Selecting Employees and Placing Them in Jobs

What Do I Need to Know?

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

LO1 Identify the elements of the selection process.

LO2 Define ways to measure the success of a selection method.

LO3 Summarize the government's requirements for employee selection.

LO4 Compare the common methods used for selecting human resources.

LO5 Describe major types of employment tests.

LO6 Discuss how to conduct effective interviews.

LO7 Explain how employers carry out the process of making a selection decision.

Introduction

If you want successful employees, you should hire smart people, right? That's partly true, but a study recently reported in *Forbes* magazine suggests you might want to look for other qualities as well.[1] Using data gathered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) over two decades, a Harvard researcher found that she could predict which people would earn the most by looking at their scores on a test that involves assigning codes to words. The test, developed by the armed services to identify people with clerical skills, doesn't require deep thought, just a willingness to try hard and persist until the job is done. When the BLS used this test to gather data on the 12,700 young people it tracked in its study, there was no reward for a high score. Those who did their best probably were inclined to try hard regardless of whether they would be rewarded—what we might call being conscientious. This study suggests that if you want successful employees, you should hire people who are both smart and conscientious.

Hiring decisions are about finding the people who will be a good fit with the job and the organization. Any organization that appreciates the competitive edge provided by good people must take the utmost care in choosing its members. The organization's decisions about selecting personnel are central to its ability to survive, adapt, and grow. Selection decisions become especially critical when organizations face tight labor markets or must compete for talent with other organizations in the same industry. If a competitor keeps getting the best applicants, the remaining companies must make do with who is left.

This chapter will familiarize you with ways to minimize errors in employee selection and placement. The chapter starts by describing the selection process and how to evaluate possible methods for carrying out that process. It then takes an in-depth look at the most widely used methods: applications and résumés, employment tests, and interviews. The chapter ends by describing the process by which organizations arrive at a final selection decision.

Selection Process

LO1 Identify the elements of the selection process.

Personnel Selection
The process through which organizations make decisions about who will or will not be allowed to join the organization.
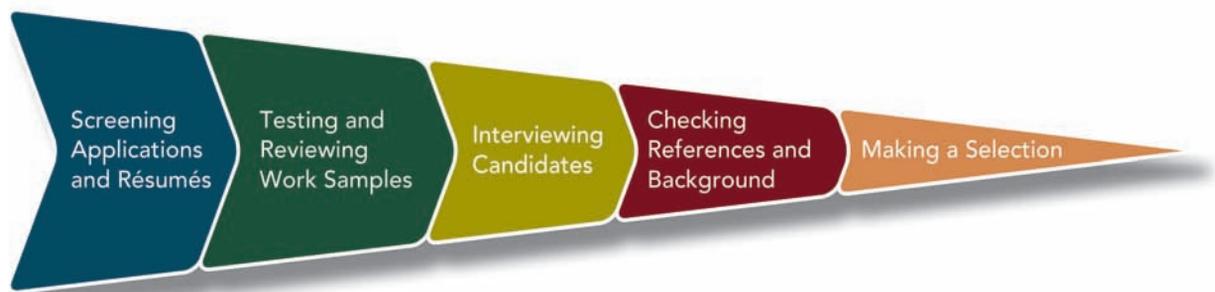
Through **personnel selection,** organizations make decisions about who will or will not be allowed to join the organization. Selection begins with the candidates identified through recruitment and attempts to reduce their number to the individuals best qualified to perform the available jobs. At the end of the process, the selected individuals are placed in jobs with the organization.

The process of selecting employees varies considerably from organization to organization and from job to job. At most organizations, however, selection includes the steps illustrated in Figure 6.1. First, a human resource professional reviews the applications received to see which meet the basic requirements of the job. For candidates who meet the basic requirements, the organization administers tests and reviews work samples to rate the candidates' abilities. Those with the best abilities are invited to the organization for one or more interviews. Often, supervisors and team members are involved in this stage of the process. By this point, the decision makers are beginning to form opinions about which candidates are most desirable. For the top few candidates, the organization should check references and conduct background checks to verify that the organization's information is correct. Then supervisors, teams, and other decision makers select a person to receive a job offer. In some cases, the candidate may negotiate with the organization regarding salary, benefits, and the like. If the candidate accepts the job, the organization places him or her in that job.

How does an organization decide which of these elements to use and in what order? Some organizations simply repeat a selection process that is familiar. If members of the organization underwent job interviews, they conduct job interviews, asking familiar questions. However, what organizations *should* do is to create a selection process in support of its job descriptions. In Chapter 3, we explained that a job description

Figure 6.1

Steps in the Selection Process

Screening Applications and Résumés → Testing and Reviewing Work Samples → Interviewing Candidates → Checking References and Background → Making a Selection

Best Practices

Strategy-Driven Selection for Mike's Carwash

When drivers want to get their cars clean and shiny, the people they deal with won't be corporate management, but employees in entry-level jobs who provide hands-on service. Mike's Carwash doesn't take chances with the positions that provide crucial customer contact. The company is meticulous about how it fills jobs at its three dozen car washes in Indiana and Ohio.

Candidates for jobs at Mike's Carwash take a math test and a personality test. The personality test aims to identify candidates with social and reasoning skills, useful for keeping customers satisfied. Candidates who survive the initial screening are interviewed by at least two managers, who are trained to screen out individuals who raise a red flag, such as a history of frequently quitting jobs. Interviewers look for candidates who exhibit a genuine appreciation of the importance of customers. Drug testing rounds out the screening process. Only about one candidate out of 50 makes it through the whole process and receives a job offer.

Why does Mike's go to so much trouble to hire employees for jobs that are often part-time and seem simple? The answer has to do with how Mike's Carwash competes: exceptional service in a fun atmosphere is what keeps customers driving back again and again. It's a strategy that's symbolized in employees' uniforms: white shirts to convey professionalism plus colorful neckties selected by employees to display a touch of wackiness. In the words of CEO Bill Dahm, "Our two founders . . . always told us that we're truly in the people business. We just happen to wash cars." For that, the company needs to find the best people, train them, and hang on to them for the long term.

With that aim in mind, the rigorous selection process is one piece of a total HR strategy: weekly training videos, monthly prizes for exceptional customer services, a policy of promoting from within, and a tuition reimbursement program to keep employees on the payroll as they advance their education. Together, these strategies support excellent service by building knowledge and experience along with an enthusiastic commitment to customer satisfaction. For example, parents driving into the automatic car wash with nervous children in the backseat are likely to be treated to a smiley face drawn on a window with soap and a clever display of stuffed animals behind a window in the tunnel. These kinds of experiences keep the customers pleased and the business growing.

Sources: Kelly K. Spors, "Top Small Workplaces 2009," *Wall Street Journal,* September 28, 2009, http://online.wsj.com; Tony Jones, "Inner Strength," *Modern Car Care,* April 2008, pp. 48–53; and Mike's Express Carwash Web site, www.mikescarwash.com, accessed March 23, 2010.

identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required for successfully performing a job. The selection process should be set up in such a way that it lets the organization identify people who have the necessary KSAOs. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has applied these principles to correct a pattern of hiring in which it was selecting many air-traffic controllers who could not pass the certification exam after they had been trained. The FAA began conducting research to learn which employment tests would identify people with the necessary skills: spatial (three-dimensional) thinking, strong memories, and ability to work well under time pressure.[2] For another example of a well-planned selection process, see the "Best Practices" box.

