

# What is recruitment: definition and recruitment process

[Business](#), [Work](#)



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Outline the different selection methods that are available to organizations and discuss how the use of assessment centres might support the selection process

## Introduction

A core part to the central activities that underlie human resource management including acquisition, development, and reward of workers, is recruitment and selection. Recruitment and selection refers to the process of sourcing employees and entails attracting, screening, and selecting individuals qualified and suitable for a given position (Foot and Hook, 2011). Recruitment and selection of appropriate employees is paramount to the success of any organization ensuring that the organization has the necessary skills, knowledge and attributes enabling it to meet strategic and operational

requirements currently and in the future (Rees and French, 2010; Gusdorf, 2008).

Recruitment encompasses the search for and the obtaining of a pool of potential candidates with desirable knowledge, skills and experience to fill particular positions with defined descriptions and specifications. The purpose of this process is the obtaining of a wide pool of applicants which provides the greatest opportunity for the selection of the best and most suited people for the required roles (Foot and Hook, 2011). Selection, therefore, refers to a process involving effective, fair and equitable assessment activities through a variety of methods used to obtain suitable individuals to join an organization (Torrington et al, 2011).

Selection is one of the last stages in the recruitment and selection process and includes various methods through which an employer makes a choice of suitable individuals from the short-listed group in the recruitment stage, eventually leading to an employment decision (Gilmore and Williams, 2009). This paper outlines the different selection methods available to organizations including: selection criteria, structured interview format, telephone interviews, work simulations, peer assessment, informal meetings, and assessment centres. The latter technique is discussed at greater length focusing on how it might support the selection process.

### Selection methods/techniques

For success and effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process, an organization's information gathering and giving processes needs to be as

accurate as possible. To obtain such accurate information, multiple methods should be employed giving greater accuracy in matching people to jobs. Following is an outline of selection methods beginning with preliminary techniques.

## **Selection criteria**

This method is a filtering tool which entails asking candidates to formally address selection criteria. Given the time taken to complete the task, however, it can act as a deterrent to prospective candidates if given too early. It is therefore more effective when candidates undertake it as part of interview preparations, with the increased chance of securing the job justifying the investment of time (Gatewood et al, 2010).

## **Peer assessment**

This method involves the involvement of a range of people with different relationships to the candidate in inquiry about response and behaviour suitable for a particular work situation or role. This method is often used to predict future managerial and leadership success. It helps to derive feedback which has been tempered for bias and enhances the capacity to predict possible future capacity (Gusdorf, 2008).

## **Telephone and video interviews**

Assessment of candidates via telephone and video calls is often applicable in cases where the position is likely to attract candidates beyond national borders or in distant areas. It is often used to conduct initial discussions so as to make preliminary assessment of a candidate's suitability probably

before they make an appearance in person. Telephone and video interviews may also be useful in the shortlisting decision where there are a large number of candidates shortlisted as suitable (Gusdorf, 2008).

## **Structured interviews**

This is a popular method with many organizations relying almost exclusively on interviews and their outcomes to make selection decisions. It involves the assessment of skills, attributes and behaviour through inquiry based on behaviour. Interviews are useful in the assessment of a candidate's presentation and communications skills, as well as getting to know them and assessing their cultural and social fit to the work area and job specifications. Since it is a two-way engagement process, interviews also allow the candidate to get a more detailed overview of the role which they can use in their own decision making regarding the job opportunity (Gatewood et al, 2010).

However, interviews are artificial and are hindered by the formal environment which may not best show candidates potential behaviour in the work environment. Effectiveness of this method can be enhanced through the use of behavioural and competence based techniques increasing its predicative validity. This effectiveness is achieved through the use of inquiry on specific examples of a candidate's past behaviour in similar positions to what the new position entails. This enables the prediction of future behaviour in similar situations (Bratton and Gold, 2007).

