

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

NO CHEATING POSSIBLE WHEN GETTING THE JOB

I had a giggle a few weeks ago when reading an article in this magazine on how difficult employers make interviews. Interviews are in fact the easiest recruitment procedure to 'learn how to perform' given that they are reliant so much on 'chemistry' and other intangible criteria they are the most subjective, unreliable recruitment tool. In fact, research has shown (Hunter & Hunter, 1984), that interviews are only slightly more reliable than recruiting on the basis of astrology!

Well, here with an update Career Connections has just made recruitment a whole lot more complicated, for candidates but objective for employers. We've teamed up with an organization called Assessment & Development Consultants, who offer employers 130 different tools to use when assessing potential (or developing existing) staff. This is the world's most extensive range of exercises, and international clients include over 700 blue chip organizations including Diageo, Unilever, British Airways, HSBC etc. In addition to the usual ability and personality (psychometrics) testing, employers are turning to these exercises that are designed to generate behavior similar to that required for success in the position being recruited. In other words, work simulation. A combination of such exercises, especially when including with psychometrics, is recognized internationally as the most accurate recruitment process.

The exercises are divided up to mirror your typical work day – where you work in groups, on a one to one and alone. Group exercises typically last 40-60 minutes, observed throughout by trained assessors, and tell employers how you interact in a team environment. Depending on the brief, group candidates could be competing or liaising together. One to one exercises could include you 'interviewing' or appraising' trained role players as well as 'bargaining with a supplier or dealing with a customer complaint'. You could be asked to interview staff members so as to get information to make important business decisions, then be called upon to present that information and defend your decision. When working alone you could be given an in-tray or computer email in-box to clear, organize, prioritize, or you could be given information to analyze and report on/make decisions on.

Before you despair, let me say that these tools are actually good news for potential candidates. Firstly, they have a proven success in predicting performance so offer you a 'level playing field' where previous experience is not the only criteria used to short-list for the job. Because everything is standardized, everyone has the same opportunity to show their ability. The process is far more objective than an interview as you are observed by a team of trained assessors, who have been trained to British Psychological Society standards and who will be rating you against a number of job related behaviors. Given the range of exercises, we can choose those that are relevant to your level (from graduate to recruit to CEO) and your field (from HR to production manufacturing). The assessment centre is fair in that it will allow you to show your abilities in various different situations. So how best to approach this latest recruitment minefield? There is little you can do to prepare. Just make sure you arrive in time and have had a good nights sleep. But the most important advice is to be yourself. These tools have been put together by double PhDs in occupational psychology – so forget trying to guess what assessors are looking for – cheating, I'm afraid, is impossible!

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