This kind of strategic approach to selection requires ways to measure the effectiveness of selection tools. From science, we have basic standards for this:

- The method provides *reliable* information.
- The method provides *valid* information.

- The information can be *generalized* to apply to the candidates.
- The method offers *high utility* (practical value).
- The selection criteria are *legal*.

Reliability
The extent to which a measurement is free from random error.

Reliability

The **reliability** of a type of measurement indicates how free that measurement is from random error.[3] A reliable measurement therefore generates consistent results. Assuming that a person's intelligence is fairly stable over time, a reliable test of intelligence should generate consistent results if the same person takes the test several times. Organizations that construct intelligence tests should be able to provide (and explain) information about the reliability of their tests.

Usually, this information involves statistics such as *correlation coefficients*. These statistics measure the degree to which two sets of numbers are related. A higher correlation coefficient signifies a stronger relationship. At one extreme, a correlation coefficient of 1.0 means a perfect positive relationship—as one set of numbers goes up, so does the other. If you took the same vision test three days in a row, those scores would probably have nearly a perfect correlation. At the other extreme, a correlation of -1.0 means a perfect negative correlation—when one set of numbers goes up, the other goes down. In the middle, a correlation of 0 means there is no correlation at all. For example, the correlation (or relationship) between weather and intelligence would be at or near 0. A reliable test would be one for which scores by the same person (or people with similar attributes) have a correlation close to 1.0.

Validity

Validity
The extent to which performance on a measure (such as a test score) is related to what the measure is designed to assess (such as job performance).

For a selection measure, **validity** describes the extent to which performance on the measure (such as a test score) is related to what the measure is designed to assess (such as job performance). Although we can reliably measure such characteristics as weight and height, these measurements do not provide much information about how a person will perform most kinds of jobs. Thus, for most jobs height and weight provide little validity as selection criteria. One way to determine whether a measure is valid is to compare many people's scores on that measure with their job performance. For example, suppose people who score above 60 words per minute on a keyboarding test consistently get high marks for their performance in data-entry jobs. This observation suggests the keyboarding test is valid for predicting success in that job.

As with reliability, information about the validity of selection methods often uses correlation coefficients. A strong positive (or negative) correlation between a measure and job performance means the measure should be a valid basis for selecting (or rejecting) a candidate. This information is important not only because it helps organizations identify the best employees but also because organizations can demonstrate fair employment practices by showing that their selection process is valid. The federal government's *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* accept three ways of measuring validity: criterion-related, content, and construct validity.

Criterion-Related Validity
A measure of validity based on showing a substantial correlation between test scores and job performance scores.

Criterion-Related Validity

The first category, **criterion-related validity,** is a measure of validity based on showing a substantial correlation between test scores and job performance scores. In the example in Figure 6.2, a company compares two measures—an intelligence test and

Figure 6.2

Criterion-Related Measurements of a Student's Aptitude
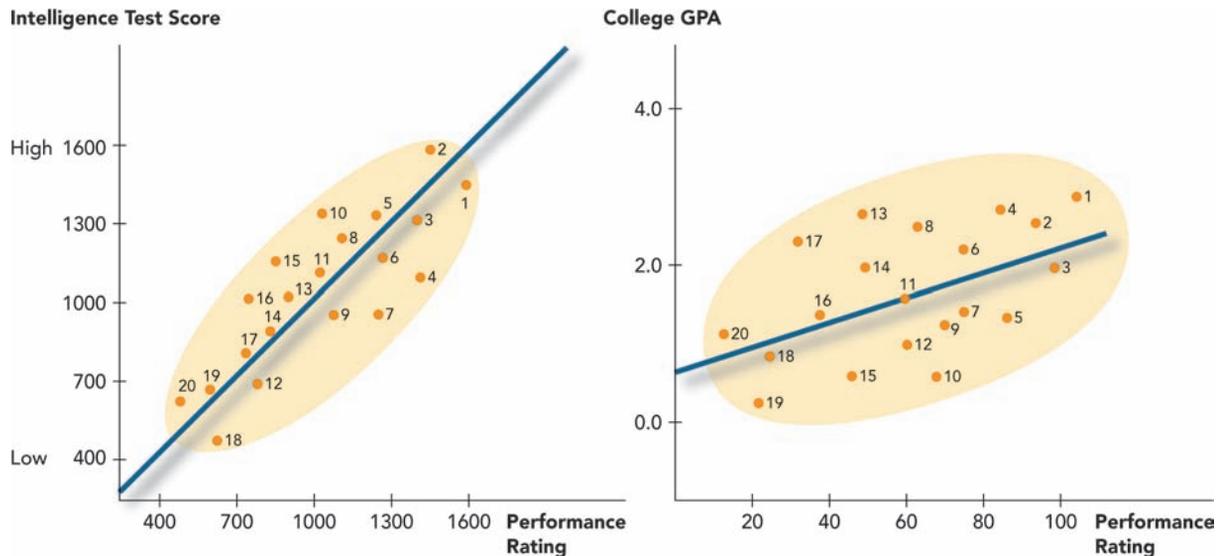
college grade point average—with performance as sales representative. In the left graph, which shows the relationship between the intelligence test scores and job performance, the points for the 20 sales reps fall near the 45-degree line. The correlation coefficient is near .90 (for a perfect 1.0, all the points would be on the 45-degree line). In the graph at the right, the points are scattered more widely. The correlation between college GPA and sales reps' performance is much lower. In this hypothetical example, the intelligence test is more valid than GPA for predicting success at this job.

Two kinds of research are possible for arriving at criterion-related validity:

1. **Predictive validation**—This research uses the test scores of all applicants and looks for a relationship between the scores and future performance. The researcher administers the tests, waits a set period of time, and then measures the performance of the applicants who were hired.
2. **Concurrent validation**—This type of research administers a test to people who currently hold a job, then compares their scores to existing measures of job performance. If the people who score highest on the test also do better on the job, the test is assumed to be valid.

Predictive validation is more time consuming and difficult, but it is the best measure of validity. Job applicants tend to be more motivated to do well on the tests, and their performance on the tests is not influenced by their firsthand experience with the job. Also, the group studied is more likely to include people who perform poorly on the test—a necessary ingredient to accurately validate a test.[4]

Content and Construct Validity

Another way to show validity is to establish **content validity**—that is, consistency between the test items or problems and the kinds of situations or problems that occur on the job. A test that is "content valid" exposes the job applicant to situations that are likely to occur on the job. It tests whether the applicant has the knowledge, skills, or ability to handle such situations. In the case of a company using tests for selecting

Predictive Validation
Research that uses the test scores of all applicants and looks for a relationship between the scores and future performance of the applicants who were hired.

Concurrent Validation
Research that consists of administering a test to people who currently hold a job, then comparing their scores to existing measures of job performance.

