measure Well

- ◆ Technical Knowledge - Better Methods Exist
- ◆ Past Performance/Track Record/Motivation on the Job
- ◆ Candidate May Have Skills, but May Not Apply those Skills on the Job

ACs = Skills Assessment Snapshot

“Not a Panacea!”

Issue: How to Score Candidates - the Search for the Best Scoring Model

- ◆ Consensus (Traditional)
- ◆ Mechanical (Statistical)
- ◆ Combination Methods

Issue: How Much Assessor Training?

- ◆ One Day vs Two Days or More
- ◆ Private Sector vs Public Sector
(Traditional Model vs Streamlined)
- ◆ Behavioral Recording vs Frame of Reference Training Model

Issue: What are ACs Actually Assessing?

- ◆ Behavioral Dimensions vs Exercise Performance (Exercise Effect)
- ◆ Dimensions vs Tasks vs Competencies...

KEY: Structured Evaluation of Job
Relevant Worker Characteristics

Issue: How to Reduce the Costs?

- ◆ Screening Down Candidate Group
 - ★ Technical Knowledge Written Tests
 - ★ Written Exercises (Inbaskets, etc.)
 - ★ Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs)

Some Jurisdictions using SJTs to screen down

- City of Anaheim, CA
- City of Lakeland, FL
- City of Minneapolis, MN
- City of St. Paul, MN
- East Bay Municipal Utility District, CA
- King County, WA
- State of New Jersey
- State of Nevada
- University of California Police Department
- Washoe County, NV

Sample SJT Item

You have noticed that there is a lack of cooperation and trust among the employees in the organization you manage. This counter-productive behavior is adversely affecting both the quality and the quantity of the work produced by the employees. You would . . .

- A. Inform the employees that failure to cooperate and work harmoniously will result in disciplinary action.**
- B. Bring in someone to do some team building with the employees.**
- C. Meet with the employees to discuss your observations and identify the cause of the interpersonal problems.**
- D. Change some of the work assignments in order to attain a more cohesive and cooperative work group.**

1. Most Likely _____ 2. Least Likely _____

Issue: How to Reduce the Costs?

- ◆ Streamlining the Process
 - ◆ Multiple Choice Inbaskets
 - ◆ Item-Rated Inbaskets
 - ◆ Multiple Hurdle AC Components
 - ◆ Reduction in Scope of AC
 - ◆ Less Exercises
 - ◆ Shorter Exercises
 - ◆ Assessor Checklists vs Narrative Descriptions

Issue: How to Reduce the Costs?

- ◆ Cross-Classification Assessment Centers
 - ◆ City of Los Angeles - combined testing for common management tasks
 - ◆ State of Alabama - one management AC for 27 management job classifications
 - ◆ State of New Jersey - day in the life of a supervisor test for all supervisory jobs

Issue: New Technology - How Used?

◆ Use of Computers

- ◆ Candidates - Use Optional vs Required

- ◆ Assessors - Rating Form Template

- ◆ Staff - Spreadsheets for Mechanical Scoring Models

Issue: New Technology - How Used?

◆ Use of Video

◆ Stimuli for Candidate Response

Example: Fire Code Inspection Video

◆ Video of Candidates' Responses

Example: Jefferson Co. Alabama

◆ Total Video Programs

Example: Washington State Patrol

Issue: New Exercise - SJT Spin Off

- ◆ The Multiple Situations Exercise:
 - ◆ Some Situations Require a Written Response
 - ◆ Some Situations Require an Oral Response with Preparation Time
 - ◆ Some Situations Require an Immediate Oral Response without Preparation Time

You Can Also Incorporate a Multiple-Choice Format SJT into AC as a Weighted Component.

Issue: Multiple Situations Exercise

Pros and Cons

- ◆ Advantage = Covers Multiple Types of Critical Job Tasks through the use of Multiple Scenarios
- ◆ Disadvantage = Not a True “Simulation” of the Job since Candidates Describe What They “Would” Do vs Demonstration of How They Would Do It
- ◆ Breadth of Exercise vs Depth

Some Jurisdictions using Multiple Situations Exercises

- City of Anaheim, CA
- City of Corpus Christi, TX
- City of Oakland, CA
- City of San Diego, CA
- City of St. Paul, MN
- East Bay Municipal Utility District, CA
- King County, WA, Sheriff's Department
- University of California - Davis Police

Assessment Center Trends:
The Last 28 Years!

OTHER ISSUES OR QUESTIONS?

Further Reading/Handouts

- ◆ Assessment Centers: What's New?
D.A. Joiner, IPMA-HR's Public Personnel Management Journal (PPM), Summer 2002
- ◆ Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations,
International Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines (2000) in PPM, Fall 2000

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HAPPY 25th ANNIVERSARY!

IPMAAC

**THANK YOU FOR THE
OPPORTUNITY!**

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