Pre-selection strategies

Contents

Introduction 3
  Learning outcome 3

Recruitment and selection: pre-selection strategies 5
  Definitions and concepts 6
  Issues for consideration in the selection process 6
  Short-listing applicants 10
  Developing selection criteria 10

Testing 12
  The tests available 14

Interviews 16
  Evaluating candidates 17
We will concentrate on the various pre-selection strategies necessary to help you make the right choice from among the potential employees who have responded to your recruitment actions.

If your recruitment strategies have been effective, you will have been successful in attracting only those applicants who could realistically do the job. Choosing from among these applicants and adopting techniques and approaches that enhance your reputation, as an equal opportunity employer, is the next step in the process. As this is a vital phase for both the employer and the applicant, it also has the potential for high risk for both parties.

If the employer is not careful, the opportunity for a competent employee to be chosen to fill the vacancy may be lost. A less competent employee may be chosen and their services may eventually need to be terminated with the resultant probability for an unfair dismissal case being mounted against the employer. By the same token, if all applicants are not treated in a professional and equitable manner, there may be a case for litigation against the employer, with the probability of poor publicity as well as financial penalties being imposed.

Learning outcome

On completion of this section you should be able to:

- design and implement a reliable and valid selection system.

Reflect on your current knowledge

In order to achieve this outcome you will need to have the following skills and knowledge as listed in the table on the next page.

- Please use the checklist to reflect on how much you know already.
- Tick the relevant boxes.
- The areas that you have checked I need to learn this or I have some knowledge of are the pages in this section that may require your special attention.
We will continue this reflection exercise at the beginning of each section in this learning resource on recruitment and selection.

We hope you get into the habit of reflecting on (evaluating) your skills. It is a skill and attitude that you will find invaluable in your job and in your daily life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge/skill</th>
<th>I can do this now</th>
<th>I have some knowledge of this</th>
<th>I need to learn this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Describe the sequence and content of a structured selection process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discuss methods of candidate evaluation and prepare an evaluation sheet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activity 1

Take a moment and think about your own selection experiences.

1. When do you feel that the selection process really began?

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

2. What actions did you and the potential employer take to advance the process?

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

3. What sources of information did both you and the employer access to help to determine if you should be interviewed as a possible appointment to the position?

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
Definitions and concepts

Your responses to the questions above have given you an opportunity to reflect on your own experiences with the selection process. As an applicant you will obviously have a different perspective to that of the employer. As a HR specialist you will have a number of roles in this area – a planner, recruiter and selector as well as an advisor and mentor to others in your organisation who may be involved in these processes.

Making decisions about whether to interview an applicant, as with all other aspects of the employment relationship, requires appropriate information that is valid and reliable. Your recruitment strategies will hopefully have netted a very good selection of potential employees, all of whom could effectively perform the duties of the position. You do not however have time to interview all applicants.

If you are using the services of an agency, you will only be provided with a short-list of people whom the agency has assessed against the criteria you have helped to develop and believes are most suitable. This process is also sometimes referred to as culling, where the majority of applicants are eliminated in order to leave only those people most likely to be selected. It should be obvious by now that EEO considerations will be paramount at this particular stage of the overall process.

The job/person specification as well as the job description will form the basis of your pre-selection strategies. Résumés, letters of application, test results and any other selection devices are also useful sources of information for this purpose. When screening suitable applicants, it is important to be objective and open-minded about the potential each applicant has to be successful in the job. Any specific gaps identified in these resources can be noted and raised during the interview.

Issues for consideration in the selection process

Bias

Every person in the selection process has their own experience, their own history, values and attitudes. Using a panel interview with a representative sample of people will help to minimise this potential for bias. Reference checks, test results, samples of the applicant’s work as well as the interview itself, will provide you with an array of evidence of each person’s competence to do the job – using each effectively will minimise bias and deliver a better result.
Selection panels

One common problem with selection panels is the tendency towards group think. As criteria are applied in a cull, there is always a wish for the group to be unanimous. A unanimous group is easier to work with and is more likely to reach consensus more quickly – so beware! It can be hard for an individual to disagree with others in a selection panel unless that individual has clear evidence and a strong, assertive personality.

