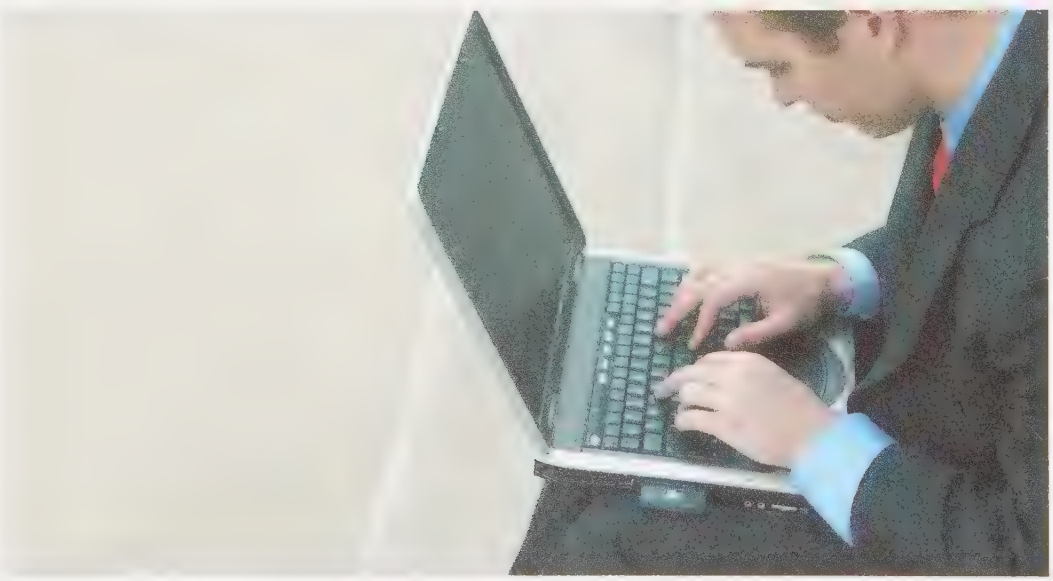
CHAPTER 5

Selecting Employees

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

LO1	Identify the elements and legal requirements of the selection process.
LO2	Define ways to measure the success of a selection method.
LO3	Compare some of the common methods used for obtaining and verifying candidate information.
LO4	Describe the major types of employment tests.
LO5	Discuss how to conduct effective interviews and make and communicate the selection decision.



Ingram Publishing

A Danish training and consulting firm called Specialisterne recruits people on the autism spectrum for companies in need of skilled workers.

Valuing Workers with Autism

Shawn Bolshin is a 30-year old university graduate with exemplary analytical skills. He has been working in Toronto for CIBC for the past two years in their information security department and is considered a "rising star" due to his knack for uncovering difficult to spot security breaches. "I'm not, like, that different," Shawn says hesitantly, "but I do have that ability to see those details and things and have a much tighter focus on things." Bolshin has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Although people on the autism spectrum often demonstrate "trustworthiness, strong memories, reliability, adherence to rules, and attention to detail," social communications like interviews may be awkward and uncomfortable. And although the majority of people with autism have average or above-average intelligence, most college-educated adults with autism are underemployed.

SAP, a global software company headquartered in Germany, also recognizes the value of hiring people with autism. For example, people with ASD may have high-structured thinking patterns including careful attention to detail. For some jobs, such as writing manuals and debugging software, these ways of thinking are exactly what employers like SAP need. SAP tested its recruitment of workers with autism in Germany and India; based on the pilot program's success, it rolled out the effort to Canada, Ireland, and the United States.

A Danish training and consulting firm called Specialisterne recruits people on the autism spectrum for companies in need of skilled workers. Workshops are used to screen candidates and are focused on completing complex tasks like building and testing a robot, rather than relying on interviews. Those who pass the screening are referred to a growing list of successful organizations including CIBC, SAP, TD Canada Trust, and Shoppers Drug Mart. Luisa Delgado, a member of SAP's executive board, described the competitive advantage of her organization's experience: "Only by employing people who think differently and spark innovation will SAP be prepared to handle the challenges of the 21st century."[1]

Introduction

Recruitment (Chapter 4) together with selection occupies a central place in talent management and organizational strategy that is increasingly referred to as talent acquisition. This strategic role that recruitment and selection play in organizations has triggered many new developments and approaches that have "expanded traditional conceptualizations of recruitment and selection practices," and we will include a discussion of several of these emerging developments in this chapter.[2]

The organization's decisions about selecting people are central to its ability to survive, adapt, and grow. Selection decisions become especially critical when organizations face tight labour markets or must compete for talent with other organizations in the same industry. If a competitor keeps getting the best applicants, the remaining companies have to make do with who is left. Hiring decisions are about acquiring the talent who will perform well in the job and in the organization. Any organization that appreciates the competitive edge provided by good people must take the utmost care in choosing its members.

This chapter will familiarize you with ways to increase the effectiveness of employee selection. The chapter starts by describing the selection process, examining the importance of candidate experience, and discussing how to evaluate possible methods for carrying out the selection process. It then takes an in-depth look at the most widely used methods: applications and résumés, employment tests, and interviews. The chapter wraps up by describing the process by which organizations arrive at and communicate hiring decisions.

What Are the Steps in the Selection Process?

Through the process of selection, organizations make decisions about who will be chosen to fill job openings. Selection begins with the candidates identified through recruitment and attempts to reduce their number to the individuals who are most likely to be the best performers in the available jobs and who will support the culture of the organization. At the end of the process, the selected individuals are placed in jobs with the organization.

The process of selecting employees varies considerably from organization to organization and from job to job. At most organizations, however, selection includes the steps illustrated in Figure 5.1. First, a human resources professional reviews the applications received to see which meet the requirements of the job. For candidates who meet the requirements, the organization administers tests and reviews work samples to assess the candidates' abilities. Those with the best abilities are invited to participate in one or more interviews. Often, supervisors and team members are involved at the interview stage of the process. By this point, the decision makers are beginning to form conclusions about which candidates are likely to be the best performers. For the top few candidates, the organization should check references and conduct background checks to verify that the organization's information is correct. Then supervisors, teams, and other decision makers select a person to receive a job offer. In some cases, the candidate may negotiate with the organization regarding salary, benefits, and the like. If the candidate accepts the job, the organization places him or her in that job.

The ease of applying online has made this processing overwhelming for many recruiters. A simple job posting

FIGURE 5.1

Steps in the Selection Process

online could generate hundreds of responses in one day. Many employers are automating much of the selection process with an **applicant tracking system (ATS)**, which is a software application that streamlines the flow of information between job seekers, HR staff, and hiring managers. As organizations expand their corporate websites into interactive career centres, applicant tracking systems provide capabilities including multilingual support for global locations; pre-screening of applications and résumés for education, specific KSAOs and/or competencies, and experience; and generation of applicant confirmation letters. Applicant tracking systems also support various data handling and report generation requirements associated with hiring employees; for example, storing résumés, tracking candidate sources, and connecting applications to specific hiring managers or job openings. By automating the process to match available talent with current job opportunities, the efficiency and speed of the overall hiring process is improved. Organizations can streamline the process, build relationships with candidates, cut hiring cycle-time, and increase the probability of hiring an available and interested candidate.[3] Some even predict outcomes of hiring candidates with particular qualities.[4]

applicant tracking system (ATS) A software application that streamlines the flow of information between job seekers, HR staff, and hiring managers.

How does an organization decide which of these elements to use, and in what order? Some organizations simply repeat a selection process that is familiar. If members of the organization underwent job interviews, they conduct job interviews, asking familiar questions. However, what organizations should do is to create a selection process in support of its job descriptions and specifications. In Chapter 3, we explained that a job specifications identifies the skills and abilities required for successfully performing a job. The selection process should be set up in such a way that it lets the organization identify people who have the necessary KSAOs and/or competencies.

This kind of strategic approach to selection requires ways to measure the effectiveness of selection tools. From science, we have basic standards for this:

- The selection method provides reliable information.
- The method provides valid information.
- The information can be generalized to apply to the candidates.
- The method offers high utility (practical value).
- The selection criteria are legal.

The Candidate Experience

The **candidate experience** is a job seeker's perception of and response to an employer's talent acquisition process. In turn, candidate experience is a critical determinant of the organization's reputation and employer brand. A positive candidate experience can result in more and potentially better applicants, hires, and referrals, and reduce the hiring costs and time to fill vacancies. However, news of negative candidate experience can be rapidly shared through social media and employer review sites like Glassdoor.[5]

candidate experience A job seeker's perception of and response to an employer's talent acquisition process.

Candidate experience also impacts business results when people who have a poor candidate experience withdraw their support as a customer and tell others in their personal and professional networks. Recent research conducted by Talent Board, a non-profit organization focused on elevating and promoting quality candidate experience, reported that candidates share their positive experiences with their inner circles publicly online (social media, Glassdoor, etc.) 77 percent of the time and their negative experiences 61 percent of the time. When job seekers have a highly positive "5 Star" candidate experience, they are 74 percent more likely to increase their business

relationship with the potential employer—even when they are not hired or become a finalist for the job. However, when job seekers have a negative "1 Star" candidate experience, 46 percent will sever their business relationship with the potential employer. The Evidenced-based HRM case at the end of the chapter examines research conducted by IBM's Smarter Workforce Institute about the impact of candidate experience and how Johnson & Johnson recently transformed its talent acquisition process to provide a transparent and compelling experience for job seekers.[6]

What Are the Legal Standards for Selection?

Whether selecting a new employee or promoting an employee from within the organization, the selection process needs to be conducted in a way that meets human rights and privacy requirements. Human rights legislation and privacy legislation described in Chapter 2 have implications for the selection process.

- The interview needs to be conducted in a way that candidates can be assessed without drawing out information that is not relevant to the job being filled. As summarized in Table 5.1, the organization may not ask questions on an application form or in an interview that gathers information about prohibited grounds of discrimination, even indirectly. For example, asking candidates for the dates they attended high school might indirectly gather information about applicants' age.
- Interview notes are made by interviewers to help distinguish among candidates. Even if these notes are used only by the interviewers, they cannot identify or distinguish candidates based on any of the prohibited grounds of discrimination (e.g., "black woman," "50-ish," "male with Irish accent," would be inappropriate to include in interview notes).[7]
- Candidates must provide their consent before a background or reference check can be conducted. Because background and reference checks may unearth information about protected grounds such as age or religious affiliation, or other personal information, human rights commissions recommend that the applicant should first receive a conditional job offer. The employer's conditional job offer is offered subject to a successful background and reference check.

