

Chapter One

Introduction

Over the past decade, the use of psychological testing for employee selection, training and development, and out-placement has greatly increased, which has produced a need for greater understanding of testing and its use in conducting individual assessments for employment-related purposes. To the best of our knowledge, there is no readable, readily understandable, yet comprehensive introductory book on this important management tool.

For Whom Did We Write This Book?

In writing this book, we had at least four audiences in mind: first, managers who routinely use individual assessments in helping them make human resources decisions; second, human resources professionals who actually conduct such assessments, often without an adequate understanding of the inherent issues involved in their work; third, trainers who often include tests and other instruments as part of a training exercise; and, fourth, those others who are interested in how individual assessments should be conducted, especially those persons who have been the targets of such a process.

We would expect that managers reading this book would have a better understanding of what to expect from a competent individual assessment and be better able to contract for such services. For the human resources professionals, we hope that reading this book would lead to an increase in their assessment skills and an improvement in

the quality of their assessment reports. We believe that trainers would improve their use of instruments in their presentations. Finally, we would expect that the general public interested in these matters would acquire a better understanding of the individual assessment process, of how that process improves human resources decisions in the workplace, as well as its limitations and what to expect as the subject of such a process.

While professional psychologists are not one of our primary audiences, we do think that they may find this book useful. Newly minted psychologists without much practical, hands-on experience will find this volume useful in filling in some gaps in their knowledge and skills base. Others may find it useful in helping their clients or prospective clients in better understanding what they do. We look forward to hearing from them and others about the usefulness of this product.

Of course, there are many books on psychological testing available. Just check out the website of any bookseller. Indeed, we have written several of them. But they fall into two major categories: the books intended for college- or graduate-level courses in testing and assessment and those that are essentially arguments against their use for a variety of reasons. As the readers of this volume will learn, improvements in the technology underlying testing has improved over the past two decades, and these arguments have lost their cogency.

What Are Our Recommendations?

Much of this book is prescriptive, urging the adoption of a variety of techniques and procedures that we believe will improve the quality of the individual assessment process. But we also recognize that it is extremely unlikely that all of them will be enthusiastically adopted by practitioners. Rather, we hope that readers will sort out those recommendations that fit their approach to assessment and that they believe will enhance their effectiveness. To the extent that this occurs, we will regard our time in writing this to have been well spent.

How Is This Book Organized?

Chapter Two: The Practice of Individual Assessment

The practice of individual assessment covers a broad spectrum from administering a single test to an individual for a specific purpose to administering and interpreting a comprehensive battery of tests to evaluate an individual in order to understand that person in some depth. The purpose of this guide is, through the use of a five-step model, to lead practitioners of assessment through the necessary steps of the individual assessment process across this spectrum. This is a what, how, and why manual that aims to prepare or enhance the level of understanding and skills that assessors need at three levels to perform this job competently. The focus of this book is on assessment in the workplace for selection, evaluation, coaching, and training and development. Finally, the impact of information technology and the Internet on individual assessment is reviewed.

Chapter Three: Psychological Measurement

Psychological testing and the statistics used to understand testing depend on the assumptions involved in the normal distribution curve. Any test used in assessment must be supported by evidence of some form of reliability and validity, ensuring that the test scores provide trustworthy information. Further, normative data, which provide the essential framework for understanding this information, also must be available, usually in the test manual; that is, test scores cannot exist in a vacuum. The available psychological tests fit into four major categories: personal/interpersonal functioning, specific job competencies, general intellectual functioning, and miscellaneous. There is strong evidence for the validity of most of these, as well as for the behavioral interview.

Chapter Four: Collecting and Analyzing Assessment Data

The process of individual assessment requires the collection and integration of data about individuals on the one hand and jobs on

the other hand. These data are the raw ingredients for the assessment process and require a skilled assessor to extract the meaning from the raw data. In this sense, the assessor becomes the processor of the data.

The implementation of our five-step model for conducting this process is provided as a guide to both the collection and analysis of the assessment data, together with a discussion of some critical issues such as choosing assessment measures, learning about new tests, and benchmarking.

Chapter Five: Developing and Integrating Individual Assessment Data

A number of sources of information can be included in an individual assessment. They include the resume; interview; psychological testing, including measures of personality, specific job competencies, cognitive ability, management and leadership skills, and honesty/integrity; work products; job samples; and observed behavior. Choosing among these measures is always a function of the requirements of the job under scrutiny. These data then need to be analyzed, inferences drawn from them, values placed on the inferences, and, finally, conclusions need to be drawn.

Chapter Six: Reporting Individual Assessment Results

Preparing a final report on an assessment requires an in-depth understanding of the individual in relation to the requirements of a specific job. Such reports require synthesizing a vast amount of information. A format for such reports is provided comprising four parts: (1) Identifying Information; (2) Functional Analysis; (3) Person/Job Fit; and (4) Conclusions and Recommendations. The recurrent need is to communicate effectively to the end user of the report. This format provides an approach that meets that need. A series of forty questions that serve as a quality-control mechanism is also provided. The use of individual assessment reports for

planning training and development through the employee lifecycle, including mentoring, outplacement, and team building, is highlighted. There is a need for future-oriented job analysis to enhance the value of individual assessment reports.

Appendices

There are nine appendices, the first of which contains a list of recommended readings that will further extend the readers' understanding of this important area. Following an appendix with a sample position description, there is a brief discussion of how to conduct a job analysis. The next two appendices provide samples of the competency specifications for first-line supervisors and then managers/executives to complement those for entry-level jobs found in Chapter Two. These are followed by three appendices, each containing a sample individual assessment report—one each for entry-level, first-line supervisor, and manager/executive positions, respectively. The final appendix contains a selective listing of the various psychological tests that we have found useful in our practice, including information about their publishers.

In writing this book we have continuously been aware of the prevailing problems, issues, and standards of our profession, especially those related to psychological testing and individual assessment. Readers are also urged to become acquainted with the three standard-setting references on psychological testing and individual assessment: (1) the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, established by a joint task force of the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education (1999); (2) *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* (1978), promulgated jointly by the U.S. Equal Opportunities Commission and the Departments of Justice and Labor; and (3) *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures* (4th ed.), established by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (2003). These three references set the criteria by which psychological tests

and individual assessment processes are evaluated and have been the bedrock on which we have based our many years of practice and this book.

Both of us have spent the major portion of our professional work focused on the development and use of psychological tests. Between the two of us, there is almost a century of professional work in testing, including decades of experience in conducting countless individual assessments. We hope that we have been able to use that knowledge and experience to provide readers with an understandable, yet solid knowledge of the individual assessment process and how tests are used in that process.