Content Validity
Consistency between the test items or problems and the kinds of situations or problems that occur on the job.

a construction superintendent, tests with content validity included organizing a random list of subcontractors into the order they would appear at a construction site and entering a shed to identify construction errors that had intentionally been made for testing purposes.[5] More commonly today, employers use computer role-playing games in which software is created to include situations that occur on the job. The game measures how the candidate reacts to the situations, and then it computes a score based on how closely the candidate's responses match those of an ideal employee.[6]

The usual basis for deciding that a test has content validity is through expert judgment. Experts can rate the test items according to whether they mirror essential functions of the job. Because establishing validity is based on the experts' subjective judgments, content validity is most suitable for measuring behavior that is concrete and observable.

Construct Validity
Consistency between a high score on a test and high level of a construct such as intelligence or leadership ability, as well as between mastery of this construct and successful performance of the job.

For tests that measure abstract qualities such as intelligence or leadership ability, establishment of validity may have to rely on **construct validity.** This involves establishing that tests really do measure intelligence, leadership ability, or other such "constructs," as well as showing that mastery of this construct is associated with successful performance of the job. For example, if you could show that a test measures something called "mechanical ability," and that people with superior mechanical ability perform well as assemblers, then the test has construct validity for the assembler job. Tests that measure a construct usually measure a combination of behaviors thought to be associated with the construct.

Ability to Generalize

Generalizable
Valid in other contexts beyond the context in which the selection method was developed.

Along with validity in general, we need to know whether a selection method is valid in the context in which the organization wants to use it. A **generalizable** method applies not only to the conditions in which the method was originally developed—job, organization, people, time period, and so on. It also applies to other organizations, jobs, applicants, and so on. In other words, is a selection method that was valid in one context also valid in other contexts?

Researchers have studied whether tests of intelligence and thinking skills (called *cognitive ability*) can be generalized. The research has supported the idea that these tests are generalizable across many jobs. However, as jobs become more complex, the validity of many of these tests increases. In other words, they are most valid for complex jobs.[7]

Utility
The extent to which something provides economic value greater than its cost.

NFL teams have been using cognitive tests to select players assuming that intelligence can be generalized to the job requirements of football teams, especially on teams that compete using complex offensive and defensive schemes. What other things, in addition to intelligence, would teams need to look for?

Practical Value

Not only should selection methods such as tests and interview responses accurately predict how well individuals will perform, but they should also produce information that actually benefits the organization. Being valid, reliable, and generalizable adds value to a method. Another consideration is the cost of using the selection method. Selection procedures such as testing and interviewing cost money. They should cost significantly less than the benefits of hiring the new employees. Methods that provide economic value greater than the cost of using them are said to have **utility.**

The choice of a selection method may differ according to the job being filled. If the job involves providing a product or service of high value to the organization, it is worthwhile to

spend more to find a top performer. At a company where salespeople are responsible for closing million-dollar deals, the company will be willing to invest more in selection decisions. At a fast-food restaurant, such an investment will not be worthwhile; the employer will prefer faster, simpler ways to select workers who ring up orders, prepare food, and keep the facility clean.

Legal Standards for Selection

As we discussed in Chapter 3, the U.S. government imposes legal limits on selection decisions. The government requires that the selection process be conducted in a way that avoids discrimination and provides access to employees with disabilities. The laws described in Chapter 3 have many applications to the selection process:

- The Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 place requirements on the choice of selection methods. An employer that uses a neutral-appearing selection method that damages a protected group is obligated to show that there is a business necessity for using that method. For example, if an organization uses a test that eliminates many candidates from minority groups, the organization must show that the test is valid for predicting performance of that job. In this context, good performance does not include "customer preference" or "brand image" as a justification for adverse impact. This was a hard lesson for Walgreens when the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission targeted the company with a lawsuit after African American employees complained that the company routinely assigned them to stores that served mainly African Americans. These stores, typically located in cities, tended to be relatively small, generating lower sales, which resulted in lower pay for the employees who worked there.[8]
- The Civil Rights Act of 1991 also prohibits preferential treatment in favor of minority groups. In the case of an organization using a test that tends to reject members of minority groups, the organization may not simply adjust minority applicants' scores upward. Such practices can create an environment that is demotivating to all employees and can lead to government sanctions. Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court found that when the city of New Haven, Connecticut, tried to promote more black candidates by throwing out the results of a test on which white firefighters performed better, the city was unlawfully discriminating against the white firefighters. In that case, the Court majority's reasoning was based on its conclusion that the city could not show that the test was not job related or that there was an equally valid test it could use instead.[9]
- Equal employment opportunity laws affect the kinds of information an organization may gather on application forms and in interviews. As summarized in Table 6.1, the organization may not ask questions that gather information about a person's protected status, even indirectly. For example, requesting the dates a person attended high school and college could indirectly gather information about an applicant's age.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1991 requires employers to make "reasonable accommodation" to disabled individuals and restricts many kinds of questions during the selection process.[10] Under the ADA, preemployment questions may not investigate disabilities, but must focus on job performance. An interviewer may ask, "Can you meet the attendance requirements for this job?" but may not ask, "How many days did you miss work last year because you were sick?" Also, the employer may not, in making hiring decisions, use employment physical exams or other tests that could reveal a psychological or physical disability.

Table 6.1

Permissible and Impermissible Questions for Applications and Interviews

PERMISSIBLE QUESTIONS	IMPERMISSIBLE QUESTIONS
What is your full name? Have you ever worked under a different name? [Ask all candidates.]	What was your maiden name? What's the nationality of your name?
If you are hired, can you show proof of age (to meet a legal age requirement)?	How old are you? How would you feel about working for someone younger than you?
Will you need any reasonable accommodation for this hiring process? Are you able to perform this job, with or without reasonable accommodation?	What is your height? Your weight? Do you have any disabilities? Have you been seriously ill? Please provide a photograph of yourself.
What languages do you speak? [Statement that employment is subject to verification of applicant's identity and employment eligibility under immigration laws]	What is your ancestry? Are you a citizen of the United States? Where were you born? How did you learn to speak that language?
What schools have you attended? What degrees have you earned? What was your major?	Is that school affiliated with [religious group]? When did you attend high school? [to learn applicant's age]
Can you meet the requirements of the work schedule? [Ask all candidates.]	What is your religion? What religious holidays do you observe?
Please provide the names of any relatives currently employed by this employer.	What is your marital status? Would you like to be addressed as Mrs., Ms., or Miss? Do you have any children?
Have you ever been convicted of a crime?	Have you ever been arrested?
What organizations or groups do you belong to that you consider relevant to being able to perform this job?	What organizations or groups do you belong to?

Note: This table provides examples and is not intended as a complete listing of permissible and impermissible questions. The examples are based on federal requirements; state laws vary and may affect these examples.

SOURCES: Examples based on Leonard D. Andrew and Richard S. Hobish, eds., "Employment Law Guide for Non-profit Organizations" (Pro Bono Partnership, 2007), Appendix I, http://www.probonopartner.org/PBPGuide/PBPHandbook-32.htm, last modified March 10, 2008; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "Prohibited Employment Policies/Practices," http://www1.eeoc.gov, accessed March 19, 2010; and Mississippi University for Women, Vice President of Academic Affairs, "Guide to Legally Permissible Interview Questions," http://www.muw.edu/vpaa/SearchLegalQuestions.pdf, accessed March 19, 2010.

focus on
social responsibility

Along with equal employment opportunity, organizations must be concerned about candidates' privacy rights. The information gathered during the selection process may include information that employees consider confidential. Confidentiality is a particular concern when job applicants provide information online. Employers should collect data only at secure Web sites, and they may have to be understanding if online applicants are reluctant to provide data such as Social Security numbers, which hackers could use for identity theft.[11] For some jobs, background checks look at candidates' credit history. The Fair Credit Reporting Act requires employers to obtain

CONFIRMING ELIGIBILITY WITH E-VERIFY

One complaint about verifying worker eligibility with Form I-9 is that many months can go by before the federal government finds a mismatch between information on the form and Social Security data. By that point, the company has already invested in training that employee, only to learn it must determine whether the problem is an ineligible worker or simply a typo on the form or in the data.