TABLE 5.1

Guidelines for Applications and Interviews

Subject	Avoid Asking	Preferred	Comments
Name	• about name change: whether it was changed by court order, marriage, or other reason. • for maiden name.		Ask after selection if needed to check on previously held jobs or educational credentials.
Address	for addresses outside Canada.	Ask place and duration of current or recent address.	
Age	for birth certificates, baptismal records, or about age in general.	Ask applicants whether they are eligible to work under Canadian laws regarding age restrictions.	If precise age is required for benefit plans or other legitimate purposes, it can be determined after selection.
Sex	about pregnancy, childbearing plans, or child care arrangements.	Ask applicant if the attendance requirements can be met.	During the interview or after selection, the applicant, for purposes of courtesy, may be asked which of Dr., Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. is preferred.
Marital status	• whether the applicant is single, married, divorced, engaged, separated, widowed, or living common-law. • whether the applicant's spouse may be transferred. • about the spouse's employment.	If transfer or travel is part of the job, the applicant can be asked whether they can meet these requirements. Ask whether there are any circumstances that might prevent completion of a minimum service commitment.	Information on dependants can be determined after selection if necessary.

(*continued on next page*)

TABLE 5.1

Guidelines for Applications and Interviews (*continued*)

Subject	Avoid Asking	Preferred	Comments
Family status	• about number of children or dependants. • about child care arrangements.	Ask if the applicant would be able to work the required hours and, where applicable, overtime.	Contacts for emergencies and/or details on dependants can be determined after selection.
National or ethnic origin	• about birthplace, nationality of ancestors, spouse, or other relatives. • whether born in Canada. • for proof of citizenship.	Ask if the applicant is legally entitled to work in Canada.	Documentation of eligibility to work (papers, visas, etc.) can be requested after selection.
Photographs	for photo to be attached to applications or sent to interviewer before interview.		Photos for security passes or company files can be taken after selection.
Religion	• about religious affiliation. • for references from clergy or religious leader. • whether the applicant will work a specific religious holiday.	Explain the required work shift, and ask whether such a schedule poses problems for the applicant.	Reasonable accommodation of an employee's religious beliefs is the employer's duty.
Disability	• for a list of all disabilities, limitations, or health problems. • whether the applicant drinks or uses drugs. • whether the applicant has ever received psychiatric care or been hospitalized for emotional problems. • whether the applicant has received workers' compensation.	Disclose any information on requirements or standards early in the process. Then ask whether the applicant has any condition that might affect ability to do the job.	A disability is relevant to job ability only if it: • threatens the safety or property of others. • prevents the applicant from safe and adequate job performance even when reasonable efforts are made to accommodate the disability.
Pardoned conviction	• whether an applicant has ever been convicted. • whether the applicant has ever been arrested. • whether the applicant has a criminal record.	If bonding is a job requirement, ask whether the applicant is eligible.	Inquiries about criminal record or convictions are discouraged unless related to job duties.
Sexual orientation	about the applicant's sexual orientation.		Contacts for emergencies and/or details on dependants can be determined after selection.

Note: This table provides examples and is not intended as a complete listing of all guidelines. The examples are based on federal human rights legislation; some provincial laws vary and may affect these examples.

Source: "Guide to Screening and Selection in Employment," Canadian Human Rights Commission, March 2007, pp. 6–10, www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/guide-screening-and-selection-employment. Reproduced with the permission of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

An important principle of selection is to combine several sources of information about candidates, rather than relying solely on interviews or a single type of testing. The sources should be chosen carefully to relate to the characteristics identified in the job description (see the HR How-To). When organizations do this, they are increasing the validity of the decision criteria. They are more likely to make hiring decisions that are fair and unbiased. They also are more likely to choose the best candidates.

HR How-To

Using Data Analytics to Support Fair Hiring Decisions

As companies get increasingly sophisticated about collecting and analyzing data, they can apply those skills to employee selection. But the selection criteria need to be fair and free from illegal discrimination.

- Understand the jobs, company, and data well enough to develop a model explaining why criteria matter. A company that collects a lot of data can eventually find relationships between some variables and superior performance. Suppose you find that people from certain postal codes are less likely to quit. If you don't dig further into what it is about people from those postal codes, you could wind up making hiring choices that show a pattern of discrimination—and don't select for important qualities behind the numbers.
- Use analytics to test whether assumptions about job requirements really are relevant. A company that routinely selects for workers with a more than 85 percent postsecondary average can gather data to see whether this requirement is actually associated with success. Perhaps someone with a 75 percent average and certain experiences performs even better.
- Use analytics methods to remove irrelevant criteria from the selection process. For example, having a computer do the initial screening removes the potential for unconscious bias related to factors such as people's names or photographs.
- Create robust processes. Just knowing that you want certain characteristics doesn't mean the company will hire great people. Ensure the selection tools, including questions asked in interviews, are effective (reliable, valid, and so on). Ensure that the process is efficient and treats all candidates with respect.
- Apply the analytic methods to all applicants. If applications submitted online are screened by a computer system, then applications submitted on paper or in person should be screened using the same criteria.

Sources: Lydell C. Bridgeford, "Experts Discuss Big Data's Effect on Hiring, Bias Claims," HR Focus, September 2015, pp. 4–6; Kurt Naasz, "Advances in 'Big Data' and Analytics Can Unlock Insights and Drive HR Actions," HR Focus, May 2015, pp. 1–4; Murad Hemmadi, "The End of Bad Hiring Decisions," Canadian Business, January 2015, EBSCOhost, http://web.a.ebscohost.com.

LO2 What Are the Criteria for Evaluating Selection Methods?

Reliability

The **reliability** of a type of measurement indicates how free that measurement is from random error.[8] A reliable measurement therefore generates consistent results. Assuming that a person's intelligence is fairly stable over time, a reliable test of intelligence should generate consistent results if the same person takes the test several times. Organizations that construct intelligence tests therefore should be able to provide (and explain) information about the reliability of their tests.

reliability The extent to which a measurement generates consistent results, i.e., is free from random error.

Usually this information involves statistics such as correlation coefficients. These statistics measure the degree to which two sets of numbers are related. A higher correlation coefficient signifies a stronger relationship. At one extreme, a correlation coefficient of 1.0 means a perfect positive relationship—as one set of numbers goes up, so does the other. If you took the same vision test three days in a row, those scores would probably have nearly a perfect correlation. At the other extreme, a correlation of −1.0 means a perfect negative correlation—when one set of numbers goes up, the other goes down. In the middle, a correlation of 0 means there is no correlation at all. For example, the correlation between weather and intelligence would be at or near 0. A reliable test would be one for which scores by the same person (or people with similar attributes) have a correlation close to 1.0.

Reliability answers one important question—whether you are measuring something accurately—but ignores another question that is as important: Are you measuring something that matters? Think about how this applies at companies that try to identify workers who will fit in well with the company's culture. Often these companies depend on teamwork, social networking, and creativity, and they expect those behaviours to prevail when workers get along well and share similar values. However, efforts

to seek cultural fit often translate into favouring the most likable candidates—for example, those who make eye contact, display an interest in others, and tell engaging stories.[9]

This approach not only raises questions of reliability—for example, whether making eye contact in a job interview is a reliable predictor of a person's behaviour on the job over time—but also raises questions about the extent to which being likable really translates into effective teamwork and creative problem solving. Perhaps the prickly member of the team will be the one who opens up a new and valuable line of thinking. Additionally, making eye contact (or not) is associated with social norms that vary cross-culturally. As in this example, employers need to consider both the reliability of their selection methods and their validity, defined next.

Validity

For a selection measure, **validity** describes the extent to which performance on the measure (such as a test score) is related to what the measure is designed to assess (such as job performance). Although we can reliably measure characteristics such as weight and height, these measurements do not provide relevant information about how a person will perform in a job. One way to determine whether a measure is valid is to compare many people's scores on that measure with their job performance. For example, suppose people who score above 60 words per minute on a keyboarding test consistently get high marks for their performance in data-entry jobs. This observation suggests the keyboarding test is valid for predicting success in that job.

validity The extent to which performance on a measure (such as a test score) is related to what the measure is designed to assess (such as job performance).

As with reliability, information about the validity of selection methods often uses correlation coefficients. A strong positive (or negative) correlation between a measure and job performance means the measure should be a valid basis for selecting (or rejecting) a candidate. This information is important, not only because it helps organizations identify the best employees but also because organizations can ensure that their selection process is fair and objective. Three ways of measuring validity are criterion-related, content, and construct validity.

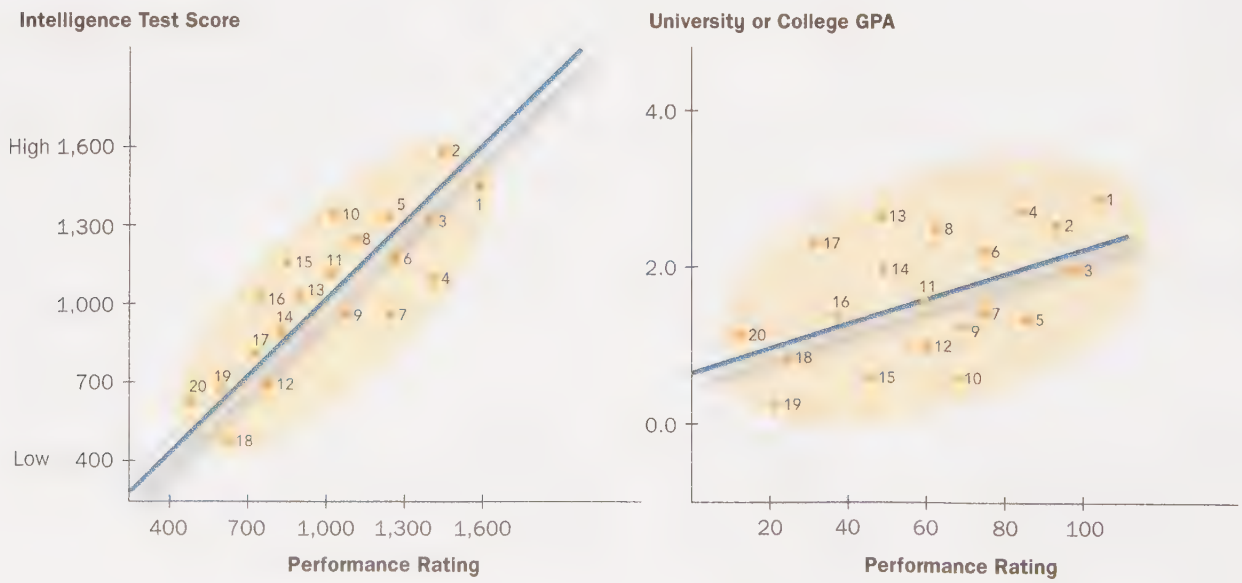
Criterion-related Validity

The first category, **criterion-related validity**, is a measure of validity based on showing a substantial correlation between test scores and job performance scores. In the example in Figure 5.2, a company compares two measures—an intelligence test and a university or college grade point average—with performance as a sales representative. In the left graph, which shows the relationship between the intelligence test scores and job performance, the points for the 20 sales representatives fall near the 45-degree line. The correlation coefficient is near 0.90 (for a perfect 1.0, all the points would be on the 45-degree line). In the graph at the right, the points are scattered more widely. The correlation between university or college

criterion-related validity A measure of validity based on showing a substantial correlation between test scores and job performance scores.

