Bridging the Bureaucratic Morass: Successfully Navigating Common Obstacles to Successful Assessment and Hiring in the Public Sector

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The Politics of Public Agencies

Factors That Should Drive Assessment & Hiring Decisions

Factors That Should Not (But Often Do) Drive Assessment & Hiring Decisions
Situations Where Politics Can Prevent Optimal Selection Processes

- Introducing new processes or best practices
- Setting of cut scores
- Weighting of test components
- Selection of tests and exclude candidates
- Setting minimum qualifications
- Getting commitment for validation projects
- Properly evaluating adverse impact and diversity

Political Threats to Successful Assessment Processes

- Pressure to use suboptimal processes or techniques
- Withholding information
- Denial of necessary resources
- Lack of support or participation
- Sabotage
- Threat of (or actual) lawsuits
- Misrepresentation tocloud
- Refusal to verify results

Political Threats to Successful Assessment Processes

- Pressure to use suboptimal processes, techniques, and consultants
- Withholding information
- Denial of necessary resources
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- Sabotage
- Threat of (or actual) lawsuit
- Misrepresentation in the media
- Refusal to certify results
Proven Strategies

Build Long-term Relationships
- Be visible
- Gain trust of client in advance of project
- Build partner relationship
- Establish your credibility
- Demonstrate fairness and lack of bias
- Show that you have their best interests at heart
- Establish rapport and communication channels

Learn the Organization
- Organizational structure
- Key decision makers and potential advocates
- Potential resources available for project
- Culture and values
- Initiatives that may impact the project
- The lingo
- Develop institutional memory—1 engen (learned)

Frame Projects in Terms of Stakeholder Motivations
- Success is determined by stakeholder definition of success
- Identify stakeholder values and motivations
- Find out what the stakeholders hope to achieve from project
- Frame your discussions around these motivations
- Focus on benefits of project before discussing needed resources
- When project benefits are clear and valued:
  - Stakeholders will be more willing to participate
  - Stakeholders will be more willing to sacrifice for project
Establish Partnership Role for Projects

- Stakeholders can be proponents, opponents, or neutrals.
- Stakeholder expectations, investments, and support are more important in project success than feasibility.
- Partners change: increase, risks, and problems.
- Establish your role as a partner or peer.
- Clearly establish roles and responsibilities:
  - You are responsible for process.
  - Client is responsible for content, resources, and implementation.
  - You are both responsible for communication, public support of the project, and responsiveness to problems.

Establish Agreement

- Unwritten agreement is critical.
- Areas of needed agreement:
  - Scope of the project
  - Definition of success
  - Project schedule
  - Project rules
  - Format and frequency of communication
  - Project tasks
  - Governance
- Establish and reinforce agreement after every substantial change.
- When appropriate, establish agreement in writing.

Measure! Measure! Measure!

It is frightening how often vital decisions are made without any appropriate data and information.

- Without data, decisions are often driven by political forces, misinformation, assumptions, rumors, or guesswork.

To be useful, data must be:
- Collected
- Integrated
- Easily verifiable
- Organized into easily understood analytic metrics
- Complete and accurate
- Relevant
- Tied to project goals and partner motivations

Benefits of Good Measurement

- Allows you to demonstrate your value.
- Allows you to conduct cost-benefit analyses of different alternatives.
- Allows you to accurately evaluate and improve your processes.
- Allows you to dispel misinformation.
- Gives your arguments greater weight.
- Can protect you from lawsuits.
Ensure Strong Communication

- Ask “Why?”
- Frame communications around strategic goals, belief systems, and areas of agreement
- Provide information that reduces fear of the unknown
- Confront rumors and misinformation
- Meet with stakeholders at the end of project to close the loop and trumpet successes

Communication Guidelines

- Avoid emotional responses
- Accept blame and share credit
- When confronting a roadblock, provide options and discuss benefits and drawbacks
- Find a way to say “yes”
- Take a stand when appropriate

Effectively Utilize Outside Consultants

Outside consultants can be extremely helpful when:
- Prior trust has not been established
- Situations are highly political
- Situations are highly emotional
- Agreement on goals or objectives cannot be reached
- Your message is falling on deaf ears

Write targeted and detailed RFPs—Make sure you get the right consultant