

LESSONS FROM THE ASSESSMENT CENTER

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ASSESSMENT CENTER

- Technique for assessing and promoting managers
- Candidates take part in a series of exercises (e.g., role play)
- Observed and assessed by trained raters or psychologists
- Assessed on a large number of dimensions (e.g., communication)
- Assessors meet and discuss candidates to arrive at an OCR
- Assessor ratings are validated against *actual performance* on the job

Dimensions X Exercises

	Case Study	Role Play	Work Analysis
Problem Solving			
Influencing			
Planning			
Communication			
Decisiveness			
Initiative			
Stress Tolerance			
Sensitivity			
Judgment			

Expect dimension ratings to correlate

	Case Study	Role Play	Work Analysis
Problem Solving	Rating	Rating	Rating
Influencing			
Planning			
Communication			
Decisiveness			
Initiative			
Stress Tolerance			
Sensitivity			
Judgment			

Massive halo

- Correlation of different dimensions in same exercise always higher than same dimensions across different exercises (i.e., exercise factors rather than dimension factors)

Performance in the exercise dominates ratings

	Case Study	Role Play	Work Analysis
Problem Solving	Rating		
Influencing	Rating		
Planning	Rating		
Communication	Rating		
Decisiveness	Rating		
Initiative	Rating		
Stress Tolerance	Rating		
Sensitivity	Rating		
Judgment	Rating		

Too many dimensions

- Carter (1954) warned assessors only capable of rating 3 or 4 at most.
- Nearly all of the variance in the OCR can be explained by 3 to 5 dimension ratings.

No discussion needed

- Meta-analysis shows that, for predicting on-the-job performance, mechanically-combined assessor dimension ratings results in 30% better performance than the OCR (Arthur et al., 2003).

Discussion may do damage

Increment in prediction of job performance over
standardized tests

Overall Consensus Rating	Average of Dimension Ratings	Optimally Weighted Ratings
.00	.09	.12

Dilchert & Ones (2009) two large managerial samples (N = 4985)

Lessons from the Assessment Center

- Raters have a difficult time distinguishing dimensions of performance
- The overall impression of the candidate dominates ratings
- The consensus discussion results in an overall rating that is less predictive of job performance than simply average everyone's ratings

Pitfalls in the group consensus rating

- Groups may polarize around a general positive or negative impression (confirmation bias)
- Order Effects
- Unequal sharing of information in the group discussion
- Unequal weighing of members' input

User Acceptance Issues

- “Many assessors report a potent sense of satisfaction from putting the evidence together and creating a holistic view of the assessee” (Howard, 1997)

Best practices to improve consensus ratings

- Ratings should be made on only a small number of dimensions
- Choose dimensions that are conceptually distinct
- Operationalize dimensions in terms of a checklist of relevant components
- Frame of Reference Training: Familiarize raters with dimensions, performance levels for each dimension, and consistency in evaluating them

THANK YOU.