## **Informal meetings**

Less formal opportunities for meeting and interacting with candidates and structured reference checking enhances the acquisition of further insight into behaviour and performance of a candidate. These are useful in observing a candidate's behaviour in an environment which is less formal and more relaxed bringing out traits that may have been inhibited or hindered. This method is best employed in the final phases of the selection process with the field narrowed down to the last few candidates (Gusdorf, 2008).

## **Work simulation exercises**

This method involves individual candidates or groups taking part in exercises that they would be required to undertake as part of the position. This method is effective in predicting future behaviour. Candidates are required to complete the task independently or groups are given the opportunity to interact towards the completion of the task respectively towards an acceptable outcome. Though it is time consuming and requires more resources than straightforward techniques such as interviews, this method is particularly useful as a follow-up and probing subsequent to an interview, or in shortlisting candidates prior to the conduct of interviews particularly in a case where there are numerous candidates (Gusdorf, 2008).

Work simulation may include the following exercises: leaderless group discussions in which participants are observed, evaluated, and rated on their performance gauging skills and attributes such as leadership, customer service orientation, teamwork, and relationship building, among others. Other techniques included in simulation include: the in-tray test which

simulates regular important tasks associated with and corresponding to requirements of the position with tasks including writing letters, memos, notes; researching information and analysing data evaluating aptitude of applicants; planning exercises to evaluate skills and attributes in planning and judgement; lectures and presentations to assess communication skills and perhaps expertise in a particular field or subject; and computer exercises to demonstrate computer and program skills (Gatewood et al, 2010).

### **Assessment centres**

Assessment centres are traditionally used and are cost effective in the performance of bulk or large scale recruitment exercises (when recruiting large numbers of people). Trained assessors in these centres evaluate candidates using a range of techniques including the methods outlined above including written tests, interviews, and individual or group exercises. The cumulative performance of a candidate in these activities is incorporated into a final collective decision which informs the employment decision. This method is typically conducted by trained specialists drawn from several departments and sectors of the organization as well as external consultants such as psychologists. The method varies in complexity and can be expensive, and as well is often targeted at more specialized and senior positions of management in an organization (Gatewood et al, 2010; Gusdorf, 2008).

The following section discusses how assessment centres support the selection process. To achieve this, the benefits of the technique and its

effectiveness in enabling the selection of the best suited candidate are discussed.

### How assessment centres can support the selection process

An effective recruitment strategy is paramount to the success of any organization (Torrington et al, 2011). The functions of recruitment and selection have the potential of becoming costly and inefficient if they are not approached proactively and in a systematic manner (Bratton and Gold, 2007). The assessment centre is an effective selection method which employs numerous dimensions such as situational tests in the evaluation and measurement of specific behaviours. This method consists of exercises and tests designed to assess individual skills and attributes which are compared to those required for the job. An individual candidate's behaviour is compared with dimensions being evaluated to determine their overall ability to perform the job (Gatewood et al, 2010).

For an organization engaged in recruitment of potential employees, there may be several constraints affecting its capacity to conduct a comprehensive selection process such as expense, time, and ability to handle large numbers of prospective candidates among others. Preoccupation with recruitment and selection will certainly divert a manager's attention from core activities of business which they could be usefully engaged in (Gilmore and Williams, 2009). Due to this consideration, and to ease the recruitment and selection process, assessment centres provide the required process to enhance



effectiveness and thereby acquire best suited individuals for job openings (Gusdorf, 2008).

The accuracy of interviews and other methods taken alone may be as low as 15% but when scores from a number of selection exercises combined in an assessment centre, accuracy rises above 60% (Gatewood et al, 2010). The conduct of diverse skills tests and exercises is beneficial in identifying skills and attributes that cannot be determined in an interview process such as aptitude, personality, honesty, abilities and motivation. They are therefore the most reliable method for assessing candidates with its tests and exercises often designed to predict how candidates will perform in a workplace situation (Torrington et al, 2011).