In an effort to make verification swifter and more accurate, the federal government launched a system called E-Verify. To use the system, employers go online to compare the information on Form I-9 with data in the Social Security Administration database and Department of Homeland Security databases, including information on passports and naturalization (becoming a citizen). More than 95 percent of the time, this electronic verification delivers results within 24 hours.

To use E-Verify, employers must first enroll; using the system is free. Companies that contract to do work for the federal government are required to use E-Verify, but participation for most other companies is voluntary. (Some states require participation.)

Unfortunately, the system has been criticized for inaccuracy. Early complaints were that the system was finding mismatches for legal workers, and the department added databases to reduce that problem. More recently, a test of the system found that it was incorrect 4 percent of the time. By far the majority of mistakes in that test involved failure to catch identity fraud by unauthorized immigrant workers.

Sources: Department of Homeland Security, "Secretary Napolitano Strengthens Employment Verification with Administration's Commitment to E-Verify," news release, July 8, 2009, http://www.dhs.gov; Department of Homeland Security, "E-Verify," last updated March 5, 2010, http://www.dhs.gov; and Louise Radnofsky and Miriam Jordan, "Illegal Workers Slip by System," *Wall Street Journal,* February 25, 2010, http://online.wsj.com.

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a candidate's consent before using a third party to check the candidate's credit history or references. If the employer then decides to take an adverse action (such as not hiring) based on the report, the employer must give the applicant a copy of the report and summary of the applicant's rights *before* taking the action.

Another legal requirement is that employers hiring people to work in the United States must ensure that anyone they hire is eligible for employment in this country. Under the **Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986,** employers must verify and maintain records on the legal rights of applicants to work in the United States. They do this by having applicants fill out the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Form I-9 and present documents showing their identity and eligibility to work. Employers must complete their portion of each Form I-9, check the applicant's documents, and retain the Form I-9 for at least three years. Employers may (and in some cases must) also use the federal government's electronic system for verifying eligibility to work, as described in the "eHRM" box. At the same time, assuming a person is eligible to work under this law, the law prohibits the employer from discriminating against the person on the basis of national origin or citizenship status.

An important principle of selection is to combine several sources of information about candidates, rather than relying solely on interviews or a single type of testing. The sources should be chosen carefully to relate to the characteristics identified in the job description. When organizations do this, they are increasing the validity of the decision criteria. They are more likely to make hiring decisions that are fair and unbiased. They also are more likely to choose the best candidates.

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986
Federal law requiring employers to verify and maintain records on applicants' legal rights to work in the United States.

Job Applications and Résumés

Nearly all employers gather background information on applicants at the beginning of the selection process. The usual ways of gathering background information are by asking applicants to fill out application forms and provide résumés. Organizations also verify the information by checking references and conducting background checks.

Asking job candidates to provide background information is inexpensive. The organization can get reasonably accurate information by combining applications and résumés with background checks and well-designed interviews.[12] A major challenge with applications and résumés is the sheer volume of work they generate for the organization. Human resource departments often are swamped with far more résumés than they can carefully review.

Application Forms

Asking each applicant to fill out an employment application is a low-cost way to gather basic data from many applicants. It also ensures that the organization has certain standard categories of information, such as mailing address and employment history, from each. Figure 6.3 is an example of an application form.

Employers can buy general-purpose application forms from an office supply store, or they can create their own forms to meet unique needs. Either way, employment applications include areas for applicants to provide several types of information:

- *Contact information*—The applicant's name, address, phone number, and e-mail address.
- *Work experience*—Companies the applicant worked for, job titles, and dates of employment.
- *Educational background*—High school, college, and universities attended and degree(s) awarded.
- *Applicant's signature*—Signature following a statement that the applicant has provided true and complete information.

The application form may include other areas for the applicant to provide additional information, such as specific work experiences, technical skills, or memberships in professional or trade groups. Also, including the date on an application is useful for keeping up-to-date records of job applicants. The application form should not request information that could violate equal employment opportunity standards. For example, questions about an applicant's race, marital status, or number of children would be inappropriate.

By reviewing application forms, HR personnel can identify which candidates meet minimum requirements for education and experience. They may be able to rank applicants—for example, giving applicants with 10 years' experience a higher ranking than applicants with 2 years' experience. In this way, the applications enable the organization to narrow the pool of candidates to a number it can afford to test and interview.

Résumés

The usual way that applicants introduce themselves to a potential employer is to submit a résumé. An obvious drawback of this information source is that applicants control the content of the information, as well as the way it is presented. This type of information is therefore biased in favor of the applicant and (although this is

Figure 6.3

Sample Job Application Form

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT
An Equal Opportunity Employer

FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	LAST NAME		SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER
LOCAL	STREET ADDRESS	CITY AND STATE	ZIP CODE	TELEPHONE
PERMANENT	STREET ADDRESS	CITY AND STATE	ZIP CODE	TELEPHONE
ELECTRONIC MAIL ADDRESS				

PLEASE ANSWER ALL ITEMS. IF NOT APPLICABLE, WRITE N/A.

ARE YOU A U.S. CITIZEN OR AUTHORIZED TO BE LEGALLY EMPLOYED ON AN ONGOING BASIS IN THE U.S. BASED ON YOUR VISA OR IMMIGRATION STATUS? ☐ YES ☐ NO

ARE YOU OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE? YES ☐ NO ☐

DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A NONIMMIGRANT U.S. VISA? ☐ YES ☐ NO IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY:

DO YOU HAVE ANY RELATIVES EMPLOYED HERE? ☐ NO ☐ YES
IF YES, GIVE NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND LOCATION WHERE THEY WORK

DO YOU HAVE ANY RELATIVES EMPLOYED BY THE COMPETITION? ☐ NO ☐ YES WHAT COMPANY?

ARE YOU ABLE TO TRAVEL AS REQUIRED FOR THE POSITION SOUGHT? ☐ YES ☐ NO

ARE YOU WILLING TO RELOCATE? ☐ YES ☐ NO

ARE THERE GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS WHICH YOU WOULD PREFER OR REFUSE? ☐ NO ☐ YES IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY:

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OR PLED GUILTY TO ANY FELONY OR MISDEMEANOR OTHER THAN FOR A MINOR TRAFFIC VIOLATION? ☐ NO ☐ YES
IF YES, STATE THE DATE(S) AND LOCATION(S):

WHEN	WHERE	NATURE OF OFFENSE(S)

WORK PREFERENCE

SPECIFIC POSITION FOR WHICH YOU ARE APPLYING	NUMBER OF YEARS OF RELATED EXPERIENCE

LIST COMPUTER SOFTWARE PACKAGES OR PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE SKILLS

STARTING SALARY EXPECTED	DATE AVAILABLE TO START WORK	HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO APPLY FOR A POSITION HERE?