Another problem is the differing perception of job specification criteria. The selection criteria must be carefully discussed at the beginning of the cull to avoid wasting time and getting involved in a disagreement at a later stage. This is especially important where a panel carry out individual culls first due to geographically separate locations.
Sequence of a structured selection process

A typical selection process may include but not be limited to the following:

**Figure 1:** Typical selection process
Activity 2

Consider the flowchart in Figure 1 from an employer’s and applicant’s perspective.

1  Do you feel that it covers all the essential steps in the process adopted by your organisation?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2  In your experiences as an applicant, which steps have generally been completed in a professional and courteous manner?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3  Which parts of the process have been neglected and what impact did this have on your opinions about applying for future vacancies that may occur with the same employer?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
Short-listing applicants

Short-listing or culling is undertaken in order to reduce the pool of applicants to a size that can be efficiently interviewed. As interviews are expensive, we should only target those applicants who thoroughly meet the specified criteria and warrant further assessment via an interview or by completing relevant tests. As mentioned previously, this is where a well designed, job specific application form will help to streamline the process as it provides the desired information in an efficient format. If you are using a panel, they will need to be involved in this process.

Stages of the short-listing process

The approach taken to short-listing will be dependent on the quality and quantity of the applications received. The two approaches are:

*The initial listing*

Applicants are selected on the basis of meeting the essential criteria.

*The competitive listing*

If after the initial list is prepared, there are still too many applicants to be interviewed, a competitive list is prepared. This is done by assessing applicants who have the most recent, relevant and substantial skills, abilities and/or experience relevant to the selection criteria. The end result is a list of applicants who are most competitive compared to each other and to the essential and desirable criteria. Selection on the basis of merit is always the fundamental principle in the process.

In the short-listing process, it is critical to always assess applicants to the standard required for the job. To do otherwise, would result in even the most suitable within the group of applicants, potentially being below that standard necessary to competently perform all of the duties in the position.

Developing selection criteria

Following is an example of a typical public sector short-listing (cull) sheet *(TAFE NSW 2000)*
**Activity 3**

Investigate and critically examine an assessment instrument such as a short-listing or culling sheet/form used in the selection process either in your workplace or one with which you are familiar. You should consider legislative requirements as well as efficiency.
A test is a uniform situation in which people are asked to perform particular, standardised tasks. Psychological tests are used to measure individual differences, including abilities, interests, personality characteristics, and intelligence.

In recent years, tests have become both more attractive and more controversial. Employers have turned to tests in an attempt to develop objective, cost-effective ways of identifying the best job candidates. Applicants, employees and minority group advocates, on the other hand, have challenged tests as discriminatory and intrusive. To the extent that you test applicants for skills, knowledge and abilities, you should make certain that the tests are related to an essential job function and that reasonable accommodations are made for any person with special needs.

Most experts agree that properly validated tests are a useful supplement to the other selection devices that employers usually rely upon, such as interviews and reference checks. Used in conjunction with these, tests can help employers make a more effective assessment of the relative merits of competing candidates. However, tests can be used to discriminate, and they can be intrusive. Because many people are sensitive to these issues, and there are laws that must be complied with, employers should be cautious about using tests. We must remember that the goal is to select better people, not to pry unnecessarily into candidates’ lives.

An interesting recent development is using computers to administer tests. Advantages of computerised tests for personnel use include savings in the expense of psychologists’ time, greater uniformity in the way a test is given, being able to make complex comparisons and calculations and being able to provide results almost instantly. Most tests that have been computerised were originally designed as pencil-and-paper tests.

Your selection methods should complement each other and satisfy the requirements of reliability and validity as well as allowing evaluation against the essential and desirable criteria. For example, the criteria that are used in the culling (or selection or short-listing) process to arrive at the people you want to see, should be reflected in the questions developed for the interview stage. The competencies required for a position should influence the testing to be used.

Organisational consultants specialising in this area have reported that about a quarter of all companies test applicants and this percentage is growing as
employers look for greater predictability in making a successful selection. Psychometric testing includes ability testing of verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning, motivational questioning and more frequently actual job simulation via assessment centres.

The Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) accredits some tests for use by lay people and others for use by trained psychologists only.