Assessment centres offer significant support to the employer or organization given their focus on the task unlike the internal HR and line managers (normally engaged in recruitment and selection) who often have other important tasks in the conduct of the organization's business (Gatewood et al, 2010). Even though its membership is often drawn within the organization, an assessment centre can dedicate an entire day or two conducting various selection techniques on candidates including complex and time intensive techniques such as realistic job interviews and lateral thinking exercises (workplace simulation), psychometric tests and practical demonstrations. Potential candidates are observed by teams of assessors and facilitators and are evaluated on performance and suitability for the job to be filled. With the enhanced focus on the selection process and properly designed tests which are standardized, reliable and valid in predicting an

applicant's future success and fit to the work situation and role, assessment centres are more adept and effective in the selection process (Bratton and Gold, 2007; Smith et al, 2013).

Given the involvement of a diverse range and specialties of assessors and facilitators (sometimes even including external agents), as well as use of merit in standardized tests and exercises, the use of assessment centres tends to be more objective and free from personal bias compared to popular methods such as interviews. This is a significant advantage of applicant testing (Gusdorf, 2008). The results of assessment centres are often numerical and can thus be validated statistically making them more reliable and valid. Such a careful and attentive selection of appropriate tests enable the drawing out of suitable skills, knowledge and ability ensuring the job filling achieves best mutual fit, meeting the needs of both the employer (organization) and the prospective employee. Best mutual fit is often essential for long term engagement in employment and reduction in turnover which is expensive for the organization and stressful for human resource management (Smith et al, 2013).

The capacity of assessment centres to handle greater numbers of shortlisted candidates from the recruitment process enables an assessment centre to further evaluate and assign greater weight to the candidate's demonstration of more desirable attributes than those with 'nice to have' but not essential traits and attributes. Often, without enhanced focus, attention and a realistic evaluation, these subtle differences would not be easy to pick out and would rarely inform or enhance the selection process (Rees and French, 2010;

Gatewood et al, 2010). In this regard, interviews among other selection methods are generally perceived to be unreliable in predicting performance of work in reality.

Use of employment centres in selection, though expensive, is however considered a cost-effective and efficient method (Bratton and Gold, 2007). A concern with the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process becomes significant in the consideration of the costs when things go wrong. This is in light of the consideration of the workforce as a source of competitive advantage. It is therefore essential to balance direct costs of the recruitment procedures with the indirect opportunity costs. Such costs include possible repeated recruitment and selection and other implicit costs from employee mismatch such as poor performance, reduced productivity, low quality products and services, dissatisfied customers and stakeholders, as well as low morale which could affect the entire workforce (Gusdorf, 2008). This consideration makes the utilization of valid, reliable and fair selection processes essential for success.

Valid and reliable results of the selection process ensure that unsuccessful candidates respect the decisions made and are even possibly available for future openings. Assessment centres are generally accepted as a fair method of selection, providing equal opportunities for all candidates and selecting on merit (Torrington et al, 2011). It is viewed as a preferential technique to remedy gender and/or racial among other claims of discrimination in HR decisions. This also enables the avoidance of negative

outcomes such as costly and reputation-damaging legal processes (Gatewood et al, 2010).

The rigour of the selection process and the detailed feedback gives candidates realistic expectations and a clearer understanding of the behaviours required for the position to be filled enhancing fit (Smith et al, 2013). The result of assessment and evaluation also eases the employment decision with the most suitable of a set of candidates forwarded for evaluation and consideration (Gusdorf, 2008).

## Conclusion

Recruitment and selection are important processes enabling an organization to obtain an effective workforce. This is linked to the success of the organization in its business. Several methods and techniques are available for the conduct of recruitment and selection processes, but most are hindered by inefficiency and unreliability in their prediction of best fit and future employee success at work. However, the use of assessment centres and its inherent appropriately designed tests and exercises enhances consistency, validity, reliability and fairness of the process with its output of criterion-based scores. These are reputed for accurately identifying successful candidates. This method therefore offers significant support to the selection process enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness.

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