Assessment Center Trends

Assessment center issues that have emerged and the resulting trends

A WRIPAC sponsored presentation by Dennis A. Joiner

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Issue: ACs What Are They?

- Multiple Job Simulation Exercises
- Opportunity for Candidates to Demonstrate KSAs
- Standardized Evaluation by Multiple Trained Observers Using Multiple Testing Techniques
- “Not a Place”
Issue: Why Use ACs?

- Legal Issues
- Employee Associations
- Fairness
- Validity
**Issue: How to Justify the Cost**

- **Public Sector:** Primarily Consequences of Less Defensible Methods = Fear of Litigation
- **Private Sector:** Primarily Cost Benefit Analysis = Return on Investment (300+%)
- **Public & Private = Higher Validity**
  - Private More a Utility Issue
  - Public More a Face Validity and Candidate Acceptance Issue
Issue: Purpose of Assessment

or How are the Assessment Results Used?

- Employee Selection
- Promotion
- Career Development and Training
  - Organizational Development
  - Individual Development
  - Skills Banking/Workforce Reallocation
  - Targeted Training “Rifle vs Shotgun”
Issue: Candidate Orientation

- Reduce Test Anxiety
- “Level the Playing Field”
- Undo Misconceptions
Issue: Goals of Orientation vs Career Development vs Candidate Training

- Orientation = Reduce Test Stress
- Career Development = Skills Development
- Candidate Training = Make Money for Trainer
Issue: Candidate Orientation Methods

- Written Information
- Live Orientation Session(s)
- Video Tapes
  - Viewed During Live Orientation
  - Viewed at Work Sites
  - Viewed at Home
Issue: What ACs Don’t Measure Well

- Technical Knowledge - Better Methods Exist
- Past Performance/Track Record/Motivation on the Job
- Candidate May Have Skills, but May Not Apply those Skills on the Job

ACs = Skills Assessment Snapshot

“Not a Panacea!”
Issue: How to Score Candidates - the Search for the Best Scoring Model

- Consensus (Traditional)
- Mechanical (Statistical)
- Combination Methods
Issue: How Much Assessor Training?

- One Day vs Two Days or More

- Private Sector vs Public Sector
  (Traditional Model vs Streamlined)

- Behavioral Recording vs Frame of Reference Training Model
Issue: What are ACs Actually Assessing?

- Behavioral Dimensions vs Exercise Performance (Exercise Effect)

- Dimensions vs Tasks vs Competencies...

KEY: Structured Evaluation of Job Relevant Worker Characteristics
Issue: How to Reduce the Costs?

- Screening Down Candidate Group
  - Technical Knowledge Written Tests
  - Written Exercises (Inbaskets, etc.)
  - Situational Judgment Tests (SJTss)
Some Jurisdictions using SJTs to screen down

- City of Anaheim, CA
- City of Lakeland, FL
- City of Minneapolis, MN
- City of St. Paul, MN
- East Bay Municipal Utility District, CA
- King County, WA
- State of New Jersey
- State of Nevada
- University of California Police Department
- Washoe County, NV
You have noticed that there is a lack of cooperation and trust among the employees in the organization you manage. This counter-productive behavior is adversely affecting both the quality and the quantity of the work produced by the employees. You would . . .

A. Inform the employees that failure to cooperate and work harmoniously will result in disciplinary action.

B. Bring in someone to do some team building with the employees.

C. Meet with the employees to discuss your observations and identify the cause of the interpersonal problems.

D. Change some of the work assignments in order to attain a more cohesive and cooperative work group.

1. Most Likely ______  2. Least Likely ______
Issue: How to Reduce the Costs?

- Streamlining the Process
  - Multiple Choice Inbaskets
  - Item-Rated Inbaskets
  - Multiple Hurdle AC Components
- Reduction in Scope of AC
  - Less Exercises
  - Shorter Exercises
  - Assessor Checklists vs Narrative Descriptions
**Issue: How to Reduce the Costs?**

- Cross-Classification Assessment Centers
  - City of Los Angeles - combined testing for common management tasks
  - State of Alabama - one management AC for 27 management job classifications
  - State of New Jersey - day in the life of a supervisor test for all supervisory jobs
Issue: New Technology - How Used?

- Use of Computers
  - Candidates - Use Optional vs Required
  - Assessors - Rating Form Template
  - Staff - Spreadsheets for Mechanical Scoring Models
Issue: New Technology - How Used?

- Use of Video
  - Stimuli for Candidate Response
    Example: Fire Code Inspection Video
  - Video of Candidates’ Responses
    Example: Jefferson Co. Alabama
  - Total Video Programs
    Example: Washington State Patrol
The Multiple Situations Exercise:
- Some Situations Require a Written Response
- Some Situations Require an Oral Response with Preparation Time
- Some Situations Require an Immediate Oral Response without Preparation Time

You Can Also Incorporate a Multiple-Choice Format SJT into AC as a Weighted Component.
Issue: Multiple Situations Exercise

Pros and Cons

- Advantage = Covers Multiple Types of Critical Job Tasks through the use of Multiple Scenarios

- Disadvantage = Not a True “Simulation” of the Job since Candidates Describe What They “Would” Do vs Demonstration of How They Would Do It

- Breadth of Exercise vs Depth
Some Jurisdictions using Multiple Situations Exercises

- City of Anaheim, CA
- City of Corpus Christi, TX
- City of Oakland, CA
- City of San Diego, CA
- City of St. Paul, MN
- East Bay Municipal Utility District, CA
- King County, WA, Sheriff's Department
- University of California - Davis Police
Assessment Center Trends: The Last 28 Years!

OTHER ISSUES OR QUESTIONS?
Further Reading/Handouts

- Assessment Centers: What’s New?
  D.A. Joiner, IPMA-HR’s Public Personnel Management Journal (PPM), Summer 2002

- Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations,
WRIPAC

HAPPY 25th ANNIVERSARY!
IPMAA

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY!
Dennis A. Joiner  
Assessment Specialist  
Dennis A. Joiner & Associates  
4975 Daru Way  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628  

Phone: (916) 967-7795  

Email: joinerda@pacbell.net