

Today's selection processes are impartial, rational and effective. To what extent is this statement a myth?

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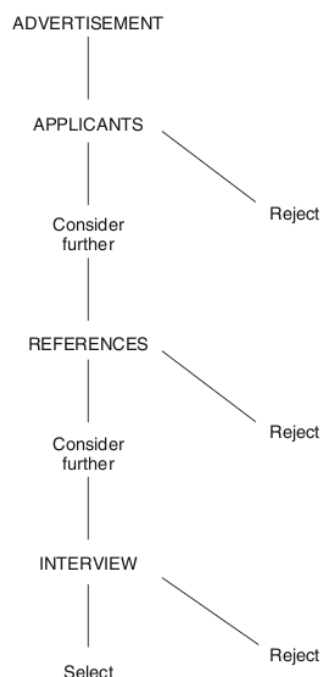
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Nowadays there many ways an organisation can attract candidates to apply for their vacancy, examples are ads, word of mouth, government or private agencies, job fairs, etc. The candidates go through a selection process or a filtering process, which aims to deliver the best employees to the organisation.

This paper is going to introduce today's selection processes and elaborate on their positive and negative aspects.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the classic stages to select a candidate for an organisation (Cook, 2004). Potential candidates arrive as pack of curriculum vitae (CV), motivation letter (also cover letter) and an application form. Different selection methods apply different ways to filter the candidates and according to Cook (2004) fulfill six different characteristics: reliable, valid, fair, acceptable, cost effective, easy to use. For the matter of this paper we will concentrate on techniques to avoid unfair discrimination as well as being rational and efficient. Below there is short description of those characteristics according to People and Organisations Group 1 presentation (2011).



Fair - ensuring that right through the process decisions are made on merit alone. Getting this wrong can have serious legal implications.

Efficient - cost effective in methods and sources. Crucial point is the amount of time it takes to conduct interviews etc – time away from normal job increases cost. Also bottlenecks at sign-off points increase the time.

Effective/Rational - producing enough but not too many suitable candidates, and ensuring identification of the best fitted for the job and organisation. Getting this wrong can lead to inefficient workforce, low morale, high staff turnover, etc.

Interviewing

According to CIPD website (2011) *“interviews remain popular because as well as providing information to predict performance, interviews also give an opportunity for the interviewer and interviewee to meet face to face and exchange information”*. Another positive aspect of interviews is that they allow both candidate and organisation to exchange more detail information, e.g. candidate can ask about the job and familiarize him/herself with the organisation, while organisation can present the job and itself as well as assess the candidate skill and if they match the job requirements. Unfortunately this method is not efficient and often can be partial. Research evidence highlights the limitations of the traditional interview as a poor predictor of a candidate's performance in the job (Herriot, 1989). Information is gathered from the interview in a relatively unsystematic manner, and judgements may be made on candidates for a variety of reasons.

Anderson and Shackleton argue that interviewing are very often bias, because the interviewer may like or dislike the interviewee or because interviewee has similar working background, experience, attitude and vision. In addition to that Armstrong (2006) suggest interviews to be held by different interviewers or interviewing panel in order to avoid partiality.

Assessment centres

This method gather all candidates at the same time and assess the candidates using various techniques. Assessment centers allow candidates to show their skills using various test cases/ scenarios as part of the selection process. It's considered to be fair way for selection process, because candidates are given same task and time to show their abilities and various skills in a similar to the real organisation's environment and matching job position. Candidates are given the chance to get to know the organisation, while the interviewers can gather much more information for a candidate compared to conventional selection processes. Schmidt and Hunter (1998) discovered that assessment centers cannot predict performance of a candidate. Another disadvantage is that they are very expensive and time consuming, making them usable only in big organisations and for senior management positions. Cook (2004) adds that Assessment centres place the candidates in a group and fairly dominant ones in a group of extremely dominants will look weak and inefficient.

