

## Predicting Fit: Aligning Talent Systems – Part II

### Part 1 – Part 2

As outlined in [Part I of Predicting Fit](#), when it comes to making improvements to selection tools and processes, more prediction is always better.

Companies can make strategic improvements that positively impact talent metrics and add real value to the business by:

- Creating a more descriptive Realistic Job Preview
- Adding job simulations as a step in the selection process.

It's not complicated. It's a matter of taking the right path.

### The Path

Purposeful evaluation of the tools, systems, and processes utilized to hire talent will often illuminate the best path to take. For example, you may find that the interview process for a particular position has limited effectiveness due to a lack of structure, causing interviewers to stray off topic, take more time with candidates than is necessary, and introduce their own biases. This kind of "low-hanging fruit" makes the path clearer. Other paths may not be so clear, but the evaluation is important, nonetheless.

This article focuses on the final steps of the hiring process and includes several strategies and techniques for improving the business impact and value of an integrated selection system.

These include:

- Job simulations
- Behavioral interviewing
- Background & reference checking
- Making final hiring decisions



By looking for ways to incrementally improve the effectiveness and predictability of these steps in the hiring process, organizations can continue the on the path of taking their selection systems from good to great.

### **Job Simulations**

Demonstration of work-related scenarios by candidates in a structured process better informs hiring leaders of candidate capability. Those more opposed to including job simulations as a part of the selection process typically target cost and time as criteria for exclusion. However, a recent Aberdeen Group report cites that nearly half of Best-in-Class organizations (46%) currently use simulations in their hiring process. The use of technology has helped job simulations become more cost effective and feasible, creating a wide marketplace.

Job-related case studies where candidates are asked to perform tasks based on information provided in a workplace scenario are another effective type of job simulation. The path of where and how a job simulation may add to the effectiveness and predictability of a selection system is often less clear, but it can be made clearer through consultation with a selection expert.

### **Behavioral Interviews**

A little structure goes a long way. Many organizations realize that providing hiring managers with a structured, behaviorally-based interview has multiple benefits, ultimately helping them determine which candidates are most suited to continue in the hiring process. The structure of an interview can range from a list of questions covering several job-related areas (i.e. customer service, dependability, team orientation, etc.) to an interview structured by competencies that include some form of behaviorally-anchored rating guide. Behaviorally-based structured interviews help:

- › keep an interview focused on job-related topics, rather than veering into risky or irrelevant areas.
- › hiring managers better manage the timing and sequence of the interview, as opposed to a loose interview that can end up taking excessive time for the hiring manager and candidate. Savvy candidates can “hijack” an interview and make it difficult for the hiring leader to manage.
- › keep the interview on track and serve to increase the standardization and consistency of the interview.



A client shares how assessment-based behavioral interviewing has helped their recruitment and selection efforts:

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*Since using the assessment interview guide, our interview teams have become more collaborative, confident, and effective. Our teams meet prior to a candidate's interview to review their assessment results and determine which competency-based questions each interviewer would like to ask. Not only has this strategy eliminated redundant questions for the candidate, it enables our teams to cover more "ground," enhancing our ability to make an informed hiring decision.*

*Amy Gibler, Director of Talent Acquisition, EPR Properties*

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For companies that utilize behavioral assessments in the selection process, questions are often generated for hiring managers to probe into areas on the assessment that were "concerns." This approach is a useful combination of competency-based questions, along with probing questions based on individual candidate assessment results. Again, leveraging assessment data in the interview process is one more step along the path of predicting the right fit.

Regardless of the amount of structure and type of interview, the best gains in value can be made by equipping the hiring leaders in your organization with proper interviewing skills. Most managers and hiring leaders will tell you they are great interviewers. I assure you that a good number of them are wrong and would argue that anyone whose job includes interviewing candidates could use stronger interviewing skills or even a refresher on sound interviewing techniques. Great talent-minded organizations partner with the training department to ensure all new and current hiring leaders have on-going and frequent exposure to interviewer training modules and tools. Effective interviewing is a learned skill that needs continual practice.

### **Background & Reference Checking**

The processes utilized at this step in the hiring process are driven by organizational policy. Background checking has been automated to the point of making this more affordable and feasible all the way through to the hourly level. There are many reputable background check companies on the market, and most are integrated into HRIS and Applicant Tracking Systems.

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Unfortunately, checking the references of candidates has become more of an item to "check off the list" for many hiring managers. Through discipline and savvy, hiring managers can yield better information from former employers rather than merely gaining employment verification. Developing a strong network and good relationships with competitors and nearby businesses goes a long way. You are more likely to get quality reference checking information from someone you know versus someone you do not know.

The questions your hiring managers ask are important in learning as much as you can about a candidate. A question such as, "Are there any conditions under which you would rehire (candidate)?" can give you a good indication—a quick "No" tells you clearly, a pause tells you something else, and you may get a "Yes." A good follow-up question in any case is "Why?" or "What else can you share?" Another effective question during a reference check is: "What can you tell me about (candidate's) performance, work style, team orientation, service orientation, etc.?" Asking open-ended questions will minimize the number of "Yes" or "No" responses.

While HR places restrictions on the type of information to disclose when called upon for a reference check, hiring managers have more "free reign" on what they can ask hiring managers in other organizations when vetting candidates. Hiring managers should have a thoughtful list of questions to ask during a reference check and seek to gain more information than simple verification of employment. Descriptive and reliable historical performance information will help further clarify the level candidate-job fit picture.

### **Hiring Decision**

Making a quality and accurate hiring decision time and again requires useful and valid information about the candidate (the predictive value of which can be incrementally improved as has been outlined in these articles) and the discipline of the hiring leader to synthesize the information in a deliberate and thoughtful way. Too often candidates are dismissed based on irrelevant, incomplete, or misinterpreted information. All hiring leaders who have interacted with the final candidates throughout the hiring process should collaborate and discuss the hiring information they have available.

Ensuring your hiring managers are following all the hiring process procedures, documentation guidelines and information handling protocol will keep ugly compliance incidences from taking up HR's valuable time. A simple checklist is an easy way of documenting the progression of the hiring steps for a candidate. Finally, treating all



candidates as customers and with respect will ensure candidates walk away—hired or not—with a positive impression of your brand and company.

### **In Closing**

Every company can benefit from selecting, developing, and retaining stronger talent. Finding stronger talent often requires making fine-tuned changes to your selection system to "raise the bar" or narrow the "candidate-job" target. A high quality hiring process will produce a great deal of predictive and descriptive information about a candidate, resulting in more informed and consistently accurate hiring decisions.

By applying the strategies outlined in **Predicting Fit: Aligning Talent Systems – Part II**, you can make strategic improvements to enable your hiring leaders to hire the very best talent for your organization.

If you would like to learn more, register for the upcoming [FREE Webinar] – [Leveraging Assessment to Drive Retention, Engagement, and Performance.](#)

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