

Test and Interview

Meaning of Test

Individuals differ in many respects including job-related abilities and skills. In order to select a right person for the job, individual differences in terms of abilities and skills need to be adequately and accurately measured for comparison.

This is done through a device called 'selection test'. Selection test is a device that uncovers the information about the candidate which is not known through application blank and interview. In this way, selection test is an adjunct to a selection method.

What is selection test? Test is defined differently by different writers and psychologists. Some define test as "an objective and standardized measure of sample behavior". It is considered standardized because the procedure of administering the test, the environment in which the test is conducted, and method of calculating individual score are uniformly applied. It is called objective because test measures the individual differences in terms of their abilities and skills following an unbiased and scientific method avoiding interference of human factors.

Types of Tests

Tests are of twelve types. These tests are conducted by many organizations. It does not mean that every organization conducts all of these tests. Some organizations may not conduct a few tests. However, brief descriptions of these tests are mentioned below:

- 1. Written tests:** Written tests historically have served as significant input into the selection decisions. There has been renewed interest in written tests, since those that have been validated can aid significantly in the acquisition of efficient and effective workers.
- 2. Achievement tests:** To verify how he can achieve the target. Past experience can help the employees to satisfy the recruiters.
- 3. Intelligent tests:** The employee's intelligent level is determined here.
- 4. Performance tests:** Whether the employees perform well or not.
- 5. Honesty or polygraph (lie detector) tests:** The use of lie detector for verifying information on the application form can only be used for specific jobs, such as police officer, finance managers etc.
- 6. Aptitude tests:** Whether the employee is interested in the job or not can be determined by this test.

7. Psychological tests: The psychology of the employee is determined. The employees who are psychologically strong and do not get nervous do well.

8. Graphology (Handwriting analysis) tests: It has been said that an individual's handwriting can suggest the degree of energy, inhibitions, and spontaneity to be found in the writer, disclosing idiosyncrasies and elements of balance and control from which many personality-characteristics can be inferred.

9. Physical tests: To examine whether the candidate is physically fit for the job.

10. 1G. Personality tests: Through these tests a mental and behavioral quality i.e. personality level is measures.

11. Trainability Tests: For jobs in which training is necessary due to the skill level of the job applicants or the changing nature of the job, trainability tests are useful. Essentially, the goal is to determine the trainability of the candidate.

12. Work Sample: Work Sample tests measure the ability to do something rather than the ability to know something. These tests may measure motor skills or verbal skills, Motor skills include physically manipulating various job related equipment and verbal skills include problem solving and language skills.

Advantage of Testing

Irrespective of the nature of tests, companies can derive the following benefits from a well planned test:

1. Predicts Future Performance:

A well designed test can predict the future performance of an individual. Thus, test can be used for hiring personnel, transfer or promotion of the personnel for higher positions.

2. Diagnoses the situation and behavior:

Knowing why people behave the way one does requires understanding the particular variables/situation that cause behavior. Here again, well planned tests help understand the situation. For example, though decline in productivity could be caused by a host of factors, tests can help understand such decline due to human factors.

3. Offers Benefits of Economy of Scale:

Conducting tests on the whole serves cost effective as it offers the benefits of economy of scale. This is because tests when administered to a group save on both time and cost.

4. Uncover what not covered by Other Devices:

One important advantage of conducting tests is that they uncover qualifications and talents of the testee that cannot be detected by application blanks and interviews.

5. Serve as Unbiased Tools:

Based on reliability and validity norms, tests do also serve as unbiased tools of selection process.

6. Quantify the Test Results:

Above all, tests being quantifiable yield themselves to scientific and statistical analyses. Thus, tests also save basis for research in personnel issues and matters. Valid job-related tests will also pay off in increasing ability to identify in advance those employees who will perform most effectively in the organization.

Process for Developing a Testing Programme

When an organization decides to use tests as an instrument for selection process, it must develop a test programme which includes the choice of different tests and administering those tests so that the test results are optimal. Development of testing programme and its implementation requires careful planning, analysis, and experiment which call for specific skills.

If the HR department is not adequately prepared for this, it is advisable to engage industrial psychologist for the purpose.

In developing testing programme, the following steps are required:

1. Defining Job Performance Criteria and Predictors:

The basic objective of selection tests is to find a match between a job and job holder so that the job is performed effectively. For this purpose, the job holder must possess certain traits or qualities. However, what those qualities are and the degree to which these qualities must be possessed by the prospective job holder must be ascertained precisely.

Job description and job specification are the instruments which provide information for this. If the job specification has been prepared in detail indicating various traits, these can be taken as predictors of job performance. It implies that those who possess these traits tend to show better performance than those who do not.

2. Choosing Tests for Measuring Traits:

After determining the traits that must be possessed by the job holders, the type of tests that are likely to measure these traits must be chosen. In choosing the tests, it must be ensured that these are valid and reliable, that is, they measure the traits specified and measure these accurately.