FIGURE 5.2

Criterion-related Measurements of a Student's Aptitude



GPA and sales representatives' performance is much lower. In this hypothetical example, the intelligence test is more valid than GPA for predicting success at this job.

Two kinds of research are possible for arriving at criterion-related validity:

1. **Predictive validation**. This research uses the test scores of all applicants and looks for a relationship between the scores and future performance. The researcher administers the tests, waits a set period of time, and then measures the performance of the applicants who were hired.
2. **Concurrent validation**. This type of research administers a test to people who currently hold a job, then compares their scores to existing measures of job performance. If the people who score highest on the test also do better on the job, the test is assumed to be valid.

predictive validation
Research that uses the test scores of all applicants and looks for a relationship between the scores and future performance of the applicants who were hired.

concurrent validation
Research that consists of administering a test to people who currently hold a job, then comparing their scores to existing measures of job performance.

Predictive validation is more time consuming and difficult, but it is the best measure of validity. Job applicants tend to be more motivated to do well on the tests, and their performance on the tests is not influenced by their firsthand experience with the job. Also, the group studied is more likely to include people who perform poorly on the test—a necessary ingredient to accurately validate a test.[10]

Content and Construct Validity

Another way to show validity is to establish **content validity**—that is, consistency between the test items or problems and the kinds of situations or problems that occur on the job. A test that is "content-valid" exposes the job applicant to situations that are likely to occur on the job. It tests whether the applicant has the knowledge, skills, or ability, that is, competencies to handle such situations.

content validity
Consistency between the test items or problems and the kinds of situations or problems that occur on the job.

In the case of a company using tests for selecting a construction superintendent, tests with content validity included organizing a random list of subcontractors into the order they would appear at a construction site and entering a shed to identify construction errors that had intentionally been made for testing purposes.[11] More commonly today, employers use computer role-playing games in which software is created to include situations that occur on the job. The game measures how the candidate reacts to the situations, and then it computes a score based on how closely the candidate's responses match those of an "ideal employee".[12]

The usual basis for deciding that a test has content validity is through expert judgment. Experts can rate the test items according to whether they mirror essential functions of the job. Because establishing validity is based on the experts' subjective judgments, content validity is most suitable for measuring behaviour that is concrete and observable.

For tests that measure abstract qualities such as intelligence or leadership ability, establishment of validity may have to rely on **construct validity**. This involves establishing that tests really do measure intelligence, leadership ability, or other such "constructs," as well as showing that mastery of this construct is associated with successful performance of the job. For example, if you could show that a test measures something called "mechanical ability," and that people with superior mechanical ability perform well as assemblers, then the test has construct validity for the assembler job. Tests that measure a construct usually measure a combination of behaviours thought to be associated with the construct.

construct validity
Consistency between a high score on a test and a high level of a construct such as intelligence or leadership ability, as well as between mastery of this construct and successful performance on the job.

Ability to Generalize

Along with validity in general, we need to know whether a selection method is valid in the context in which the organization wants to use it. A **generalizable** method applies not only to the conditions in which the method was originally developed—job, organization, people, time period, and so on. It also applies to other organizations, jobs, applicants, and so on. In other words, is a selection method that was valid in one context also valid in other contexts?

generalizable
Valid in other contexts beyond the context in which the selection method was developed.

Researchers have studied whether tests of intelligence and thinking skills (called cognitive ability) can be generalized. The research has supported the idea that these tests are generalizable across many jobs. However, as jobs become more complex, the validity of many of these tests increases. In other words, they are most valid for complex jobs.[13]

Practical Value

Selection methods not only show how well individuals will perform but also should produce information that

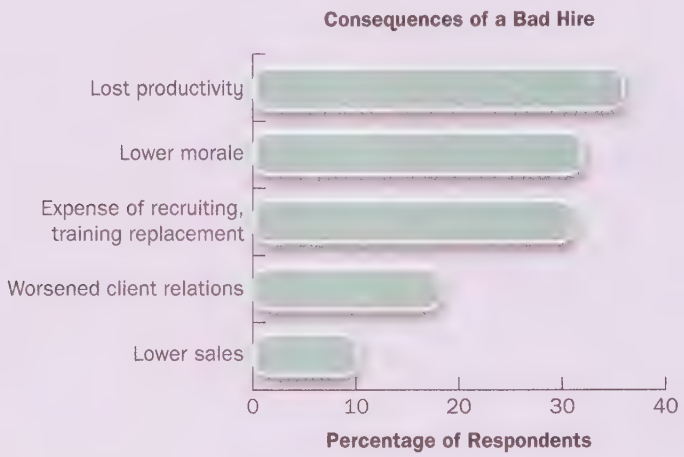
Did You Know?

Consequences of a Bad Hire Affect the Bottom Line

Almost two-thirds (66 percent) of employers surveyed by CareerBuilder said their company had experienced negative consequences as a result of selecting someone who was not a good fit or did not perform the job well. Of these respondents, 27 percent said a poor hiring decision had cost their company more than $50,000. When asked to identify the types of consequences, respondents most often said productivity suffered.

Question

1. Do the results of this survey indicate that companies should spend up to $50,000 to select an employee for every vacant position? Why or why not?



Sources: Mariah Deleon, "What Really Happens When You Hire the Wrong Candidate," Entrepreneur, April 9, 2015, https://www.entrepreneur.com; Rachel Gillett, "Infographic: How Much a Bad Hire Will Actually Cost You," Fast Company, April 8, 2014, http://www.fastcompany.com; Adecco, "Hiring Mistakes, the Cost of a Bad Hire," AdeccoUSA blog, June 10, 2013, http://blog.adeccousa.com; CareerBuilder, "More Than Half of Companies in the Top Ten World Economies Have Been Affected by a Bad Hire, according to a CareerBuilder Survey," news release, May 8, 2013, http://www.careeerbuilder.com

actually benefits the organization. Being valid, reliable, and generalizable adds value to a method. Another consideration is the cost of using the selection method. Selection procedures such as testing and interviewing cost money. However, they should cost significantly less than the benefits of hiring the new employees. Methods that provide economic value greater than the cost of using them are said to have **utility**.

utility The extent to which the selection method provides economic value greater than its cost.

The choice of a selection method may differ according to the job being filled. If the job involves providing a product or service of high value to the organization, it is worthwhile to spend more to find a top performer. At a company where salespeople are responsible for closing million-dollar deals, the company will be willing to invest more in selection decisions. At a fast-food restaurant, such an investment will not be worthwhile; the employer will prefer faster, simpler ways to select workers.

LO5 Job Applications and Résumés

Nearly all employers gather background information on applicants at the beginning of the selection process. The usual ways of gathering background information are by asking applicants to fill out application forms and provide résumés. Organizations also verify the information by checking references and conducting background checks.

Asking job candidates to provide background information is inexpensive. The organization can get reasonably accurate information by combining applications and résumés with background checks and well-designed interviews.[14] A major challenge with applications and résumés is the sheer volume of work they generate for the organization. Especially considering how easy it is for candidates to submit applications or résumés online, human resource departments need to take steps to ensure they are not swamped with more than they can carefully review.

Applications

Asking each applicant to fill out an employment application is a low-cost way to gather basic data from many applicants. It also ensures that the organization has certain standard categories of information, such as mailing address and employment history, from every applicant.

Employment applications include areas for applicants to provide several types of information:

- **Contact information.** The employee's name, address, contact number, and email address.
- **Work experience.** Companies the applicant worked for, job titles, and dates of employment.
- **Educational background.** High school, college, or university attended and diploma(s) or degree(s) awarded.
- **Applicant's signature.** Signature or verification following a statement that the applicant has provided true and complete information.

The application form may include other areas for the applicant to provide additional information, such as specific work experiences, technical skills, certifications, or memberships in professional or trade associations. Also, including the date on an application is useful for keeping up-to-date records of job applicants. The application form should not request information that might violate human rights legislation. For example, questions about an applicant's birthplace, marital status, or number of children would be inappropriate.

By reviewing application forms, HR staff can identify which candidates meet minimum requirements for education and experience. They may be able to rank applicants—for example, giving applicants with five years' experience a higher ranking than applicants with two years of experience. In this way, the applications enable the organization to narrow the pool of candidates to a number it is prepared to test and interview.

Résumés

The usual way applicants introduce themselves to a potential employer is by submitting a résumé. An obvious drawback of this information source is that applicants control the content of the information, as well as the way it is presented. This type of information is therefore oriented in favour of the applicant and may not even be accurate (although this is unethical). The Statistic Brain Research Institute reports that 53 percent of résumés contain falsifications, 33 percent include inaccurate job descriptions, and 21 percent list a fraudulent degree.[15] Some employers today see social media (e.g., LinkedIn profiles) as an alternative source of information that is more relevant or more accurate. However, this inexpensive way to gather information does provide employers with a starting point. Organizations typically use résumés as a basis for deciding which candidates to consider further.

As with employment applications, an HR staff member reviews the résumés to identify candidates meeting basic requirements such as educational background, related work performed, and types of equipment the person has used. Because résumés are created by the job applicants (or the applicants have at least approved résumés created by someone they hire), they also may provide some insight into how candidates communicate and present themselves. Employers tend to decide against applicants whose résumés are unclear, messy, or contain mistakes. For example, a recent study of recruiters found that when "applicants have strong job experience, the presence of spelling errors significantly increases the rejection rates."[16]

On the positive side, résumés may enable applicants to highlight accomplishments that might not show up in the format of an employment application. Review of résumés is most valid when the content of the résumé is assessed in terms of the elements of a job description and job specifications.