Selection boards/panels

This selection process is more official and gathers different parties interested in the selection decision in a larger interviewing panels. The only advantage this method provides is that many people can look and assess the candidate and provide and compare impression/notes on the spot. The disadvantages are that questions are unplanned and asked randomly, one member of the board can influence or dominate the other members and candidate cannot justice themselves. Armstrong (2006) confirms those disadvantages and elaborate that selection board tend to support more confident candidates, not taking in consideration superficially impressive candidates and underestimate qualities of those who are less effective in front of big group of people.

This method is considered to be neither impartial not effective.

Online recruiting

E-recruiting uses the Internet to announce vacancies and later on CV and job information are exchanged through email. A more recent and advanced e-recruiting is making use of web 2.0 technologies, e.g. social networks like Facebook or MySpace. There are also specialized social networks such as LinkedIn, where personnel profiles are provided including full CVs of potential candidates. Another recent discovery is the corporate blogging, where current employees are asked to blog about their job position, work environment and organisation in general. The information is revealed and used to attract new employees.

Corporate websites are also a well known source for recruiting. They are either as a section of the main website or a special branded vacancies dedicated website. In both cases those are giving detail information about vacancies, personnel specification, benefits and guidelines how to apply online and fill in tests.

According to Armstrong (2006) the advantages of e-recruiting are that it can reach a wider range of potential candidates and is quicker and cheaper than traditional methods. More information and communication can happen through the website and internet, e.g. supply CV details or references. The disadvantage is that it may produce too many irrelevant or poor candidates and is not the most popular job-seeking method. This way of selecting candidates is considered to be unbiased, because the initial processing of the candidates is done by a machine pre-programmed with certain criteria same for all candidates, but there are no guarantee for effectiveness.

Interviewing panels

This selection process involved two or more interviewers, often human resource specialist and line manager, who are gathering to interview a candidate. The advantage of the process is that information is shared as well as interviewers can discuss impressions of the candidate and clear superficial judgements. Often is considered to be rational and effective way of selecting good candidates.

Graphology

Graphology is a selection process method based on candidates handwriting. Candidates are asked to write about their personality and this is used to predict the future performance in a role. This method is not common, except France and some other European countries. Different studies have shown that this method is ineffective and cannot predict candidate's performance. Schmidt and Hunter (1998) even argues that the little effectiveness come from the content candidates provide and not the actual handwriting. On the other hand its proved that handwriting differs between people due to genetic and personality reason.

Schmidt and Hunter (1998) established that the reason why intelligence (general mental ability or GMA) is such a good predictor of job performance is because 'more intelligent people acquire job knowledge more rapidly and acquire more of it and it is this knowledge of how to perform the job that causes their job performance to be higher'. Their research clearly indicates that the combination of structured interviews and intelligence tests is the most effective in terms of predictive validity. The Table 1.1 shows the index of predictive validity for overall job performance of General Mental Ability (GMA) scores combined with a second predictor.

Personnel Measure	Validity (r)	Multiple R	Additional validity from adding a second predictor	% Increase in validity
GMA tests	.51			
Interview (structured)	.51	.63	.12	24%
Job knowledge tests	.48	.58	.07	14%
Integrity tests	.41	.65	.14	27%
Interview (unstructured)	.38	.55	.04	8%
Assessment centres	.37	.53	.02	4%
Biographical data	.35	.52	.01	2%
Conscientiousness tests	.31	.60	.09	18%
Reference checks	.26	.57	.06	12%
Job experience (years)	.18	.54	.03	6%
Years of education	.10	.52	.01	2%
Interests	.10	.52	.01	2%
Graphology	.02	.51	0	0%
Age	-.01	.51	0	0%

Conclusion

Today we benefit from various selection processes emerging throughout the last century. They are used in different cases in order for the organisation to find the best matching vacancies candidates. In this paper we have present the most popular and common selection process and tried to highlight their advantages and disadvantages in respect to being fair, rational and effective.

The finding this paper come across show us that there is no one single selection process that meet the three objectives stated above. They can be considered as trade-offs and often one contradict the other by either consuming too much resource and being irrational or most often being unfair.

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