In order to use the tests for selection purpose, it is desirable to administer these tests on the present employees to determine their validity. Apart from validity and reliability, other factors which should be considered in the choice of tests are ease of administration, cost involved, and evaluation of results.

3. Administering Tests:

When the tests are chosen and their validity and reliability are established, these tests can be administered to test candidates' traits. In administering the tests, care should be taken that physical and psychological situations are conducive and the candidates are at ease to show their usual performance.

4. Analyzing the Results of the Tests:

When testing is over, the results of the tests should be calculated. Most of the tests are objective type with each answer of a question predicts the possession or non-possession of a particular trait. These answers may be assigned points to obtain total score. If facilities exist, calculation of results should be computerized to quicken the process. After obtaining the test scores, these may be analyzed, interpreted, and used in selection process.

In using the test results, there may be situations when a candidate may have consistently high scores on all the tests or inversely, he may have low scores consistently. Not much problem comes in this situation as higher scorers may be considered for selection while lower scorers may be weeded out. In another situation, a candidate may have outperformed in some tests but underperformed in others.

In such a case, taking aggregate of all the tests for the purpose of comparison may pose a problem. In order to solve this problem, either a cut-off point is taken as the basis to ensure that the candidate has at least the minimum degree of all the desirable traits or weight may be provided on the basis of relative importance of different desirable traits. In the weight system, the test scores are multiplied by the weights to obtain aggregate which may become comparable.

Limitations of Tests

Tests suffer from certain limitations also.

Hence, while applying tests for selection of candidates the following guidelines should be observed:

- (i) Tests should be used as supplements rather than as substitute for any method of selection.
- (ii) Tests are better at predicting failure than success. They often determine which applicants will not or cannot perform a job satisfactorily instead who can or will perform in effective and efficient manner.
- (iii) Tests are not precise measures of one's skills and traits but only samples of one's total behavior. So to say, tests with highest scores do not necessarily mean better choices for a job than those with lower scores.
- (iv) Tests should be validated in the organization in which these are administered. Here, validity means the degree to which a test actually measures what it is meant to measure.
- (v) In order to make the test scores comparable, tests should be administered under standard conditions to all applicants tested for a particular job".
- (vi) Tests should be designed, administered, interpreted and evaluated only by trained and competent persons.
- (vii) The candidates should be provided with samples of tests or answering queries so as to warm up them before the test is administered.

Meaning of Interview

The interview is the heart of the employment process. Interviewing is considered to be the most useful selection method. The interview is a conversation with a purpose. According to Michael, "An interview is a face to face, oral observational and personal appraisal method." Its aim is to provide the candidate with information about the job and the company and also to give the candidate a favorable impression of the company.

There are three purposes that may be served – obtaining information, giving information, and motivation. It is widely used not only in employee selection but for placement, orientation, appraisal, disciplinary action exit or separation, counseling and general problem-solving. The final selection is partly based on the performance of the candidate in different test and partly on his performance in the final interview.

The candidate has to appear before the interviewer or a group of interviewers. The candidate's overall personality is judged in the interview. But it has been criticized because of the scope for bias.

In general term, interview is a conversation with purpose and depending on the objectives of interview. Interviewing the candidates is an important aspect of selection procedure. The final selection is partly based on the performance of the candidate in different tests and partly on his performance in the final interview. In the interview, the candidate has to appear before the interviewer or a board of interviewers.

The candidate's overall personality is judged in the interview. The interview may last for 10 to 20 minutes or even more. Various questions are asked from the candidate in order to judge his ability, knowledge, capacity and so on. Interviewing technique is used in all companies and in the case of all categories of staff to be recruited.

Objectives of interview

1. To get an opportunity to judge on applicant's qualifications and characteristics as a basis for sound selection and placement. On the basis of the information obtained about the family background, training, educational and other qualifications, personality, characteristics, aptitude, interests and skills of an applicant — the interviewer tries to arrive at as impartial a decision as possible.

He may decide to hire him, to reject him or to pass him on to another step in the interview if it is not the final one. This type of interview is referred to as selection or placement interview.

2. To give an applicant essential facts about the job and the company (nature and hours of work, medical requirements, opportunities for advancement, special hazards, employee benefits and services, company policies, etc.) in order to enable him to decide intelligently whether he should or should not accept the employment. The interview is generally a non-reciprocal relation between the individuals concerned.
3. To establish a rapport, or a feeling of mutual understanding and confidence, between the personnel department and the applicant who is to be employed.
4. To promote goodwill towards the company whether the interview culminates in employment or not. The goodwill is generated by unfailing courtesy to the interviewees, by providing them with vocational literature, pamphlets, by offering constructive suggestions, and by showing interest in them.
5. Interviewing is an invaluable tool of disciplinary action, grievance handling and relations with unions.
6. To solve problems such as when counseling a student conferring with a career guidance person or discussing a grievance with a superior. Such interviews are information-gathering

or fact findings meetings; but their main purpose is to solve a problem. Such interviews are also termed as counseling interviews.