Organizations are increasingly turning to applicant tracking systems to centralize the handling of résumés and job applications from both internal and external applicants. Typically this involves completing an online application form on the employer's website and uploading a résumé. In many cases, information is electronically extracted from the résumé and inserted into the application form. Before submitting the application, the applicant verifies the information and performs any necessary edits.

The use of blind screening has been adopted by organizations including KPMG and HSBC in the effort to remove unconscious bias that may present barriers or exclude some candidates from consideration. In addition to name, this process typically removes home address, email address, and any information that could reveal applicants' ethnicity, home country, or employment equity information on an application. Studies have provided mixed results about whether or not blind screening promotes diversity. For example, the Public Service Commission of Canada recently implemented a name-blind recruitment pilot project within the federal public service. The pilot project involved more than 2,200 candidates, 685 of whom self-declared as visible minorities. The Final Report concluded that "removal of identifying information from job applications had no effect on the screening decisions of applications from members of visible minority groups."[17]

References

Application forms often ask that applicants provide the names of several references. Applicants provide the names and contact information of former employers or others who can vouch for their abilities and past job performance. In some situations, the applicant may

provide letters of reference written by those people. It is then up to the organization to have someone contact the references to gather information or verify the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant.

As you might expect, references are not an unbiased source of information. Most applicants are careful to choose references who will say something positive. In addition, former employers and others may be afraid that if they express negative opinions, they will be sued. Their fear is understandable. In one case, an employee sued his former supervisor for comments about how the employee had succeeded in overcoming attendance problems related to a struggle with multiple sclerosis. The employee felt that the disclosure of his prior attendance problems was defamatory.[18] (Disclosing his medical condition also would have posed problems for the potential future employer's ability to comply with human rights legislation.) This case shows that even well-intentioned remarks can cause problems. Also problematic from the perspective of getting useful information is that some candidates fail to list people who can speak about their work history.

Usually the organization checks references after it has determined that the applicant is a finalist for the job. Questions asked in reference checks need to adhere to the same requirements as applications and interviews (see Table 5.1).[19]

Contacting references for all applicants would be time consuming, and it does put a burden on the people contacted. Part of that burden is the risk of giving information seen as too negative or too positive. If the person who is a reference gives negative information, there is a chance the candidate will claim defamation, meaning the person damaged the applicant's reputation by making statements that cannot be proved truthful.[20]

At the other extreme, if the person gives a glowing statement about a candidate, and the new employer later learns of misdeeds such as sexual misconduct or workplace violence, the new employer might sue the former employer for misrepresentation.[21] Employers have a duty to protect workers and the public from harassment or violence arising from placing an unfit or dangerous person in the workplace. **Negligent hiring** refers to a situation where an employer may be found liable for harm an employee causes to others if references and background checks were not performed adequately at the time of hiring. In these cases, the employer may be found to "have known or should have known" that an employee might cause harm to others in the workplace.

negligent hiring A situation where an employer may be found liable for harm an employee causes to others if references and background checks were not performed adequately at the time of hiring.

Because such situations occasionally arise, often with much publicity, people who give references tend to give as little information as possible. Most organizations have policies that the human resource department will handle all requests for references and that they will verify only employment dates and sometimes the employee's final salary. In organizations without such a policy, HR professionals should be careful—and train managers to be careful—to stick to observable, job-related behaviours and to avoid broad opinions that may be misinterpreted. An irony with respect to policies about the content and handling of references is that managers and colleagues in these organizations may well be actively providing highly visible and public references in the form of skills endorsements and recommendations in LinkedIn. "Human nature makes it difficult for a person, when asked, to deny the request to recommend someone. Therefore, a 'no recommending employees on LinkedIn' clause in a social media policy is helpful. It provides an ideal excuse when denying an employee that request and, it is hoped, avoids causing offence."[22]

In spite of these drawbacks of references, the risks of not learning about significant problems in a candidate's past outweigh the possibility of getting only a little information. "An HR manager may be in the interesting position of declining to give an elaborate reference for any employee who intends to leave her organization, yet demand one for a person she wishes to hire. And applicants may find themselves to be essentially unemployable, as they discover they can't be hired without a satisfactory reference from their former employer."[23]

Background Checks

A background check provides an additional means to verify that applicants are as they represent themselves to be. Unfortunately, not all candidates (or references) are open and honest. In a recent survey of HR professionals, more than half said they had caught at least one piece of false information on a résumé.[24]

Note that this is not the same as half of résumés contain lies. However, it's also possible that some professionals saw but didn't recognize misinformation. And a recent survey reported that 82 percent of Canadian HR professionals "believe that people providing references are not always honest" and "68 percent believe they've been lied to while conducting phone references."[25]

Companies like BackCheck™ specialize in employment background checks such as criminal record checks, credit inquiries, education verifications, employment verifications, driving records, identity cross-checks, and reference checks. For example, Scotiabank expanded its range of pre-employment screening with BackCheck to include criminal reference checks and identity verifications in addition to reference checking, and employment and educational verifications.[26]

Angus Stewart, vice-president of forensics and leader of corporate intelligence at KPMG in Toronto, says that knowing what to look for is key to a successful search.

"Education fraud is the most common," he says, adding that people lie about the degree they received or the institutions they attend. There is also the "diploma mill issue": people state degrees they ordered online from phony institutions. "There's quite a bit of that."[27]

Also fuelling this growing use of background checks are applicants using complex and high-tech means to fraudulently impress employers. For example, a counterfeiting ring operating from a house in Markham, Ontario, may have supplied thousands of people with forged university degrees and transcripts as well as forged immigration documents, according to York Regional Police. The police confiscated forged degrees from the University of Toronto, the University of Western Ontario, Cape Breton University, and many others. Even university officials were hard pressed to detect the fakes. "These were of such high quality that our university people had to do a double take," said Detective Fred Kerr. "From an employer point of view, you're not going to catch what's wrong with them."[28]

Before performing a background check, employers need to keep in mind they must get consent from the candidate. As discussed earlier in the chapter, conducting a background check after extending a contingent job offer can help to protect the potential employer from a discrimination claim if the applicant is not hired. Consent may also be needed to comply with privacy legislation. Employers also need to "tread carefully" when it comes to social media presence checks or random online searches. Although there are no laws that prohibit these kinds of checks, the growing trend of conducting these types of random social media background checks prompted Offices of the Privacy Commissioner of both Alberta and British Columbia to release "Guidelines for Social Media Background Checks." Employers are cautioned to follow the guidelines when using social media or Google to seek out information about potential employees. The primary dilemma is that a social media check may reveal information that extends beyond job-relevant information. Even so, job seekers need to be aware that sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook may still be making them look good or bad to potential employers. According to Louise Fox, director of Toronto's Protocol Solutions: "Don't put anything online that you wouldn't want your mom to read or have published in the newspaper."[29]

Employment Tests and Work Samples

When the organization has identified candidates whose applications or résumés indicate they meet basic requirements, the organization continues the selection process with this narrower pool of candidates. Often, the next step is to gather objective data through one or more employment tests or assessments. Increasingly, these tests and assessments can be completed on mobile devices, which represents an evolution from web-based and computer versions that were pre-dated by paper-and-pencil assessments.[30]

These tests fall into two broad categories:

1. **Aptitude tests** assess how well a person can learn or acquire skills and abilities. In the realm of employment testing, the best-known aptitude test is the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB). The Public Service Commission of Canada also provides other employment-related tests such as the Office Skills Test (OST-200), which assesses an individual's clerical skills including: following directions, filing, performing calculations, checking, and understanding words.[31]

aptitude tests Tests that assess how well a person can learn or acquire skills and abilities.

2. **Achievement tests** measure a person's existing knowledge and skills. For example, some organizations use interactive tests to assess applicants' skills using software such as Outlook, Excel, and PowerPoint.

achievement tests Tests that measure a person's existing knowledge and skills.

Before using any test, organizations should investigate the test's validity and reliability. Besides asking the testing service to provide this information, it is wise to consult more impartial sources of information, such as the ones described in Table 5.2. Recent research findings have provided evidence of optimism that tests can be taken on mobile devices without harming the validity or reliability of the tests; however, HR professionals need to ensure that the content of any specific test is suitable for mobile platforms.[32]

Physical Ability Tests

Physical strength and endurance play less of a role in the modern workplace than in the past, thanks to the use of automation and current technology. Even so, many jobs still require certain physical abilities or psychomotor abilities (those connecting brain and body, as in the case of eye–hand coordination). When these abilities are essential to job performance or avoidance of injury, the organization may use physical ability tests. These evaluate one or more of the following areas of physical ability: muscular tension, muscular power, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, balance, and coordination.[33] Although these tests can accurately predict success at certain kinds of jobs, some of these tests also tend to exclude women and people with disabilities. As a result, use of physical ability tests can make the organization vulnerable to human rights complaints. It is therefore important to be certain that the abilities tested for really are essential to job

TABLE 5.2

Sources of Information About Employment Tests

Mental Measurements Yearbook	Descriptions and reviews of tests that are commercially available
Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures **(Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology)**	Guide to help organizations evaluate tests
Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests **(American Psychological Association)**	Description of standards for testing programs
Tests: A Comprehensive Reference for Assessments in Psychology, Education, and Business	Descriptions of thousands of tests
Test Critiques	Reviews of tests, written by professionals in the field

Royal Canadian Mounted Police | Gendarmerie Royale du Canada

The RCMP's Physical Abilities Requirement Evaluation (PARE) consists of three timed stations—Obstacle Course, Push/Pull, and Weight Carry.

performance or that the absence of these abilities really does create a safety hazard.