HAVE YOU EVER WORKED AT, OR APPLIED FOR WORK HERE BEFORE? ☐ NO ☐ YES
IF YES: WHEN? WHERE?

LIST EMPLOYMENT REFERENCES HERE, IF NOT INCLUDED ON ATTACHED RESUME

TURN OVER

COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF INFORMATION IS NOT INCLUDED ON ATTACHED RESUME

EDUCATION CIRCLE THE HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED: ELEMENTARY 6 7 8   HIGH SCHOOL 1 2 3 4   COLLEGE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

HIGH SCHOOL NAME(S)	LOCATION(S)		GRADUATED ☐ YES ☐ NO	GRADE AVERAGE	CLASS RANK ____ OUT OF ____
COLLEGE NAME(S)	LOCATION(S)	MAJOR FIELD(S) OF STUDY AND PRINCIPAL PROFESSOR (OR ADVISOR)	DEGREE(S) RECEIVED		OVERALL AND MAJOR GPA'S

ACADEMIC HONORS OR OTHER SPECIAL RECOGNITION

FOREIGN LANGUAGES READ   FOREIGN LANGUAGES SPOKEN

HAVE YOU TAKEN THE GMAT, GRE, SAT OR OTHER ACADEMIC ENTRANCE TEST(S) WITHIN THE LAST TEN YEARS? ☐ YES ☐ NO
IF YES, LIST TEST(S), DATE(S) AND HIGHEST SCORE(S).

DATE TAKEN		SCORE(S)			
SAT	TOTAL: ____	VERBAL:		MATHEMATICAL: ____	
ACT	TOTAL: ____	ENGLISH: ____ MATHEMATICS: ____	READING: ____	SCIENCE: ____	
GRE (GENERAL TEST)	TOTAL: ____	VERBAL: ____ QUANTITATIVE: ____	ANALYTICAL: ____		
GMAT	TOTAL: ____	VERBAL: ____ MATH: ____	AWA: ____		
OTHER	TOTAL: ____				

EMPLOYMENT AND MILITARY RECORD LIST MOST RECENT FIRST. I AGREE TO FURNISH VERIFICATION IF REQUESTED. ATTACH RESUME. RESPOND BELOW IF INFORMATION IS NOT INCLUDED ON RESUME.

NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER	POSITION HELD	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES	SALARY START	SALARY FINISH	DATES FROM	DATES TO	REASON FOR LEAVING

ENCIRCLE THOSE EMPLOYERS YOU <u>DO NOT</u> WANT US TO CONTACT
TURN OVER

Visit the text Web site www.mhhe.com/noefund4e for tips on writing an effective résumé.

unethical) may not even be accurate. However, this inexpensive way to gather information does provide employers with a starting point. Organizations typically use résumés as a basis for deciding which candidates to investigate further.

As with employment applications, an HR staff member reviews the résumés to identify candidates meeting such basic requirements as educational background, related work performed, and types of equipment the person has used. Because résumés are created by the job applicants (or the applicants have at least approved résumés created by someone they hire), they also may provide some insight into how candidates communicate and present themselves. Employers tend to decide against applicants whose résumés are unclear, sloppy, or full of mistakes. On the positive side, résumés may enable applicants to highlight accomplishments that might not show up in the format of an employment application. Review of résumés is most valid when the content of the résumés is evaluated in terms of the elements of a job description.

References

Application forms often ask that applicants provide the names of several references. Applicants provide the names and phone numbers of former employers or others who can vouch for their abilities and past job performance. In some situations, the applicant may provide letters of reference written by those people. It is then up to the organization to have someone contact the references to gather information or verify the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant.

As you might expect, references are not an unbiased source of information. Most applicants are careful to choose references who will say something positive. In addition, former employers and others may be afraid that if they express negative opinions, they will be sued. Their fear is understandable. In a recent case, an employee sued his former supervisor for comments about how the employee had succeeded in overcoming attendance problems related to a struggle with multiple sclerosis. The employee felt that the disclosure of his prior attendance problems was defamatory.[13] (Disclosing his medical condition also would have posed problems for the potential future employer's ability to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.) The case, which was settled, shows that even well-intentioned remarks can cause problems.

Usually the organization checks references after it has determined that the applicant is a finalist for the job. Contacting references for all applicants would be time consuming, and it does pose some burden on the people contacted. Part of that burden is the risk of giving information that is seen as too negative or too positive. If the person who is a reference gives negative information, there is a chance the candidate will claim *defamation*, meaning the person damaged the applicant's reputation by making statements that cannot be proved truthful.[14] At the other extreme, if the person gives a glowing statement about a candidate, and the new employer later learns of misdeeds such as sexual misconduct or workplace violence, the new employer might sue the former employer for misrepresentation.[15]

Because such situations occasionally arise, often with much publicity, people who give references tend to give as little information as possible. Most organizations have policies that the human resource department will handle all requests for references

and that they will only verify employment dates and sometimes the employee's final salary. In organizations without such a policy, HR professionals should be careful—and train managers to be careful—to stick to observable, job-related behaviors and to avoid broad opinions that may be misinterpreted. In spite of these drawbacks of references, the risks of not learning about significant problems in a candidate's past outweigh the possibility of getting only a little information. Potential employers should check references. In general, the results of this effort will be most valid if the employer contacts many references (if possible, going beyond the list of names provided by the applicant) and speaks with them directly by phone.[16]

Background Checks

A background check is a way to verify that applicants are as they represent themselves to be. Unfortunately, not all candidates are open and honest. Others, even if honest, may find that the Internet makes it easy for potential employers to uncover information that reveals them in an unflattering light and may cost them a job. A recent investigation into the amount of false information on résumés found that it spiked in 2007. Part of the increase came from more efforts to exaggerate or misrepresent facts; but in addition, employers were catching more of this behavior simply by looking up information with Internet search engines like Google.[17]

About 8 out of 10 large companies and over two-thirds of smaller organizations say they conduct criminal background checks. These efforts are affecting more workers, because the slower economy allows many employers to be choosy, the Internet makes searching for convictions easier, and crackdowns on crime have resulted in an estimated 60 percent of American males having been arrested at some point in their lives. An example of one such man is Wally Camis Jr., who told an employment agency he had not been arrested. However, a background check by the agency turned up an incident in the 1980s, when Camis was 18: when two men threatened Camis, he flashed the handle of his hairbrush. He succeeded in convincing them it was a knife, so they told the police they had been assaulted by Camis. He received a no-judgment ruling and agreed to pay a fine; he later served in the Air Force and held several jobs. The issue, according to the employment agency, was that Camis had not been honest about his past. To become employable, Camis had his record expunged—an alternative being sought by a rapidly growing number of individuals convicted of misdemeanors.[18] The fact that the ease and prevalence of background checks are leading to a surge of interest in expungement poses problems for employers concerned about maintaining a safe workplace and avoiding theft. The results of background checks may not be as complete as employers believe.

