

Assessment Centers: Fundamentals & Trends

An IPAC Conference presentation by

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Las Vegas, Nevada, July 25, 2012

ACs: What Are They?

- ◆ Multiple Job Simulation Exercises
- ◆ Opportunity for Candidates to Demonstrate KSAs
- ◆ Standardized Evaluation by Multiple Trained Observers Using Multiple Testing Techniques

Based on 1975 & 1979 "AC Standards"

How to Score Candidates - the Search for the Best Scoring Model

- ◆ Consensus (Traditional)
- ◆ Mechanical (Statistical)
- ◆ Combination Methods

Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations

1989 Major Changes

Name Change to “Guidelines” vs. “Standards”

Consensus/Clinical or Statistical Scoring allowed

2000 Main Changes

AC must include “at least one, and usually several, job-related simulations that require the assessee to demonstrate a constructed behavioral response.”

More delineation on Use of Technology and Assessor Training

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

Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations

2008 Main Changes

More guidance on Assessor Training content and the required length of Assessor Training further clarified

Differences among Assessment Centers used for different purposes: Selection vs. Diagnosis vs. Development

Global Assessment Center Practices: Multi-Cultural Issues and Cross Cultural Issues

A Typical Public Sector Assessment Center

6 Assessors trained for one day

8-10 Candidates (per day of assessment)

Three or four Job Simulation Exercises

**Possibly 1 additional day for Assessors to
integrate or finalize all scores**

**More than 40 candidates, add more Assessors
and more training or have Assessors specialize
in one exercise and drop integration day(s)**

Why Use ACs?

- ◆ Legal Issues
- ◆ Employee Associations
- ◆ Fairness
- ◆ Validity

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

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”

Candidate Orientation

- ◆ Reduce Test Anxiety
- ◆ “Level the Playing Field”
- ◆ Undo Misconceptions

Goals of Orientation vs. Career Development vs. Candidate Training

- ◆ Orientation = Reduce Test Stress
- ◆ Career Development = Skills Development
- ◆ Candidate Training = Make Money for Trainer

Candidate Orientation Methods

- ◆ Written Information
- ◆ Live Orientation Session(s)
- ◆ Videotapes, DVDs/Video Technology
 - ☞ Viewed During Live Orientation
 - ☞ Viewed at Work Sites
 - ☞ Viewed on Computer Anywhere

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 = A Skills Assessment Snapshot
or "A Very Condensed Probationary Period!"

What are ACs Assessing?

- ◆ Behavioral Dimensions vs. Exercise Performance (Exercise Effect)
- ◆ Dimensions vs. Tasks vs. Competencies

The KEY is to use a Structured Evaluation of Job Relevant Worker Characteristics

How to Reduce the Costs

◆ Screening Down Candidate Group

☞ Technical Knowledge Written Tests

☞ Written Exercises (Inbaskets, etc.)

☞ Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs)

Sample/Example SJT Item

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 _____

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

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

New Technology - How Used?

◆ Use of Computers

- ☞ Candidates - Use Optional vs. Required
- ☞ Assessors - Rating Form Templates
- ☞ Staff - Spreadsheets for Mechanical Scoring Models/Candidate Profiles

New Technology - How Used?

◆ Use of Video

☞ Stimuli for Candidate Response

Example: Fire Code Inspection Video Exercise

☞ Video of Candidates' Responses

Example: Jefferson Co. Alabama - Police and Fire

☞ Total Video Programs

Example: Washington State Patrol Sergeant AC

Example of a Video AC with 72 to 80 Candidates

Three exercises based on current Job Analysis

Same 1½ days for All Candidates to complete AC

Same 6 Assessors evaluate each candidate (later)

**Same 2 Assessors specialize in each exercise using the
same standards for all candidates**

Same Questions asked same way (on video monitor)

Same exact time allowed for answering each question

All responses on videotape: 2 cameras in 8-10 rooms

Video Assessment Center Advantages & Disadvantages

Great for standardizing the exam process – Fairness

Great for preventing cheating – Exam Security

**Lots of questions and answers and “presentation skills”
observable**

**No interpersonal interaction or human connection
between candidates and video actors or assessors**

Lower scores achieved across all exercises

Equipment Problems – Must build in redundancy

Further Reading/Handout

- ◆ Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations, International Task Force on Assessment, International Journal of Selection and Assessment, Vol. 17, No. 3, September 2009
- The above Guidelines were endorsed on September 24, 2008 at the 34th International Congress on Assessment Center Methods in Washington, DC., USA. Copies of the Guidelines can be obtained from the presenter of this session via email.

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