The RCMP have invested significant effort to develop an effective test to assess candidates' physical abilities—Physical Abilities Requirement Evaluation (PARE). The PARE is a job-related physical ability test that simulates a critical incident of chasing, controlling, and apprehending a suspect.[34]

Cognitive Ability Tests

Although fewer jobs require muscle power today, brainpower is essential for most jobs. Organizations therefore benefit from people who have strong mental abilities. **Cognitive ability tests**—sometimes called "intelligence tests"—are designed to measure mental abilities such as verbal skills (skill in using written and spoken language), quantitative skills (skill in working with numbers), and reasoning ability (skill in thinking through the answer to a problem). Many jobs require all of these cognitive skills, so employers often get valid information from general tests. The Public Service Commission of Canada uses the General Competency Test Level 1 (GCT1) to measure thinking skills (understanding written material, solving numerical problems, and drawing logical conclusions) for administrative support position selection decisions. See Figure 5.3 for a sample question and answer from the General Competency Test Level 1 (GCT1). A test called the GCT2 is used to assess general cognitive abilities required for officer-level positions.[35] Many reliable tests are commercially available. The tests are especially valid for complex jobs and for those requiring adaptability in changing circumstances.[36]

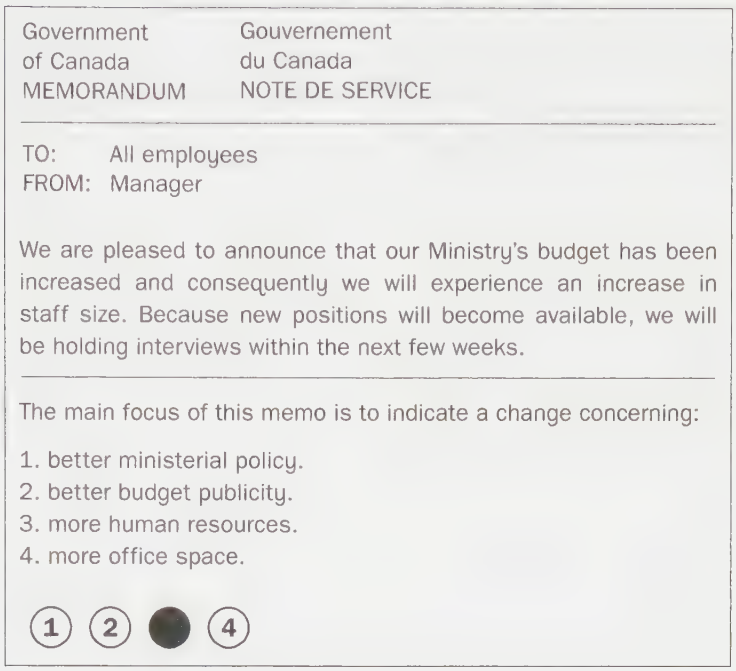
cognitive ability tests Tests designed to measure mental abilities such as verbal skills, quantitative skills, and reasoning ability.

Job Performance Tests and Work Samples

Many kinds of jobs require candidates who excel at performing specialized tasks, such as operating a certain machine, handling calls from customers, or designing advertising materials. To evaluate candidates for such jobs, the organization may administer tests of the necessary skills. Sometimes the candidates take tests that involve a sample of work, or they may show existing samples of their work. Testing may involve a simulated work environment, a difficult team project, or a complex computer programming puzzle.[37] Examples of job performance tests include tests of keyboarding speed and in-basket tests. An in-basket test measures the ability to juggle a variety of demands, as in a manager's job. The candidate is presented with simulated emails and messages describing the kinds of problems that confront a person in the job. The candidate has to decide how to respond to

FIGURE 5.3

Sample Question from the Public Service Commission of Canada's General Competency Test: Level 1 (GCT1)



Source: General Competency Test Level 1 (GCT1)—Instructions and Sample Questions, www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/ppc-cpp/test-examen/gct1-ecg1/index-eng.htm. Public Service Commission 2011. Reproduced with the permission of the Public Service Commission of Canada.

these messages, and in what order. Examples of jobs for which candidates provide work samples include graphic designers and writers.

Tests for selecting managers may take the form of an **assessment centre**—a wide variety of specific selection programs that use multiple selection methods to rate applicants or job incumbents on their management potential. An assessment centre typically includes in-basket tests, tests of more general abilities, and personality tests. Combining several assessment methods increases the validity of this approach. For example, the Public Service Commission of Canada uses the Human Resources Consultant Simulation Exercise, which "simulates important aspects of a human resource consultant's job." The candidate receives exercise items including memoranda, letters, and reports and is given three hours to review the items and complete a written action plan and prepare for an oral presentation. The next step is to make an oral presentation (30 minutes maximum) to the selection panel followed by questions from the panel. The final phase requires the candidate to provide assistance and advice to a manager as part of an interactive exercise.[38]

assessment centre A wide variety of specific selection programs that use multiple selection methods to rate applicants or job incumbents on their management potential.

Job performance tests have the advantage of giving applicants a chance to show what they can do, which leads them to feel that the evaluation was fair.[39] The tests also are job-specific—that is, tailored to the kind of work done in a specific job. So they have a high level of validity, especially when combined with cognitive ability tests and a highly structured interview.[40] This advantage can become a disadvantage, however, if the organization wants to generalize the results of a test for one job to candidates for other jobs. The tests are more appropriate for identifying candidates who are generally able to solve the problems associated with a job, rather than for identifying which specific skills or traits the individual possesses.[41] Developing different tests for different jobs can become expensive. One way to save money is to prepare computerized tests that can be delivered online to various locations.

Personality Inventories

In some situations, employers may also want to know about candidates' personalities. For example, one way psychologists think of personality is in terms of the "Big Five" traits: extroversion, adjustment, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and inquisitiveness (explained in Table 5.3). There is evidence that people who score high

TABLE 5.3

Five Major Personality Dimensions Measured by Personality Inventories

1. Extroversion	Sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, expressive
2. Adjustment	Emotionally stable, non-depressed, secure, content
3. Agreeableness	Courteous, trusting, good natured, tolerant, cooperative, forgiving
4. Conscientiousness	Dependable, organized, persevering, thorough, achievement oriented
5. Inquisitiveness	Curious, imaginative, artistically sensitive, broadminded, playful

on conscientiousness tend to excel at work, because they use self-control to pursue goals and excel at overcoming obstacles.[42] The relevance of personality dimensions may also be job specific. For example, extroverts tend to excel in sales jobs, because these jobs call upon traits associated with extroversion—notably, being gregarious and assertive.[43] Companies also are crunching their data to see which traits are associated with success at their particular organization. At JetBlue, for example, the director of talent acquisition and assessment says his company can measure specific traits to determine who will deliver the best job performance.[44]

The usual way to identify a candidate's personality traits is to administer one of the personality tests that are commercially available. The employer pays for the use of the test, and the organization that owns the test then scores the responses and provides a report about the test taker's personality. An organization that provides such tests should be able to discuss the test's validity and reliability. It is possible to find reliable, commercially available measures of each trait, but the evidence of their validity and generalizability is mixed at best.[45]

Some people don't have enough insight about themselves to answer accurately, or their personalities vary on and off the job. Also, compared with intelligence tests, people are better at "faking" their answers to a personality test to score higher on desirable traits.[46] Evidence includes higher scores for conscientiousness when people take job-related tests than when they take research-related tests. Also, candidates who don't get hired have scored much higher when they retry the test. Ways to address this problem include using trained interviewers rather than surveys, collecting information about the applicant from several sources, and letting applicants know that several sources will be used.[47]

One trend in favour of personality tests is greater use of teamwork. Because team members must work together closely, the selection of one member can affect the personality requirements for other team members. where personality conflicts can be a significant problem. Traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness have been associated with effective teamwork.[48] An organization might try to select team members with similar traits and values in order to promote a strong culture where people work together harmoniously, or they instead might look for a diversity of personalities and values as a way to promote debate and creativity.

Honesty and Drug and Alcohol Tests

No matter what employees' personalities may be like, organizations want employees to be honest and to perform safely. Some organizations are satisfied to assess these qualities on the basis of judgments from reference checks and interviews. Others investigate these characteristics more directly through the use of tests.

The most famous kind of honesty test is the polygraph, the so-called "lie detector" test. As a result of controversies associated with the use of polygraph tests, testing services have developed other types of honesty (or integrity) tests. Generally, these tests ask applicants directly about their attitudes toward honesty and integrity and their own experiences in situations inside and outside work. Most of the research into the validity of these tests has been conducted by the testing companies, but evidence suggests they do have some ability to predict behaviour such as theft of the employer's property.[49] A recent study conducted by Canadian researchers with Canadian Armed Forces recruits provided evidence that integrity can be predicted from three of the Big Five personality factors—conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability.[50]

As concerns about workplace safety and performance due to to the use of both legal and illegal substances (e.g., alcohol, cannabis, medications, and "street" drugs) continues to grow, so has the use of drug and alcohol testing including pre-employment testing. Pre-employment testing is intended to reduce risks associated with hiring people who may put themselves and others in danger in safety-sensitive jobs.[51]

Employers considering the use of drug and alcohol tests should ensure that their testing programs comply with relevant human rights legislation for their jurisdiction. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination related to a disability, and dependence on drugs or alcohol is considered a disability that must be accommodated to the point of undue hardship. For example, the Canadian Human Rights Commission's Policy on Alcohol and Drug Testing describes "testing for alcohol or drugs as a form of medical examination" and "pre-employment drug or alcohol testing is permitted only in limited circumstances."[52]

Employers also have to keep in mind that testing will not uncover all problems. One recent concern is that addictive drug use increasingly relates to legal prescription painkillers and the legalization of recreational cannabis has posed a variety of issues for organizations to navigate including the need for clear policies.

The approach to pre-employment substance testing in Western Canada has tended to emphasize safety and has directly conflicted with Ontario Court of Appeal decisions. For example, the Alberta Court of Appeal upheld the employer's right to immediately terminate a new employee who failed a pre-employment drug screening test that was part of the hiring process for Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), a subsidiary of Houston-based oil-and-gas giant Haliburton. The employee had started work and been on the job for nine days when his marijuana-positive test results came back. The Alberta Court of Appeal ruled that the terminated employee was not an addict, but rather a recreational user; therefore, he was not disabled and did not require accommodation. The Court ruled that there was no discrimination because the employer's testing policy was connected to workplace safety.[53]

Medical Examinations

Especially for physically demanding jobs, organizations may wish to conduct medical examinations to see that the applicant can meet the job's requirements. Employers may also wish to establish an employee's physical condition at the beginning of employment, so that there is a basis for measuring whether the employee has suffered a work-related disability later on. At the same time, as described in Chapter 2, organizations may not discriminate against individuals with disabilities who could perform a job with reasonable accommodations. Likewise, organizations may not use a measure of physical ability that discriminates against women, older workers, etc., unless those requirements are valid in predicting the ability to perform a job. Medical examinations must be related to job requirements and may not be given until the candidate has received a conditional job offer. Many organizations make selection decisions first, then conduct the exams to confirm that the employee will be able to meet requirements of the job, with any reasonable accommodations required. Limiting the use of medical examinations in this way also holds down the cost of what tends to be an expensive process.