Another type of background check that has recently drawn greater scrutiny is the use of credit checks. Employers in certain situations, such as processes that involve handling money, are concerned that employees with credit problems will behave less honestly. To avoid hiring such employees, these employers conduct a background check. Also, some employers see good credit as an indicator that a person is responsible. For reasons such as these, the percentage of employers conducting credit checks has risen from 25 percent in 1998 to 47 percent in 2009.[19] But in a time of high unemployment and many home foreclosures, some people see this type of investigation as unfair to people who are desperately trying to find work: the worse their financial situation, the harder the job search becomes. Under federal law, conducting a credit check is legal if the person consents, but some states ban or are considering bans on the practice.

Employment Tests and Work Samples

When the organization has identified candidates whose applications or résumés indicate they meet basic requirements, the organization continues the selection process with this narrower pool of candidates. Often, the next step is to gather objective data through one or more employment tests. These tests fall into two broad categories:

Aptitude Tests
Tests that assess how well a person can learn or acquire skills and abilities.

Achievement Tests
Tests that measure a person's existing knowledge and skills.

1. **Aptitude tests** assess how well a person can learn or acquire skills and abilities. In the realm of employment testing, the best-known aptitude test is the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), used by the U.S. Employment Service.
2. **Achievement tests** measure a person's existing knowledge and skills. For example, government agencies conduct civil service examinations to see whether applicants are qualified to perform certain jobs.

Before using any test, organizations should investigate the test's validity and reliability. Besides asking the testing service to provide this information, it is wise to consult more impartial sources of information, such as the ones identified in Table 6.2.

Physical Ability Tests

Physical strength and endurance play less of a role in the modern workplace than in the past, thanks to the use of automation and modern technology. Even so, many jobs still require certain physical abilities or psychomotor abilities (those connecting brain and body, as in the case of eye-hand coordination). When these abilities are essential to job performance or avoidance of injury, the organization may use physical ability tests. These evaluate one or more of the following areas of physical ability: muscular tension, muscular power, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, balance, and coordination.[20]

Although these tests can accurately predict success at certain kinds of jobs, they also tend to exclude women and people with disabilities. As a result, use of physical ability tests can make the organization vulnerable to charges of discrimination. It is therefore important to be certain that the abilities tested for really are essential to job performance or that the absence of these abilities really does create a safety hazard.

Table 6.2

Sources of Information about Employment Tests

Mental Measurements Yearbook	Descriptions and reviews of tests that are commercially available
Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology)	Guide to help organizations evaluate tests
Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests (American Psychological Association)	Description of standards for testing programs
Tests: A Comprehensive Reference for Assessments in Psychology, Education, and Business	Descriptions of thousands of tests
Test Critiques	Reviews of tests, written by professionals in the field

Cognitive Ability Tests

Although fewer jobs require muscle power today, brainpower is essential for most jobs. Organizations therefore benefit from people who have strong mental abilities. **Cognitive ability tests**—sometimes called "intelligence tests"—are designed to measure such mental abilities as verbal skills (skill in using written and spoken language), quantitative skills (skill in working with numbers), and reasoning ability (skill in thinking through the answer to a problem). Many jobs require all of these cognitive skills, so employers often get valid information from general tests. Many reliable tests are commercially available. The tests are especially valid for complex jobs and for those requiring adaptability in changing circumstances.[21]

The evidence of validity, coupled with the relatively low cost of these tests, makes them appealing, except for one problem: concern about legal issues. These concerns arise from a historical pattern in which use of the tests has had an adverse impact on African Americans. Some organizations responded with *race norming*, establishing different norms for hiring members of different racial groups. Race norming poses its own problems, not the least of which is the negative reputation it bestows on the minority employees selected using a lower standard. In addition, the Civil Rights Act of 1991 forbids the use of race or sex norming. As a result, organizations that want to base selection decisions on cognitive ability must make difficult decisions about how to measure this ability while avoiding legal problems. One possibility is a concept called *banding*. This concept treats a range of scores as being similar, as when an instructor gives the grade of A to any student whose average test score is at least 90. All applicants within a range of scores, or band, are treated as having the same score. Then within the set of "tied" scores, employers give preference to underrepresented groups. This is a controversial practice, and some have questioned its legality.[22]

Cognitive Ability Tests
Tests designed to measure such mental abilities as verbal skills, quantitative skills, and reasoning ability.

Job Performance Tests and Work Samples

Many kinds of jobs require candidates who excel at performing specialized tasks, such as operating a certain machine, handling phone calls from customers, or designing advertising materials. To evaluate candidates for such jobs, the organization may administer tests of the necessary skills. Sometimes the candidates take tests that involve a sample of work, or they may show existing samples of their work. Testing may involve a simulated work setting, perhaps in a testing center or in a computerized "virtual" environment.[23] Examples of job performance tests include tests of keyboarding speed and *in-basket tests*. An in-basket test measures the ability to juggle a variety of demands, as in a manager's job. The candidate is presented with simulated memos and phone messages describing the kinds of problems that confront a person in the job. The candidate has to decide how to respond to these messages and in what order. Examples of jobs for which candidates provide work samples include graphic designers and writers.

Tests for selecting managers may take the form of an **assessment center**—a wide variety of specific selection programs that use multiple selection methods to rate applicants or job incumbents on their management potential. An assessment center typically includes in-basket tests, tests of more general abilities, and personality tests. Combining several assessment methods increases the validity of this approach.

Job performance tests have the advantage of giving applicants a chance to show what they can do, which leads them to feel that the evaluation was fair.[24] The tests also are job specific—that is, tailored to the kind of work done in a specific job. So they have a high level of validity, especially when combined with cognitive ability tests and a highly structured interview.[25] This advantage can become a disadvantage,

Assessment Center
A wide variety of specific selection programs that use multiple selection methods to rate applicants or job incumbents on their management potential.

however, if the organization wants to generalize the results of a test for one job to candidates for other jobs. The tests are more appropriate for identifying candidates who are generally able to solve the problems associated with a job, rather than for identifying which particular skills or traits the individual possesses.[26] Developing different tests for different jobs can become expensive. One way to save money is to prepare computerized tests that can be delivered online to various locations.

Personality Inventories

In some situations, employers may also want to know about candidates' personalities. For example, one way that psychologists think about personality is in terms of the "Big Five" traits: extroversion, adjustment, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and inquisitiveness (explained in Table 6.3). There is evidence that people who score high on conscientiousness tend to excel at work, especially when they also have high cognitive ability.[27] For people-related jobs like sales and management, extroversion and agreeableness also seem to be associated with success.[28] Strong social skills help conscientious people ensure that they get positive recognition for their hard work.[29]

The usual way to identify a candidate's personality traits is to administer one of the personality tests that are commercially available. The employer pays for the use of the test, and the organization that owns the test then scores the responses and provides a report about the test taker's personality. An organization that provides such tests should be able to discuss the test's validity and reliability. Assuming the tests are valid for the organization's jobs, they have advantages. Administering commercially available personality tests is simple, and these tests have generally not violated equal opportunity employment requirements.[30] On the downside, compared with intelligence tests, people are better at "faking" their answers to a personality test to score higher on desirable traits.[31] For example, people tend to score higher on conscientiousness when filling out job-related personality tests than when participating in

People who participate in Google's annual Code Jam—a global programming competition—typically exhibit one of the "Big Five" personality traits.

