



PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Since the interview won't do it, how do you measure a job candidate's potential?

By Ira Wolfe

If a truth serum could be administered to a job candidate, what might the individual reveal? Most likely this candidate would disclose a few behaviors that ordinarily don't show up until months, weeks, or even just days after being hired. And what could this truth serum do for your business? Based on the validity of alternative predictors of job performance, the odds of hiring the right person the

first time would increase from less than 2 out of 10 to 7 or more out of 10. Even for a 10-employee workforce, this could reduce turnover more than an astonishing 350%!

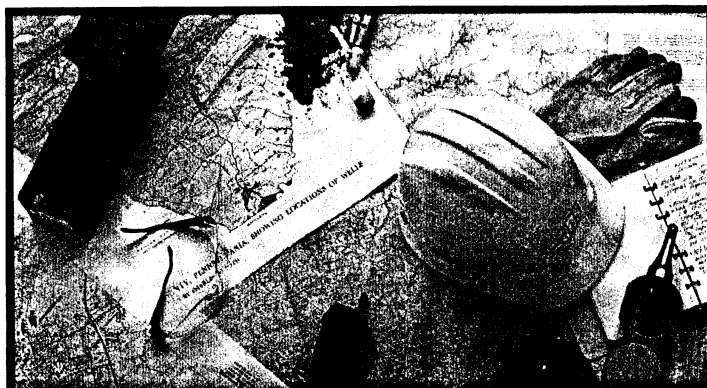
The interview is just one tool in the selection process that attempts to compare how well the skills, knowledge, and talents of the individual match the requirements of the job. What if we had the power of the truth serum during the interview? What

skills, knowledge and talents might a manager be looking for...and what job-killing weaknesses might be revealed before the job is offered?

During the interview, managers typically ask questions they are "allowed" to ask, and candidates respond in the way they are expected. The manager typically listens for the response he wants and then evaluates those observations to determine how well qualified the candidate might be.

If the responses managed to pass through the manager's personal filters, or personal viewpoints, the candidate might receive a job offer. If the candidate's responses, experiences, or appearance did not pass through the manager's filters, the candidate is most likely encouraged to continue on his job journey.

Despite the increasingly global competition for top talent and a shrinking pool of qualified



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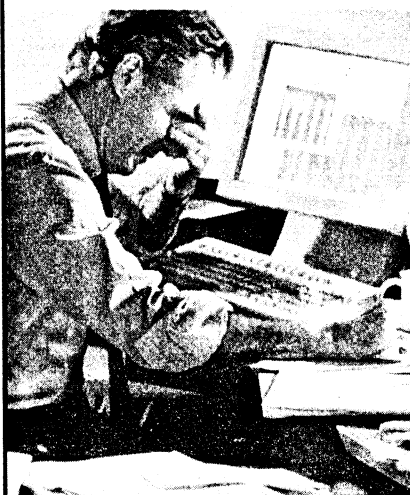
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candidates, most managers continue to use the interview as the primary tool for selecting and promoting new employees. It is no wonder why employee performance is lagging so far behind expectations.

The interview is the least effective predictor of job success compared to all the other selection tools available. One reason is because the interview does not mirror real-life on the job. Overlook the fact that most candidates are on their best behavior during the interview and the interview becomes merely an event, or in many cases a non-event, between two or more people, the interviewer(s) and the candidate. What other resources are available to managers that are more reliable predictors of future job performance?

Before you can get what you want, you need to know what you're looking for. What is it that managers are looking for? I posed this question to a group of managers who recently attended my seminar, *Motivational Mistakes Managers Make*.

"Highly motivated" was the first descriptor volunteered. Everyone agreed that "highly motivated" was what they wanted (even though it is painfully obvious that many were settling for "just barely motivated" in today's market). A few seconds of silence in the room was then interrupted by "good interpersonal skills, experienced, good work ethic, team player, and keeping on task."

When asked to describe "highly motivated," words such as enthusiastic, energetic, positive outlook, professional appearance rang out from the group. "We are looking for candidates who will have their shoes by the bed," reported Doug Myer, general sales manager at WDAC 94.5. "We expect our salespeople to be ready to walk out the door early in the morning without prodding and who will view a 'no' as one step closer to a 'yes'."

And ah!.....there's the rub. Looking for something you want is only half the battle. How do you determine if someone is highly motivated from an interview? How much enthusiasm is required for success on the job? Is enthusiasm enough...or are you looking for passion? Assuming you can measure motivation or enthusiasm or passion, how much is enough? Is there such a thing as too much motivation and if so, how can you tell?

Let's look at another desirable trait or skill...positive outlook. If the individual seems upbeat and wears a

big smile at the interview, does this mean that his optimistic behavior can be expected regularly on the job? What happens when the first customer files a complaint, a sale is lost, or his favorite team loses the Super Bowl? Will the new hire get over it quickly or will he go into mourning or burst into rage?

On the other hand, can too much optimism become a weakness? Take for instance, the individual who faces every personal adversity with only the blink of an eye. There's a time for cheerleading and a time for serious work. Will they be able to differentiate the two?

We can go on and on.....but you're hopefully getting the point. What managers rightfully need to discover during the interview is woefully difficult to measure. And if it was measurable through our hypothetical truth serum, how much motivation, attitude, and work ethic would be enough?

Unfortunatel Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines will not allow truth serum, but job-specific skill and performance tests are permitted. Why? Validity studies indicate the use of performance assessments, such as personality and interests testing, when used to assess job essential requirements during the selection process increase the chances of selecting the right person as much as 600% over the interview alone.

Myer has an interesting perspective on using assessments for job matching. "When I was hired at WDAC (as a salesperson), I found that the assessments accurately represented who I was. The results gave me confidence that I was moving into a situation that would be a match."

About a year after accepting his new position, Myer was interviewed for the general sales manager position. Myer was offered the position based on his performance AND his match to the job. Myer now uses the sales assessments for all his new hires. "The assessments verify the ideas I formulate about the candidate during the interviewand also bring out some red flag characteristics that I might overlook. One of the most helpful assessments is the one dealing with motivation."

Myer is not alone. From dentists in Tyler, Texas, and Vancouver, BC, looking for dental assistants and receptionists to the VP of operations in a billion dollar multinational company screening candidates for

global operations managers to the director of sales of a communication technology company on a mission to identify salespeople who can "hit the ground running," businesses of all sizes in many industries are using performance assessments to avoid costly hiring mistakes. Given the shrinking pool of talented workers and explosive cost to recruit, train and

retain employees, it is no wonder managers are replacing gut instinct and resumes with modern-day "truth serum" - personality, attitudes, motivation and soft skill assessments - to match the right people to the right job the first time.

Ira S. Wolfe is president and founder of Success Performance Solutions.



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