

Predicting Fit: Aligning Talent Systems – Part I

The Question

A television commercial aired a few years ago in which a large telecommunications company points out the obvious to sell their brand message. They ask a focus group of elementary-age kids the question: "Who thinks more is better than less?" That softball question gets all hands to raise, and the result is entertaining and effective. Point well made!



Similarly, Human Resources and [talent management](#) leaders and professionals should be asking those types of questions about the effectiveness and predictiveness of their selection system. **"Is predicting fit better?"** Of course, it is - especially true in light of today's highly competitive talent landscape and ever -changing business climate. The real and more difficult question is: **"How do I get more?"**

The Answer

The answer to that question is unique to your organization and found through rigorous evaluation and measurement of the tools and processes in which you have invested to hire internal and external talent. In fact, several questions can be answered that add value to your organization through a careful analysis:

- › Are you realizing optimal and measurable gains by selecting better talent in terms of turnover reduction, time to productivity, retention of top performers, and other measures of work performance?
- › What is your Return on Investment (ROI) from your selection system? Are my HR supplier partners acting more like a vendor or consulting as a true business partner?
- › How am I well-positioned from a legal defensibility standpoint?

Strong talent-minded organizations are highly disciplined about evaluating all elements of their selection methodology to ensure they are adding value through better science and prediction in their talent decisions. A survey of over 250 companies sites that 62% of Best-in-Class organizations review and/or update their assessment strategy on at least an annual basis (Aberdeen Group). In other words, acting on their evaluation took them from good to great.

Here are several strategies and techniques for improving the effectiveness and business impact of an integrated selection system. From initial point of application to making the final hiring decision, we will explore ways to find incremental gains in the predictiveness, efficiency and results of each step to help your organization make the best people decisions possible. This

article will focus on the first several hiring process steps (Part I). The final steps of the hiring process (Part II) will be discussed offered in our next (April) Talent Insider.

A selection system with high ROI is one where each step produces maximum predictiveness and adds value to the previous step in a unique and measurable way. In other words, the candidate-role picture becomes clearer and clearer to the hiring leader as the candidate progresses through the system. Let's put the spotlight on each step and find ways to sharpen the focus with our *Four Success Essentials of Selection Success*.

Four Success Essentials of Selection Success

1. Recruitment Message

The very first point of contact to a candidate creates their first impression of your company's employment brand. From the hourly hire to top executive, the recruitment message delivered through the various avenues begins to paint the picture to candidates about your company culture, values and principles. It's critical to get that story right and ensure that all your communication and touch-points are aligned to tell the same story.

Consider surveying recent hires about their hiring experience from their first point of contact. You may find a common thread from their experience to mend a gap in your recruitment message and process. Gaining experiential feedback is important to ensure that your message resonates with candidates and tells your unique story. Consider working with your marketing and communications department to make sure the message is well-aligned and positioned. Provide stakeholders with the tools to tell a consistent and compelling story.

Finally, get creative and benchmark. Encourage your HR and talent management leaders to think outside of the box when telling the story and representing your employment brand. There is a lot of competition for talent, and you may gain good insights and new ideas by benchmarking your recruitment message against your competition to see how you compare.

2. Realistic Job Preview

Companies often make the mistake of either over-selling or under-communicating a job opportunity. In an effort to attract the best candidate, some companies opt to promote only the positive aspects of a job and the company in the hiring process. For example, when was the last time you heard something negative about a job in an announcement or advertisement?

Let's be honest, all aspects about a job are not positive. Work is hard and should be described in realistic terms. This description, or Realistic Job Preview (RJP), should be honest with regard to all aspects of a job. This is then balanced by communicating the benefit of working at your organization to ensure the candidate buys in and is a good cultural fit. Ensure that you are communicating what it would be like to work at your company in a particular role or job family in very realistic terms to give the candidate a clear sense of expectations and a more informed way of deciding whether to self-select out of consideration or pursue the opportunity. In either

case, the hiring managers in your organization are then spending their valuable time with only those candidates who at least consider themselves a good fit for the job and company. The RJP can be presented via your website and career portal and in printed versions for companies who accept "walk-in" candidates.