7. To get a real feel of the candidate, observe his appearance, mannerisms, confidence, and typical ways of reacting to questions of various sorts.
8. To find out why an employee is leaving the company and seeking job elsewhere. Such interviews are called exit or termination interviews.
9. Despite the fact the interviews are often regarded as costly, inefficient and non-valid procedure for selection purposes, they are widely used because the psychological tests and application blanks do not give correct information about the candidate as a real flesh and blood human being.

Types of Interviews

Four types of interviews for selection have been identified. These are:

1. Preliminary Interview:

The interviews conducted to screen the applicants to decide whether further detailed interview will be required are called preliminary interviews. The candidate is given freedom by giving job details during the interview to decide whether the job will suit him.

One of the drawback associated with the preliminary interview is that it might lead to the elimination of many desirable candidates in case interviewers do not have much and proper experience in evaluating candidates. The positive argument, if any, for this method is that it saves time and money for the company.

2. Patterned Interview:

In this interview, the pattern of the interview is decided in advance. What kind of information is to be sought or given, how the interview is to be conducted, and how much time is to be allotted to it, all these are worked out in advance. In case interviewee drifts, he/she is swiftly guided back to the structured questions. Such interviews are also called standardized interviews.

3. Depth Interview:

As the term itself implies, depth interview tries to portray the interviewee in depth and detail. It, accordingly, covers the life history of the applicant along with his/her work experience, academic qualifications, health, attitude, interest, and hobbies. This method is particularly suitable for executive selection. Expectedly, depth interview involves more time and money in conducting it.

4. Stress Interview:

Such interviews are conducted for the jobs which are to be performed under stressful conditions. The objective of stress interview is to make deliberate attempts to create stressful or strained conditions for the interviewee to observe how the applicant behaves under stressful conditions.

The common methods used to induce stress include frequent interruptions, keeping silent for an extended period of time, asking too many questions at a time, making derogatory remarks about the candidate, accusing him that he is lying and so on. The purpose is to observe how the candidate behaves under the stressful conditions – whether he loses his temper, gets confused or frightened.

Limitations of Interview

Research studies have firmly established that, among all selection methods, interview has been the most researched and carefully documented method.

However, interview suffers from some limitations also.

1. Interviewers may not have a clearly defined technique developed. This results in lack of validity in evaluation of the candidate.
2. There is always variation in offering scoring points to the candidate by the interviewers.
3. Interview can help judge the personality of the candidate but not his ability for the job.
4. A single characteristic of the candidate found out on the basis of interview, may affect the judgment of the interviewer on other qualities of the applicant. This is called 'halo effect'.
5. The biases of interviewers may cloud the objectivity of interview.
6. Finally, interview is a time consuming and expensive device of selection.

The above listed limitations or defects in interview underline the need for observing certain guidelines to make interviews more effective.

Importance of Interview

(i) Helps in Selection of a suitable candidate – Candidates who have claimed different qualities in their application can be tested directly through face to face conversation and those who are suitable can be selected.

(ii) Exchange of information – Face to face conversation helps to exchange views and opinions between interviewer and interviewee and any doubt regarding the terms and conditions of the job can be cleared then and there only.

(iii) Helps to know the facilities – Interview helps to know the facilities offered and opportunities available to the employees and also the terms and conditions of employment. This helps the candidates to decide whether to offer their service or not to the organization.

(iv) Helps to tell about company – Interview helps to tell about company's policy, rules, regulations, discipline and conditions of appointment. If the conditions are acceptable, candidates may accept the job and vice-versa.

(v) Widely accepted tool – Interview is the oldest and most commonly used device in selecting the employees. Though test and group discussion are conducted to select the employees, they do not provide complete information about the candidates. Under such circumstances interview acts as a great help to the organization.

Guidelines for Successful Interviewing

(1) The interviewer should be competent, trained and experienced and understand the nature and requirements of the job under consideration.

(2) Adequate information about the interviewee must be obtained before the interview.

(3) Privacy and sufficient time must be provided to each interviewee.

(4) Interviewee must be made to feel at ease so that he does not hesitate in giving relevant facts about himself.

(5) Questions to be asked in the interview must related to the requirements of the job, and they must be prepared well in advance.

(6) Interviewers must be straight forward and frank instead of being shrewd and clever.

(7) Arguments and personal remarks should be avoided by the interviewers.

(8) The feelings of the candidate should not be hurt.

(9) Personal prejudices about the candidates must not be allowed to affect the selection of the right kind of person.

(10) Proper record of interview must be kept after the candidate has left the interview room.