Objective Selection And Recruitment For Equal Opportunities Employment

The process of identifying the characteristics, qualities and skills for a job is known as job analysis or position evaluation and the process of identifying if a candidate for the job possesses the required dimensions is known as psychometric testing, which I wrote about in the February issue of ‘Business Today’, when I discussed about ‘Difficult People At Work’ and the need to recruit people with the right attitude.

More and more successful global organisations are benefiting from the use of psychometric tests. Properly applied, these tests can affect the quality of your selection and individual staff or career development decision making process. Please don’t get me wrong. I’m not being a sales canvasser for products of psychometric tests, but only endeavouring to create an awareness within ‘Our Sri Lankan Corporate World’ on the advantages of a professional ‘Person to Job’ matching tool.

Some of the advantages of this system are that,

It saves cost by helping to ensure that you recruit the best person for the job.

Leads directly to improved performance by enabling you to identify the training needs at recruitment.

Promotes staff satisfaction and reduces turnover of key staff by ensuring recognisable fair and accurate decision making.

Selection Errors

The cost of selection errors can be considered in a number of different ways.

High staff turnover which in turn increases recruitment costs. This can vary between 10 percent of base pay for clerical staff to 40 percent of base pay for senior managers/professionals.

Cost of training of the new staff.

Poor selection will also result in hidden costs of incompetence and lost opportunity. Incompetence often leads to pressure and stress on the incumbent of the position as well as his/her peers.

The overall cost of poor selection is incalculable. In an early 1994 survey in the United Arab Emirates, it was found that it almost equalled the ASR (annual salary rate) of the incumbent. And in instances where labour laws are tight, (like in Sri Lanka where you cannot terminate an employee on the grounds of incompetence) where voluntary or negotiated severance pay is given, it will be far greater than this.

Against the enormous cost of poor selection, occupational or psychometric tests are relatively inexpensive.

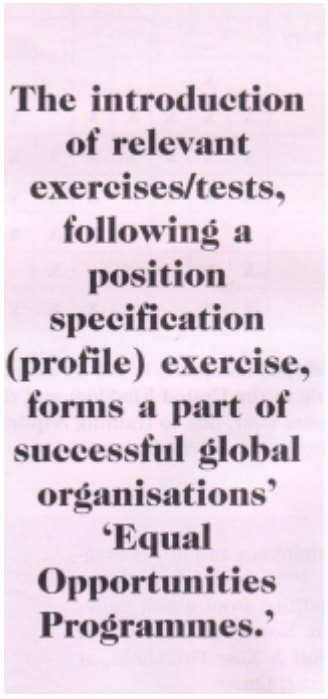


Objective interviewing

Interviewing by trained personnel, against a clear position specification can achieve a great deal. Objective occupational or psychometric tests aid the selection process by ensuring that candidates are treated equally on properly administered and relevant exercises. The results of these exercises can be used to challenge stereotyped judgements made by interviewers and enable a more objective analysis

than is possible by interviewing alone. It is for these reasons that the introduction of relevant exercises/tests, following a position specification (profile) exercise, forms a part of successful global organisations' 'Equal Opportunities Programmes.' (I know of a senior director of a company I used to work for approximately a decade and a half ago, who opens an interview with the words 'tell me something about yourself, as the candidate walks into the interview room and even before the candidate could sit down.)

However, many interviewers are superficial and still worse, the interviewer may do much of the talking, asking closed and leading questions, from which a very subjective decision is made, based on relatively little hard data.



Different types of exercises in 'Psychometries' family

'Ability Tests' known as attainment tests are designed to assess the result of formal education and training.

'Aptitude Tests' measure the ability to acquire further knowledge or skills.

Interest Inventories' contain questions which might cover hobbies, activities at school/university and general life, experiences which seek to measure the individual's career direction.

‘Personality Inventories’ are designed to measure the key personality attributes relevant to successful performance in a wide range of jobs.

I am not aware of any locally developed computer based or manual psychometric tests. These are available in the United Kingdom and the United States. Import prices can be quite dear, due to training required for licence from suppliers to administer exercises/tests.