Interviews

Supervisors and team members most often get involved in the selection process at the stage of employment interviews. These interviews usually bring together job applicants and representatives of the employer to obtain information and evaluate the applicant's qualifications and organizational fit. While the applicant is providing information, they are also forming opinions about what it is like to work for the organization. Most organizations use interviewing as part of the selection process. In fact, this method is used more than any other.

Interviewing Techniques

Interview techniques include choices about the type of questions to ask and the number of people who conduct the interview. Several question types are possible:

- In a **nondirective interview**, the interviewer has great discretion in choosing questions. The candidate's reply to one question may suggest other questions to ask. Non-directive interviews typically include open-ended questions about the candidate's strengths, development areas, career goals, and work experience. Because these interviews give the interviewer wide latitude, their reliability is not great and some interviewers ask questions that are not valid or even legal.

nondirective interview A selection interview in which the interviewer has great discretion in choosing questions to ask each candidate.

- A **structured interview** establishes a set of questions for the interviewer to ask. Ideally, the questions are related to job requirements and cover relevant knowledge, skills, and experiences. The interviewer is supposed to avoid asking questions that are not on the list. Although interviewers may object to being restricted, the results may be more valid and reliable than with a nondirective interview.

structured interview A selection interview that consists of a predetermined set of questions for the interviewer to ask.

- A **situational interview** is a structured interview in which the interviewer describes a situation likely to arise on the job and asks the candidate what they would do in that situation. This type of interview may have high validity in predicting job performance.[54]
- A **behavioural interview** is a situational interview in which the interviewer asks the candidate to describe how they handled a type of situation in the past. Questions about the candidates' actual experiences tend to have the highest validity.[55]

situational interview A structured interview in which the interviewer describes a situation likely to arise on the job, then asks the candidate what they would do in that situation.

behavioural interview A structured interview in which the interviewer asks the candidate to describe how they handled a type of situation in the past.

BMO Financial Group has been using behavioural interviews since the early 1990s for almost every

position it fills. BMO even offers prospective employees advice about what a good answer includes. BMO Financial Group views behavioural interviews as most effective for external candidates because internal candidates have existing performance reviews and have been through the process at some point.[56]

The common setup for either a nondirective or structured interview is for an individual (an HR professional or the supervisor for the vacant position) to interview each candidate face to face. However, variations on this approach are possible. In a **panel interview**, several members of the organization meet to interview each candidate. A panel interview gives the candidate a chance to meet more people and see how people interact in that organization. It provides the organization with the judgments of more than one person, with the intent to reduce the effect of personal biases in selection decisions. However, biased decisions may actually be higher in a panel interview if the members of the panel interview have similar backgrounds or experience "groupthink." Panel interviews may be particularly intimidating for people with ADHD, autism, and other learning differences.[57]

panel interview Selection interview in which several members of the organization meet to interview each candidate.

Alternatively, some organizations conduct an interview without any interviewers; they use a **digital interview**, a technology-based interview in which interviewees digitally record their responses to interview questions that are provided digitally, without live interaction with the interviewer.[58]

digital interview A technology-based interview in which interviewees digitally record their responses to interview questions that are provided digitally, without live interaction with the interviewer.

Digital interviews have evolved from earlier applications of technology to improve the efficiency of the job interview process; e.g., telephone interviews and video-conference interviews. A digital interview process typically starts with a candidate receiving an email with a link to an online platform. The candidate reads the instructions on a mobile device or computer. The first interview question is provided in text form and a clock counts down available time to read the question (e.g., 60 seconds). The candidate clicks a "record" button, which opens a new browser window, and is provided time (e.g., up to 3 minutes) to answer the interview question. The candidate stops the recording and clicks "submit video." After a brief pause (e.g., 15 seconds), the next interview question is provided and the previous steps are repeated. Interviews may be rated by human raters or by machine-learning algorithms, which eliminate human influence and personal bias. Additional benefits of digital interviews include flexibility, standardization, and analytical capabilities; however, downsides include no ability to ask follow-up questions, no ability for interviewees to ask questions, as well as the potential for negative candidate reactions including opting out of the process.[59]

HireVue, the largest provider of digital interviews in North America worked with Hilton Hotels & Resorts, which hires thousands of team members annually for its more than 5,000 properties in 103 countries and territories globally. Amber Weaver, who heads up the high-volume talent acquisition team at Hilton, partnered with HireVue to revamp Hilton's traditional hiring process, which was taking approximately six weeks to fill a training class of 25 new hires. Hilton's multi-step process was transformed into a single video assessment using "predictive analytics to assess a candidate's vocabulary, intonation, and nonverbal gestures" relative to top performers and cut the time to fill a training class to 5 days.[60]

Air Canada President and CEO Calin Rovinescu recently explained how Air Canada will be introducing artificial intelligence and facial recognition programs to to evaluate potential employees for skills such as linguistic abilities—reducing the interview process from eight to three steps for selecting flight attendants.[61]

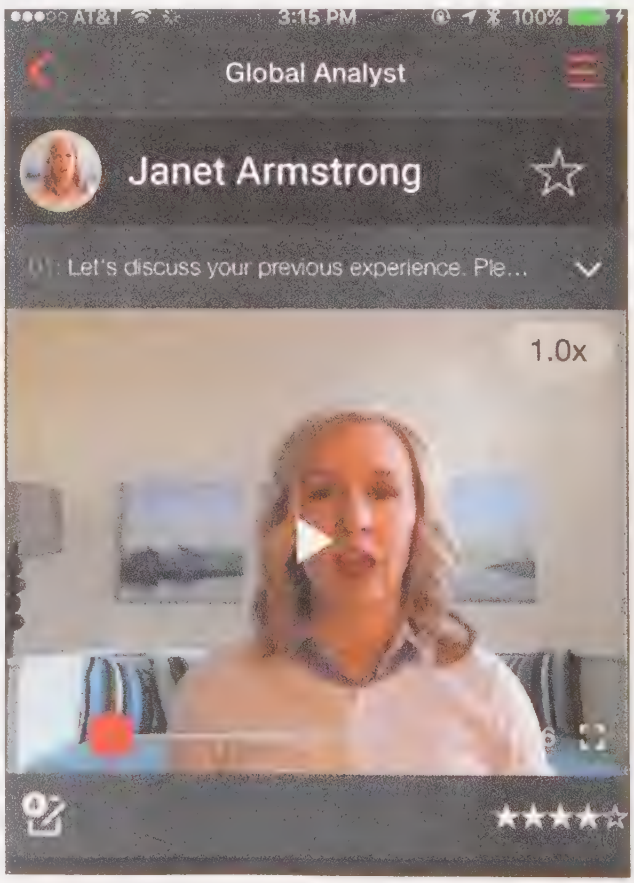


Photo courtesy of HireVue

Candidates can use their computer or mobile device to participate in a digital interview provided by HireVue.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional Interviewing

The wide use of traditional in-person interviewing is not surprising. People naturally want to see prospective employees firsthand. As we noted in Chapter 1, the top qualities that employers seek in new hires include communication skills and interpersonal skills. Talking face to face can provide evidence of these skills. Interviews can give insights into candidates' personalities and interpersonal styles. They are more valid, however, when they focus on job knowledge and skill. Interviews also provide a means to check the accuracy of information on the applicant's résumé or job application. Asking applicants to elaborate about their experiences and offer details reduces the likelihood of a candidate being able to invent a work history.[62]

Despite these benefits, in-person interviewing is not necessarily the most accurate basis for making a selection decision. Research has shown that interviews can be unreliable, low in validity,[63] and biased against a number of different groups.[64] Interviews are also costly. They require that at least one person devote time to interviewing each candidate, and the applicants typically have to be brought to one geographic location. Interviews are also subjective, so they place the organization at greater risk of discrimination complaints by applicants who were not hired, especially if those individuals were asked questions not entirely related to the job.

Organizations can avoid some of these pitfalls.[65] Human resources staff should keep the interviews focused, structured, and standardized. The interview should focus on accomplishing a few goals, so that at the end of the interview, the organization has ratings on several observable measures, such as ability to express ideas. As noted earlier, situational and behavioural interviews are especially effective for doing this. The interview should not try to measure abilities and skills—for example, cognitive intelligence—that tests can measure better. Organizations can prevent problems related to subjectivity by training interviewers and using more than one person to conduct interviews. Training typically includes focusing on the recording of observable facts, rather than on making subjective judgments, as well as developing interviewers' awareness of their biases.[66] Using a structured system for taking notes or scoring responses may help reduce subjectivity and help the interviewer remember and explain an evaluation later. [67] Finally, to address costs of interviewing, some organizations also use applications with video chat capabilities (e.g., Skype).

Marconobre/Dreamstime.com

When interviewing candidates, it's valid to ask about willingness to travel if that is a requirement of the job. Interviewers might ask questions about previous business travel experiences and/or how interviewees handled situations requiring flexibility and self-motivation (qualities that would be an asset in someone who is travelling alone and solving business problems remotely).

Preparing to Interview

Organizations get the greatest benefits from in-person interviewing if they prepare carefully. A well-planned interview should be standardized, comfortable for the participants, and focused on the job and the organization. The interviewer should have a quiet place in which to conduct interviews without interruption. This person should be trained in how to ask objective questions, what subject matter to avoid, and how to detect and handle their own personal biases or other distractions in order to fairly evaluate candidates.

The interviewer should have enough documents to conduct a complete interview. These should include a list of the questions to be asked in a structured interview. When the questions are prepared, it is also helpful to determine how the answers will be assessed. For example, if questions are asked about how interviewees have handled certain situations, consider what responses are best in terms of meeting job requirements. If the job requires someone who develops new and creative solutions to problems, then a response that shows innovative behaviour would receive a higher score. The interviewer also should have a copy of the interviewee's employment application and résumé to review before the interview and refer to during the interview. If possible, the interviewer should also have information on hand about the organization and the job. Near the beginning of the interview, it is a good idea to go over the job specifications, organizational policies, and so on, so that the interviewee has a clearer understanding of the organization's needs and expectations.

