

Why the Assessment Centre is one of the Most Preferred Selection Tools

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One of the most competency-based recruitment and selection method is the assessment centre and is revolutionizing the entire process of recruitment. The Assessment Centres involve the multiple observation of candidates where the selectors attempt to view candidates' performance over some time in various situations to assess their managerial potential and the potential candidates will be assessed against certain selected competencies depending on the role. Woodruffe (2009) defines competencies as the set of behaviour patterns that the incumbent needs to bring to a position to perform its tasks and functions with competence. According to Wolf and Jenkins (2006), competency-based Assessment Centres helps in recruiting quality candidates.

According to Bird and Stevens (2013), effective assessment and measurement of leadership competencies is an important undertaking for organisations operating in a global environment. While a plethora of tools are touted as effective for assessing global leadership competencies, most of these assessment tools are paper and paper-pencil questionnaire tests measuring personality or attitudinal competency components and there is a dearth of research examining their criterion-related validity. The Assessment Centres have proven construct, content and criterion-related validity as well as notable levels of utility for both selection and development talent management objectives(Hoffman,2015).

As one example of a recent content analysis and mapping review of literature, Bird(2013), categorized 160 global leadership competency terms found in the extant literature into three broad competencies related to business and organizational acumen, managing people and relationships and managing self. According to Conger and O'Neill (2012), rigorous assessment of global leadership competencies serves as the foundation of effective talent management practices for global leaders.

According to Barrick (2011), one of the advantages of assessment centres as a measurement tool include their reliance on multiple raters and multiple methods/exercises to assess multiple leadership performance dimensions or competencies identified as important by the job analysis.

It is important to note that the important process in developing an assessment centre is the identification and definition of competencies for a particular position. The competency modelling process includes an analysis of the job situation, tasks, and contextual factors on which to focus, as well as identification of the behaviours, skills and attributes needed to be successful in the identified job situation.

One of the reasons why assessment centres are used in recruitment is that there are objective and unlike mere interviews, there are not prone to:

- Interview bias

- The halo effect
- The cloning effect
- Subjective opinions of different interviewers

It is important to note that assessment centres are far more objective than other selection tools like unstructured interviews.

Yet another advantage of the assessment centre is that it gives the employers a chance to see the candidates in action. Instead of merely relying on self-assessment during interviews, assessment centres make it easier to assess and compare candidates who appear to be of equal quality on paper but fare very different in a real-world situation.

These assessment centres also allow the employers to simulate different scenarios typical to the role and see how the candidates fare. For example in a leaderless group discussion the candidates might be needed to work together on a given business problem to see which roles they take within a team, how they interact, influence, communicate, problem solve and work effectively with others.

The assessment centres also have the advantage of reinforcing the employers' brand. The prospective applicants who turn up for assessment centres by word of mouth tend to spread the gospel about the engaging part of assessment centres and this gives the employer the chance to create a positive impression in all the high-quality candidates who attend the assessment centre sessions.

Also with assessment centres, it is possible to hire subjects based on merit rather than subjectiveness. The research evidence indicates that with assessment centres, measurement evidence and evaluation is a bit thorough, normalised against a broad curve of candidates and recorded. This is more objective than in a single interview where just taking mere notes can be subjective.

Based on the above discussion any progressive organisation should adopt assessment centres as one of their recruitment and selection processes given its advantages.

Source:

Farnham, D. and Stevens, A. (2000). 'Developing and implementing competency-based recruitment and selection in a social services department.'

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