1. Extroversion	Sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, expressive	Table 6.3
2. Adjustment	Emotionally stable, nondepressed, secure, content	**Five Major Personality Dimensions Measured by Personality Inventories**
3. Agreeableness	Courteous, trusting, good-natured, tolerant, cooperative, forgiving	
4. Conscientiousness	Dependable, organized, persevering, thorough, achievement-oriented	
5. Inquisitiveness	Curious, imaginative, artistically sensitive, broad-minded, playful	

research projects.[32] Ways to address this problem include using trained interviewers rather than surveys, collecting information about the applicant from several sources, and letting applicants know that several sources will be used.[33]

A recent study found that 35 percent of U.S. organizations use personality tests when selecting personnel.[34] One reason is organizations' greater use of teamwork, where personality conflicts can be a significant problem. Traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness have been associated with effective teamwork.[35] In addition, an organization might try to select team members with similar traits and values in order to promote a strong culture where people work together harmoniously, or they instead might look for a diversity of personalities and values as a way to promote debate and creativity.[36]

Honesty Tests and Drug Tests

No matter what employees' personalities may be like, organizations want employees to be honest and to behave safely. Some organizations are satisfied to assess these qualities based on judgments from reference checks and interviews. Others investigate these characteristics more directly through the use of honesty tests and drug tests.

The most famous kind of honesty test is the polygraph, the so-called lie detector test. However, in 1988 the passage of the Polygraph Act banned the use of polygraphs for screening job candidates. As a result, testing services have developed paper-and-pencil honesty (or integrity) tests. Generally these tests ask applicants directly about their attitudes toward theft and their own experiences with theft. Most of the research into the validity of these tests has been conducted by the testing companies, but evidence suggests they do have some ability to predict such behavior as theft of the employer's property.[37]

As concerns about substance abuse have grown during recent decades, so has the use of drug testing. As a measure of a person's exposure to drugs, chemical testing has high reliability and validity. However, these tests are controversial for several reasons. Some people are concerned that they invade individuals' privacy. Others object from a legal perspective. When all applicants or employees are subject to testing, whether or not they have shown evidence of drug use, the tests might be an unreasonable search and seizure or a violation of due process. Taking urine and blood samples involves invasive procedures, and accusing someone of drug use is a serious matter.

Employers considering the use of drug tests should ensure that their drug-testing programs conform to some general rules:[38]

- Administer the tests systematically to all applicants for the same job.
- Use drug testing for jobs that involve safety hazards.
- Have a report of the results sent to the applicant, along with information about how to appeal the results and be retested if appropriate.
- Respect applicants' privacy by conducting tests in an environment that is not intrusive and keeping results confidential.

Another way organizations can avoid some of the problems with drug testing is to replace those tests with impairment testing of employees, also called *fitness-for-duty testing*. These testing programs measure whether a worker is alert and mentally able to perform critical tasks at the time of the test. The test does not investigate the cause of any impairment—whether the employee scores poorly because of illegal drugs, alcohol, prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, or simple fatigue. For example, Bowles-Langley Technology has developed a test that measures alertness by presenting employees with exercises that involve interacting with graphics, much like playing a video game. The test measures various responses including reaction time and hand–eye coordination. For a cost of about $5 or $10 per worker per month, companies can verify that employees such as pilots and truck drivers are able to fly or drive safely. Because the tests can be accessed online, they are available to workers in a variety of situations.[39]

Medical Examinations

Especially for physically demanding jobs, organizations may wish to conduct medical examinations to see that the applicant can meet the job's requirements. Employers may also wish to establish an employee's physical condition at the beginning of employment, so that there is a basis for measuring whether the employee has suffered a work-related disability later on. At the same time, as described in Chapter 3, organizations may not discriminate against individuals with disabilities who could perform a job with reasonable accommodations. Likewise, they may not use a measure of size or strength that discriminates against women, unless those requirements are valid in predicting the ability to perform a job. Furthermore, to protect candidates' privacy, medical exams must be related to job requirements and may not be given until the candidate has received a job offer. Therefore, organizations must be careful in how they use medical examinations. Many organizations make selection decisions first and then conduct the exams to confirm that the employee can handle the job, with any reasonable accommodations required. Limiting the use of medical exams in this way also holds down the cost of what tends to be an expensive process.

LO6 Discuss how to conduct effective interviews.

Interviews

Supervisors and team members most often get involved in the selection process at the stage of employment interviews. These interviews bring together job applicants and representatives of the employer to obtain information and evaluate the applicant's qualifications; The "Did You Know?" box shows some of the ways job applicants create unfavorable impressions with interviewers. While the applicant is providing information, he or she is also forming opinions about what it is like to work for the organization. Most organizations use interviewing as part of the selection process. In fact, this method is used more than any other.

Nondirective Interview
A selection interview in which the interviewer has great discretion in choosing questions to ask each candidate.

Interviewing Techniques

Interview techniques include choices about the type of questions to ask and the number of people who conduct the interview. Several question types are possible:

- In a **nondirective interview,** the interviewer has great discretion in choosing questions. The candidate's reply to one question may suggest other questions to ask. Nondirective interviews typically include open-ended questions about the

What Turns Off an Interviewer

Interviewers gather information from what job applicants tell them and also from how they behave. Frankly, some behaviors are a turnoff. In a recent survey, HR professionals identified ways that job applicants can kill their prospects.

Source: Based on Diana Middleton, "Avoid These Interview Killers," *Wall Street Journal,* November 14, 2009, http://online.wsj.com.

Percentage Who Say it's a Deal Breaker
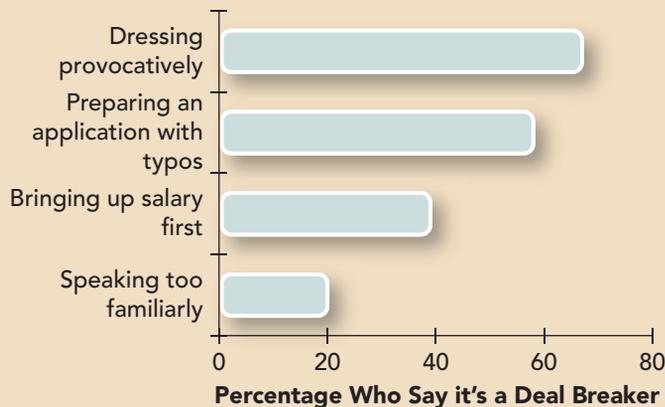
candidate's strengths, weaknesses, career goals, and work experience. Because these interviews give the interviewer wide latitude, their reliability is not great, and some interviewers ask questions that are not valid or even legal.

- A **structured interview** establishes a set of questions for the interviewer to ask. Ideally, the questions are related to job requirements and cover relevant knowledge, skills, and experiences. The interviewer is supposed to avoid asking questions that are not on the list. Although interviewers may object to being restricted, the results may be more valid and reliable than with a nondirective interview.