The interviewer should schedule enough time to review the job requirements, discuss the interview questions, and give the interviewee a chance to ask questions. Interviewers need to be well prepared to answer interviewee questions. For example, a highly skilled candidate may ask, "How is your company supporting Indigenous communities?" If the interviewers do not have an answer, they potentially miss the opportunity to hire the candidate who may have multiple competing employment opportunities.[68]

HR Oops!

Red Flags During Job Interviews

When managers or HR professionals select candidates to interview, they are trying to find the candidates with basic qualifications, who are likely to be the highest performers. Sometimes, unfortunately, what happens in an interview signals a troubling lack of motivation or business sense. For example, interviewers are unimpressed with someone who arrives at an interview after making no effort to learn anything about the company or prepare any questions to ask.

Sometimes candidates' behaviour demonstrates such poor motivation and lack of judgment that it resembles a bad comedy routine. Interviewers have complained of candidates checking Facebook or wearing headphones during an interview; one even took a phone call about a job at another company. Some make odd statements: one told an interviewer she had taken "too much Valium" beforehand, and another said his personal hero was himself.

Some memorable incidents reported by interviewers are downright frightening. One applicant had a car accident—hitting the employer's building. Another tried making a secret recording of the interview. And a third applicant, responding to an interviewer's prompt to "impress me," lit the interviewer's newspaper on fire.

Questions

1. With a multiple-hurdle model, interviewing typically comes late in the selection process. Based on what you know about the steps in the process, why do you think the candidates described here made it past the earlier hurdles? (For example, might they have other qualifications, or might there be problems with the process?)
2. In the compensatory model, a high score on one type of assessment can make up for a low score on another. Assuming the candidates described here had low scores on their interviews, can you think of a situation in which a high score on some other measure could make these candidates the best choice for a position? Explain.

Sources: "Top 10 Unbelievable Interview Blunders," CareerBuilder, http://employer.careerbuilder.com, accessed April 11, 2016; Ryan Caldbeck, "These Five Interview Blunders Will Probably Kill Your Job Prospects," Entrepreneur, March 14, 2014, http://www.entrepreneur.com; Adam Auriemma, "Fire, Valium, Dentures: Job Interviews Gone Wild," Wall Street Journal, January 16, 2014, http://blogs.wsj.com; CareerBuilder, "Employers Share Most Memorable Interview Blunders," news release, January 16, 2014, http://www.careerbuilder.com.

To close the interview, the interviewer should thank the candidate and provide information about what to expect—for example, that the organization will contact a few finalists within the next week or that a decision will be made by the end of the week.

Selection Decisions

After reviewing applications, scoring tests, conducting interviews, and checking references, the organization needs to make decisions about which candidates will be provided a job offer. In practice, most organizations find more than one qualified candidate to fill an open position. The selection decision typically combines ranking based on objective criteria along with subjective judgments about which candidate will likely be the highest performer.

How Organizations Select Employees

The selection decision should not be a simple matter of whom the supervisor likes best or which candidate will take the lowest offer. Also, observing confidence in job candidates does not necessarily mean they are competent. Rather, the people making the selection decision should look for the best fit between candidate and position. In general, the person's performance will result from a combination of ability and motivation. Often, the selection is a choice among a few people who possess the basic qualifications. The decision makers therefore have to decide which of those people have the best combination of ability and motivation to perform well in the position and in the organization as a whole.

The usual process for arriving at a selection decision is to gradually narrow the pool of candidates for each job. This approach, called the **multiple-hurdle model**, is based on a process such as the one shown earlier in Figure 5.1. Each stage of the process is a hurdle, and candidates who overcome a hurdle continue to the next stage of the process. For example, the organization reviews applications and/or résumés of all candidates, conducts some tests on those who meet minimum requirements, conducts initial interviews with those who had the highest test scores, follows up with additional interviews or testing, and then selects a candidate from the few who successfully navigated this process. Another, more expensive alternative is to take most applicants through all steps of the process and then review all the scores to find the most desirable candidates. With this alternative, decision makers may use a **compensatory model**, in which a very high score on one type of assessment can make up for a low score on another. Think about how each of these two models would apply.

multiple-hurdle model Process of arriving at a selection decision by eliminating some candidates at each stage of the selection process.

compensatory model Process of arriving at a selection decision in which a very high score on one type of assessment can make up for a low score on another.

Whether the organization uses a multiple-hurdle model or conducts the same assessments on all candidates, the decision maker or makers need criteria for choosing among qualified candidates. An obvious strategy is to select the candidates who score highest on tests and interviews. However, employee performance depends on motivation as well as ability. It is possible that a candidate who scores very high on an ability test might be "overqualified"; that is, the employee might be bored by the job the organization needs to fill, and a less-able employee might actually be a better performer in the job. Similarly, a highly motivated person might learn some kinds of jobs very quickly, potentially outperforming someone who has the necessary skills. Furthermore, some organizations have policies of developing employees for career paths in the organization. Such organizations might put less emphasis on the skills needed for a particular job and more emphasis on hiring candidates who share the organization's values.

Finally, organizations have choices about who will make the decision. Sometimes the immediate supervisor or manager makes the final decision, often alone. This person may couple knowledge of the job with a judgment about who will contribute the most to the department. The decision could also be made by a human resources professional using standardized, objective criteria. Especially in organizations that value teamwork, selection decisions may be made by a work team or other panel of decision makers. As noted in the HR How To feature and in the discussion of digital interviews, organizations are increasingly turning to data-driven methods to inform and/or make hiring decisions. This approach is an application of people (human capital) analytics (see Chapter 1) to make evidence-based hiring decisions. A **hiring algorithm** is a mathematical model that predicts which job candidates are most likely to be high performers once hired. The use of this type of predictive model is intended to improve the quality of hiring decisions by reducing the human errors associated with biases and other perceptual distortions.

hiring algorithm Mathematical model that predicts which job candidates are most likely to be high performers after being hired.

Timing of the decision is also important. "Hiring managers are busy but the best candidates don't stay on the market long. And often the best candidate is lost in the process if the hiring manager takes too long to make a decision or if there's too much back-and-forth between the hiring manager and HR," explains Ken Graham, director of training and professional services at Adecco in Toronto.[69]

Communicating the Decision

The human resource department is often responsible for notifying applicants about the results of the selection process. When a candidate has been selected, the organization should communicate the offer to the candidate. The offer should include the job responsibilities, work schedule, rate of pay, starting date, and other relevant details. If placement in a job requires that the applicant complete a medical examination, the offer should state that contingency. The person communicating the offer should also indicate a date by which the candidate should reply with an acceptance or rejection of the offer. For some jobs, such as management and professional positions, the candidate and organization may negotiate pay, benefits, and work arrangements before they arrive at a final employment agreement.

The person who communicates this decision should keep accurate records of who was contacted, when, and for which position, as well as of the candidate's reply. The HR department and the immediate supervisor also should be in close communication about the job offer. Organizations would like to be able to hire their first-choice candidates, but this does not always happen, particularly when labour markets are tight. The Conference Board of Canada's "Trends and Metrics Survey, Fourth Edition" recently collected information from 150 Canadian organizations and reported results by job category. For example, on average, only 72 percent of executive vacancies were filled with first-choice candidates, whereas, 90 percent of management, technical and skilled trades, and clerical and support positions were filled with first-choice candidates.[70]

When an applicant accepts a job offer, the HR department must notify the supervisor, so that they can be well prepared for the new employee's arrival.

Thinking Ethically

What Is an Employer's Ethical Duty to Check Facts?

A survey of hiring professionals found that a majority recalled seeing a lie on a candidate's résumé. The most common lies involved exaggerating skills and responsibilities, and some were startling—for example, attendance at a nonexistent university or employment in two cities during the same time period.

Why would job seekers take a chance that they won't be caught? One reason might be they see or imagine that employers won't take the information seriously. Survey results indicate that more than two-thirds of those reviewing a résumé devote less than five minutes to the task—and many of them spend less than two minutes. Also, employers aren't necessarily giving out accurate information themselves if they paint overly rosy pictures during interviews and on their websites or fail to keep job descriptions up to date. Candidates may conclude that the selection process is one of manipulation, not honesty.

Besides doing their part to make the selection process transparent, employers can protect themselves against misrepresentations by job seekers. These efforts generally involve some kind of background check. Methods include contacting current and former employers to verify employment; this is where most discrepancies with résumés are detected. Other checks may look at a candidate's education, credit record, driving abstract, and other available information, as long as these methods are legal and relevant.

Companies might rely on interviews to catch gaps. This requires a high level of skill; the average person barely does better than guessing at random when it comes to detecting a gap. For example, many people assume that lack of eye contact is a sign of lying, but the evidence doesn't support that assumption. For example, in Indigenous cultures, eye contact is generally avoided because it is perceived to be too assertive. A more effective approach is to ask neutral questions and listen carefully for details and inconsistencies. Ideally, the candidate offers details that can be verified later through objective methods.

Questions

1. Who is affected by an employer's decision to skip background checks? Discuss whether such a decision achieves the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals.
2. How can employers meet the standards of being fair and equitable when they conduct background checks?

Sources: "What is Culture and Why Does it Matter," First Nations Construction," http://www.aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca/toolkit/what-culture-and-why-does-it-matter,; Andre Lavoie, "What Happens When Your Hiring Process Is Founded on Deceit?" Entrepreneur, March 1, 2016, http://www.entrepreneur.com; Martin Berman-Gorvine, "Multiple Background Checks Suggested for Candidates," HR Focus, December 2015, pp. 10–11; "Liar, Liar, Résumé on Fire," HR Magazine, October 2015, https://www.shrm.org; Dennis McCafferty, "The Worst Jaw-Dropping Résumé Blunders," CIO Insight, August 27, 2015, http://www.cioinsight.com; Martin Bermine-Gorvine, "The Notion That It's Easy to Spot a Liar Is Itself a Lie," HR Focus, August 2015, pp. 10–13.

SUMMARY

LO1 Identify the elements and legal requirements of the selection process.

Selection typically begins with a review of candidates' employment applications and résumés, then tests are administered, followed by one or more interviews. Reference and background checks may be conducted to verify the accuracy of information provided by candidates. A candidate is selected and placed in the position The selection process must comply with human rights and privacy legislation and be conducted in a fair and consistent manner. To provide a positive candidate experience, each step in the selection process must be handled effectively.

LO2 Define ways to measure the success of a selection method.