There are four types of testing available to you. These are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of function</th>
<th>Type of testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills/knowledge</td>
<td>verbal, numerical, speed, spatial, strength, coordination, perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude</td>
<td>keyboard, technical, foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>motivation, disposition, likes and dislikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>what they have done, what they would do, assessment centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test that is used for each category of employee depends on the cost and should be determined by the essential selection criteria and the quality of output required.

Many tests will not measure what you are seeking. Their reliability and validity must be carefully checked to ensure that results are accurate. Be very wary of applying standardised tests across categories of employees on a general basis. Be sure that by finding out whether they want to sit under a palm tree reading a book or participating in a team sport is testing what you are after.

The information collected must be safeguarded for privacy at all times.

Common tests used in Australia include the:

- Myers-Briggs series (this can be administered by lay people upon accreditation)
- Catell 16 PFQ
- MMPI
- Humms-Wadsworth.

These have been used by psychologists from Chandler, as well as Coopers and Lybrand. Generally, consultants advise clients that testing represents maybe ten percent of the recruitment and selection process at best. A good behavioural interview and an analysis of competencies will significantly add to the validity and reliability of the final decision.

An assessment centre is a physical environment that attempts to predict future performance. It does this by getting candidates to perform in
The tests available

Role of tests

It is important to recognise the role and limitations of using tests. They can help to validate the selection of a new employee as well as the transfer or promotion of existing staff.

Types of tests

Tests fall into three main types ie general ability, specific aptitude and personality type tests.

Features of good tests

The essence of a good test, regardless of its primary focus, is reliability and validity.

Problems of using tests

Tests are not without their critics. This generally stems from issues of relevance to the job criteria, the concept of personality and the ability of candidates to fake the results, the reliability of the test as a predictor of on the job success and finally EEO-related issues.

Evaluating tests

Activity 4

Given your readings on the use of tests within the recruitment and selection process, make notes on the following questions:

1. What types of tests would you consider appropriate for your position?
2 Why might you recommend the use of such tests?

3 What will you test?

4 How will you ensure conformity to both the spirit and intent of the relevant EEO legislation?
Now that you have considered a range of pre-selection strategies, it is time to discuss the most popular selection technique—the interview. The following table identifies some of the most recognised interview techniques. Using the information in your text as well as conducting your own research from at least one other source, identify the features, advantages and limitations of each technique.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview type</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview type</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 6

Consider your own job—choose and justify an appropriate selection technique(s).

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Evaluating candidates

Depending on the type of interview you decide to conduct, the method you choose to evaluate the applicants you interview may vary somewhat but will still be linked to the particular criteria stipulated for the job. The following
format uses a narrative text description of the applicant’s competencies against the job competencies:

**Interview assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of applicant</th>
<th>Comments against selection criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The panel should sign each comments page and make additional copies if needed.

The reality of most jobs, however, is that certain aspects are more important than others and are therefore *weighted* accordingly. Applicants may also be evaluated by the interviewer and given a numeric *score* against each criterion to indicate their degree of competency in that particular area.

An example is shown as Table 1.
### Table 1: Interview assessment form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Applicant 1</th>
<th>Applicant 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weighting (max 5)</td>
<td>Score (max 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific job competencies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and enthusiasm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral expression</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative and self-reliance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Alertness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating</td>
<td></td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of the interview assessment form is to:

- record evaluations of each interview
- ensure interview agreement by having the same standard of judgement for all applicants across all interviewers
- validate the interview process as completed forms are compared with job/person specifications and evaluated against other candidates.
Activity 7

Analyse the information contained in the above interview assessment form.

1 Based on the final score alone, which applicant would seem to meet the needs of the job?

2 What are the details telling you about the applicant which may require future action on your part if that person is finally chosen?

3 Because this form captures the applicant’s performance during the interview only, what other sources of information are available to you to help you in making the final decision?
Check your progress

To assist you in reviewing your understanding of this section, go through the following checklist. Those competencies that you ticked *No* to or *I need to review* should be studied again. You can contact your teacher if you need clarification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I need to review</th>
</tr>
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<td>• Describe the sequence and content of a structured selection process</td>
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