3. Application and Pre-screening

The strategic use of technology in the application and hiring process can produce multiple benefits. By implementing the ability of candidates to learn about employment opportunities and submit an application on a 24/7 basis, organizations not only create a better process for candidates but subsequently 1) widen the funnel at the top of the hiring process and 2) enable hiring leaders to be more selective about who they hire. Typically, having more candidates in the pipeline increases the odds of hiring better talent. However, that outcome is highly contingent on the ability of the steps in the hiring process to discern and identify from among the larger candidate pool which candidates are best suited to work for the particular role and company. "More is better" is only true and possible in the context of the hiring process's predictive ability if the science, tools and systems are in place to enable hiring leaders to reliably and accurately select the candidates who fit best. Great people organizations can leverage application technology to enable optimal access to and information about their jobs, culture and values.

Effective pre-screening essentially involves hiring leaders consistently and correctly executing the processes for assessing information collected in the application step. The goal of pre-screening is to assess the candidate's fit with the basic requirements of the job, such as required work and educational experience, as well as secondary factors, such as scheduling preference and availability. Efficiency gains can typically be found by having a more structured and disciplined process for evaluating candidate information to save time and reduce unnecessary steps. Additionally, incorporating the pre-screening questions typically asked by hiring leaders into an assessment that is scored electronically will save hiring manager time, while supporting and adding detail to the RJP.

4. Assessment Program

Sound science determines the predictive power of your assessment program. The key to the science is establishing gains through higher incremental validity. Rustin D. Meyer defines incremental validity as "the ability to explain an outcome, beyond all other predictors. It is a type of validity that is used to determine whether a new psychometric assessment will increase the predictive ability of an existing method of assessment." in other words, is the assessment adding additional information to your ability to identify top candidates above and beyond the other steps in the hiring process? The scientific process of building an assessment program that seeks to maximize incremental validity is a complicated one and best managed by highly trained psychometricians, who consider many factors related to the client situation, set of roles, industry, etc. However, great science needs to be joined by a great experience for the candidate and hiring manager, as well as real implementation, to realize meaningful gains in prediction and better overall results.



Please reference the [Top 5 Considerations for a Great Candidate Experience](#) for more detail on improving the experience for candidates.

As mentioned, first impressions by candidates are critical. The hiring manager experience is improved by the following:

- 1) the use of user-friendly assessment technology
- 2) sound implementation
- 3) easy to read and understand assessment reporting.

Assessment technology ranges from a hiring manager faxing in an hourly assessment for automated processing to assessment administration, scoring and reporting on handheld devices.

In any case, it's important to work with an assessment provider who can meet your unique needs and ensure a positive experience for the candidate and hiring manager. Likewise, effective implementation of the assessment program will support the predictiveness of your assessment program. As mentioned in the [Calculating Your Talent ROI](#), the process for training and implementing an assessment program to key stakeholders and hiring managers, supported by robust communication, is one of the top five key criteria for supporting the science behind assessments.

Finally, the quality and user-friendliness of the assessment reporting drives the consistency with which hiring managers use the assessment information. Assessment reports should be concise and clear in guiding the decision-maker (i.e., recruiter and hiring manager) to the right candidate decision derived for scientific validation, while providing supporting information for interviewing, development and on-boarding. A high-quality assessment report takes the guesswork out of making an informed hiring decision.

In Closing

By understanding their core purpose, HR and talent management professionals can begin evaluating how and where to improve the discrete steps in their selection systems and how they work together. This evaluation will identify strategic adjustments that can help organizations take their selection system from good to great, paying out in stronger people metrics and business results. Be on the lookout for Part II in next month's CMP Talent Insider.

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