One criterion is reliability, which indicates the method is free from random error, so that measurements are consistent. A selection method should also be valid, meaning that performance on the measure (such as a test score) is related to what the measure is designed to assess (such as job performance). A selection method also should be generalizable, so that it applies to more than one specific situation. Each selection method should have utility, meaning it provides economic value greater than its cost.

LO3 Compare some of the common methods used for obtaining and verifying candidate information.

Nearly all organizations gather information through employment applications and résumés. These methods are inexpensive, and job applications standardize basic information received from all applicants. The information is not necessarily reliable, because each applicant provides the information. References and background checks help to verify the accuracy of the information.

LO4 Describe the major types of employment tests.

Employment tests and work samples may be used to narrow the applicant pool. Any test or assessment must measure abilities associated with successful job performance. Increasingly, employment tests are conducted on mobile devices.

Physical ability tests need to be job related. Cognitive ability tests, or intelligence tests, tend to be valid and available at low cost. Job performance tests, review of work samples, personality, and integrity tests, may also be used. Under certain circumstances it may be possible to conduct pre-employment substance tests. A medical examination should be conducted only after making a conditional job offer.

LO5 Discuss how to conduct effective interviews and make and communicate the selection decision.

Interviews are widely used in the selection process. Structured, situational, and behavioural interviews provide greater validity than unstructured interviews. Interviews are costly and may introduce bias into the selection process; however, preparation and training as well as applications of technology are increasingly being used to make interviewing more efficient and effective.

Hiring decisions need to be based on objective criteria and may be made by supervisors, managers, or HR professionals, or through data-driven methods.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What activities are involved in the selection process? Think of the last time you were hired for a job. Which of those activities were used in selecting you? Should the organization that hired you have used other methods as well? What advice do you have to the organization about providing an excellent candidate experience?
2. Why should the selection process be designed to align with the organization's job descriptions and specifications?
3. Suppose a manufacturer using analytics to support their hiring decisions, learns that employees who graduated from one Polytechnic/College/Institute of Technology take longer to get up to speed than employees who graduated from another Polytechnic/College/Institute of Technology. How might applying the data to hiring decisions increase the risk of discrimination? How could the manufacturer use the information in a non-discriminatory way? Consider the HR How-To in preparing your responses.
4. Choose two of the selection methods identified in this chapter. Describe how you can compare them in terms of reliability, validity, ability to generalize, utility, and compliance with human rights legislation.
5. Suppose your organization needs to hire a data scientist, and you are reviewing LinkedIn profiles of candidates who have applied for the available position. What kinds of information will you want to review about the candidates' work experience? What kinds of information will you want to consider about their education? How important are the candidates' "Summary"? What methods would you use for verifying or exploring this information? Why would you use those methods?
6. For each of the following jobs, select two kinds of tests you think would be most important to include in the selection process. Explain why you chose those tests.
   a. City bus driver
   b. Pharmaceutical sales representative
   c. HR professional
   d. Barista
7. Suppose you are a human resources professional at a large retail chain. You want to improve the company's hiring process by standardizing interviews, so that every time someone is interviewed for a particular job category, that applicant answers the same questions. You also want to make sure the questions asked are relevant to the job and comply with

human rights legislation. Think of three questions to include in interviews for each of the following jobs. For each question, state why you think it should be included.

a. Front-line sales person at one of the company's stores
b. Store manager
c. Accounts payable clerk at company headquarters

8. How can organizations improve the quality of their interviewing so that interviews provide valid information?
9. The following questions are favourites of three seasoned hiring managers. For each of the following questions provide your opinion of:
   i. what you think the interviewer was after.
   ii. the "best" answer.
   iii. the "worst" answer.
   a. Del Rollo, director of hospitality, Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Niagara-on-the-Lake asks, "What is the greatest service experience you've had?"
   b. Gary Hellard, manager of recruiting, WestJet Airlines, Calgary asks, "Tell us what began as your most frustrating or tough day, and what you did so that it ended up being your most productive day."
   c. Nancy Blair, office leader, Egon Zehnder International Inc., Calgary asks, "What do you hope this job is not?
10. Some organizations set up a selection process that is long and complex. In some people's opinion, this kind of selection process not only is more valid but also has symbolic value. What can the use of a long, complex selection process symbolize to job seekers? How do you think this would affect the organization's ability to attract the best employees?

Source: Question 9 is based on: Tony Martin, "Why Are They Asking Me This?" Report on Business, The Globe and Mail, September 26, 2007, www.theglobeandmail.com, retrieved September 27, 2007.

EXPERIENCING HR—ELEVATING CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

To get a sense of what it is like to perform work of an HR professional, conduct research about how to create a positive candidate experience. Summarize the advice and recommendations provided by various credible sources and organize your key points to align with the steps in the selection process illustrated in Figure 5.1. Do your recommendations and advice provide a comprehensive map of a candidate's journey through each stage of a selection process? Who would be accountable for designing, implementing, and sustaining the talent acquisition practices and processes recommended (e.g., HR professional, supervisor/manager, executive leader)? Identify two or three things that could be implemented quickly and cost-effectively, and have a significant effect on candidate experience. How would you measure the impact and/or results? Be prepared to share your findings and insights in a class discussion.

CASE STUDY: EVIDENCE-BASED HRM

Assessing the Impact of the Candidate Experience

The IBM Smarter Workforce Institute examined information from more than 7,000 job applicants across a variety of industries and from thousands of organizations in 45 countries and territories to determine the evidence-based outcomes associated with satisfying and dissatisfying candidate experiences.

Research revealed that applicants who were satisfied with their candidate experience, regardless of whether they received a job offer, "are more than twice as likely to recommend the hiring organization to others who were not satisfied (62 percent vs. 28 percent)" and are "twice as likely to become a customer of the hiring organization." Additionally, candidates' experiences are "amplified"—more than 60 percent "talk about their experiences with friends and family."

The research also revealed that the candidate experience had far-reaching impacts. For organizations aspiring to hire their first-choice candidates—research findings included that "candidates who were satisfied with their experience are 38 percent more likely to accept a job offer." These findings provide evidence of the organizational benefits associated with providing a positive and satisfying candidate experience.

Johnson & Johnson, the global pharmaceutical and health care company, recently conducted a series of surveys and focus groups and learned that candidates experienced frustration with their hiring process. Sjored Gehring, global vice-president of talent acquisition, and his team established a bold vision to reimagine their talent acquisition process. That was no small task given that Johnson & Johnson receives approximately one million applications for more than 25,000 job openings annually. "We've started to see in job candidates the same expectations for a consumer-like experience that they're getting elsewhere," explained Gehring. Gehring and his team developed a transparent, mobile-friendly hiring platform, J & J Shine, that provides candidates with transparency including the ability to track their applications in real time—like Amazon customers can track their packages. J & J Shine is seamlessly integrated to an applicant tracking system that measures applicants' satisfaction rate with their job-seeking process using "Net Promoter Score," a metric extensively used to measure customer experience and predict business growth.

Questions

1. Is candidate experience a metric that should be used to assess an organization's selection process? Why or why not?
2. For each of the steps in the selection process (Figure 5.1), identify what job seekers would likely want in a positive candidate experience.
3. How can candidate experience translate into business performance?

Sources: Haiyan Zhang and Sheri Feinzig, "The far-reaching impact of candidate experience," IBM Smarter Workforce Institute, (2017), pp. 1-7; Ayn-Monique Kiahre, "3 Ways Johnson & Johnson is Taking Talent Acquisition to the Next Level," August 29, 2017, https;//www.jnj.com; and Andrew R. McIlvaine, "Johnson & Johnson Takes Steps to Make Hiring Shine," Recruiting Trends, October 24, 2017, www.recruitingtrends.com; and "What is Net Promoter?" https://www.netpromoter.com.

CASE STUDY: HRM SOCIAL

Conducting Background Checks via Social Media

Searching for a job candidate's name online is so easy that it seems like an obvious way to check the person's background. Public information could show, for example, whether the person really is vice-president of marketing at XYZ Corporation or has done something that could later embarrass the employer. Indeed, research indicates that employers are interested. A survey by CareerBuilder found that 39 percent use social media to research candidates, and a survey by recruiting firm Challenger, Grey and Christmas, found even greater use: 22 percent said they always review social media, and another 38 percent said they sometimes do so.

Employers need to proceed with caution, however. A particular concern is to protect candidates' privacy and avoid discrimination, yet the very nature of social media encourages sharing the kinds of information related to prohibited grounds of discrimination. For example, photos and descriptions of activities can tell or suggest a person's age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, family status, ethnicity, and disabilities. Employers can try to avoid discrimination and privacy violations by postponing their search of social media until after they have identified a candidate they want to hire.

A better way to use social media is to involve someone who is not the decision maker. The company can use a designated HR employee or contract with a service that specializes in screening job candidates. The service uses criteria from the employer—for example, screening out candidates who misrepresent their experience or education. It gathers information about the candidate and reports to the employer only the job-related information gathered. Before using a service such as this or conducting any background check, employers should obtain permission from the candidate.

Finally, a few companies have sought greater insight than what is available publicly by asking candidates for their passwords, so the employer can look at a candidate's private information. Experts advise against this practice, which is invasive, probably violates media sites' terms of use, and is likely to alienate many good candidates.

Questions

1. How well does searching social media fulfill the requirements of providing reliable, valid, high-utility, and legal information for selection decisions?
2. What would show up in a search of public information about your name? What is your advice to others about the importance of managing their online presence?

Sources: Ed Lieber, "How to Use Social Media to Find Employees," Small Business Trends, September 27, 2015, http://smallbusinesstrends.com; Catey Hill, "Your Boss Doesn't Care about Your Facebook, Twitter Profiles," MarketWatch, May 19, 2014, http://www.marketwatch.com; Rebecca Weiss, "Social Media's Impact on Hiring, Management and Discipline: What Every Employer Needs to Know," Lexology, September 2, 2013, http://www.lexology.com; CareerBuilder, "More Employers Finding Reasons Not to Hire Candidates on Social Media, Finds CareerBuilder Survey," news release, June 27, 2013, http://www.careerbuilder.com; Steve Bates, "Use Social Media Smartly When Hiring," Society for Human Resource Management, HR Topics and Strategy, March 19, 2013, http://www.shrm.org.

PART 3

Talent Management

CHAPTER 6

Training, Learning, and Development

CHAPTER 7

Managing Employees' Performance

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