- A **situational interview** is a structured interview in which the interviewer describes a situation likely to arise on the job and asks the candidate what he or she would do in that situation. This type of interview may have high validity in predicting job performance.[40]

- A **behavior description interview (BDI)** is a situational interview in which the interviewer asks the candidate to describe how he or she handled a type of situation in the past. Questions about candidates' actual experiences tend to have the highest validity.[41]

The common setup for either a nondirected or structured interview is for an individual (an HR professional or the supervisor for the vacant position) to interview each candidate face to face. However, variations on this approach are possible. In a **panel interview,** several members of the organization meet to interview each candidate. A panel interview gives the candidate a chance to meet more people and see how people interact in that organization. It provides the organization with the judgments of more than one person, to reduce the effect of personal biases in selection

Structured Interview
A selection interview that consists of a predetermined set of questions for the interviewer to ask.

Situational Interview
A structured interview in which the interviewer describes a situation likely to arise on the job, then asks the candidate what he or she would do in that situation.

Behavior Description Interview (BDI)
A structured interview in which the interviewer asks the candidate to describe how he or she handled a type of situation in the past.

When interviewing candidates, it's valid to ask about willingness to travel if that is part of the job. Interviewers might ask questions about previous business travel experiences and/or how interviewees handled situations requiring flexibility and self-motivation (qualities that would be an asset in someone who is traveling alone and solving business problems on the road).

Panel Interview
Selection interview in which several members of the organization meet to interview each candidate.

decisions. Panel interviews can be especially appropriate in organizations that use teamwork. At the other extreme, some organizations conduct interviews without any interviewers; they use a computerized interviewing process. The candidate sits at a computer and enters replies to the questions presented by the computer. Such a format eliminates a lot of personal bias—along with the opportunity to see how people interact. Therefore, computer interviews are useful for gathering objective data, rather than assessing people skills.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviewing

The wide use of interviewing is not surprising. People naturally want to see prospective employees firsthand. As we noted in Chapter 1, the top qualities that employers seek in new hires include communication skills and interpersonal skills. Talking face to face can provide evidence of these skills. Interviews can give insights into candidates' personalities and interpersonal styles. They are more valid, however, when they focus on job knowledge and skill. Interviews also provide a means to check the accuracy of information on the applicant's résumé or job application. Asking applicants to elaborate about their experiences and offer details reduces the likelihood of a candidate being able to invent a work history.[42]

Despite these benefits, interviewing is not necessarily the most accurate basis for making a selection decision. Research has shown that interviews can be unreliable, low in validity,[43] and biased against a number of different groups.[44] Interviews are also costly. They require that at least one person devote time to interviewing each candidate, and the applicants typically have to be brought to one geographic location. Interviews are also subjective, so they place the organization at greater risk of discrimination complaints by applicants who were not hired, especially if those individuals were asked questions not entirely related to the job. The Supreme Court has held that subjective selection methods like interviews must be validated, using methods that provide criterion-related or content validation.[45]

Organizations can avoid some of these pitfalls.[46] Human resource staff should keep the interviews narrow, structured, and standardized. The interview should focus on accomplishing a few goals, so that at the end of the interview, the organization has ratings on several observable measures, such as ability to express ideas. The interview should not try to measure abilities and skills—for example, intelligence—that tests can measure better. As noted earlier, situational interviews are especially effective for doing this. Organizations can prevent problems related to subjectivity by training interviewers and using more than one person to conduct interviews. Training typically includes focusing on the recording of observable facts, rather than on making subjective judgments, as well as developing interviewers' awareness of their biases.[47] Using a structured system for taking notes is helpful for limiting subjectivity and helping the interviewer remember and justify an evaluation later.[48] Finally, to address costs of interviewing, many organizations videotape interviews and send the tapes (rather than the applicants) from department to department. The above "HR How To" box provides more specific guidelines for successful interviewing.

HR How To

INTERVIEWING EFFECTIVELY

Interviewing is one HR function that almost all managers are involved with at some point. Here are some tips for conducting interviews that identify the best candidates:

- *Be prepared*—Make sure the place where you interview is accessible and comfortable for you and the candidate. Read the candidate's résumé and other paperwork ahead of time, to avoid asking for information that has already been provided. Prepare a list of questions, as well as information about the company's history, culture, and other details the candidate might be interested in knowing.
- *Put the applicant at ease*— A nervous or cautious job candidate may not show his or her best qualities. Express your appreciation for the candidate's time, and let the person know you're glad to meet him or her. Briefly explain what to expect during the interview.
- *Ask about past behaviors*— Talking about specific events makes it harder for a candidate to focus on guessing what the interviewer wants to hear, and the answers give clues about what the candidate will do in new situations. For example, depending on the type of job, you might ask, "Please tell me about a time when you received a customer complaint and how you handled it," or "This job involves tight deadlines; could you tell me about a time when you faced a difficult deadline?"
- *Listen*—The interview information is only as good as the interviewer's ability to gather it. Let the candidate do most of the talking, and pay attention to what is being said and not said. If a candidate sounds vague or too good to be true, ask follow-up questions to gather details.
- *Take notes*—As much as you can without distracting yourself or the candidate, jot down notes to remind you of key points. Also schedule 5 or 10 minutes after each interview for writing down your impressions.
- At the end of the interview, make sure the candidate knows what to expect next— for example, a phone call or additional interviews within the next week.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency, "Tips on How to Successfully Interview Job Candidates," November 17, 2009, www.mbda.gov; University of South Carolina Division of Human Resources, "Tips on Interviewing University Job Applicants," http://hr.sc.edu, accessed March 23, 2010; and Dun & Bradstreet, "How to Conduct an Effective Employee Interview," Small Business Solutions, http://smallbusiness.dnb.com, accessed March 23, 2010.

Preparing to Interview

Organizations can reap the greatest benefits from interviewing if they prepare carefully. A well-planned interview should be standardized, comfortable for the participants, and focused on the job and the organization. The interviewer should have a quiet place in which to conduct interviews without interruption. This person should be trained in how to ask objective questions, what subject matter to avoid, and how to detect and handle his or her own personal biases or other distractions in order to fairly evaluate candidates.

The interviewer should have enough documents to conduct a complete interview. These should include a list of the questions to be asked in a structured interview, with plenty of space for recording the responses. When the questions are prepared, it is also helpful to determine how the answers will be scored. For example, if questions ask how interviewees would handle certain situations, consider what responses are best in terms of meeting job requirements. If the job requires someone who motivates others, then a response that shows motivating behavior would receive a higher score. The interviewer also should have a copy of the interviewee's employment application

and résumé to review before the interview and refer to during the interview. If possible, the interviewer should also have printed information about the organization and the job. Near the beginning of the interview, it is a good idea to go over the job specifications, organizational policies, and so on, so that the interviewee has a clearer understanding of the organization's needs.

The interviewer should schedule enough time to review the job requirements, discuss the interview questions, and give the interviewee a chance to ask questions. To close, the interviewer should thank the candidate for coming and provide information about what to expect—for example, that the organization will contact a few finalists within the next two weeks or that a decision will be made by the end of the week.

Selection Decisions

After reviewing applications, scoring tests, conducting interviews, and checking references, the organization needs to make decisions about which candidates to place in which jobs. In practice, most organizations find more than one qualified candidate to fill an open position. The selection decision typically combines ranking based on objective criteria along with subjective judgments about which candidate will make the greatest contribution.

How Organizations Select Employees

The selection decision should not be a simple matter of whom the supervisor likes best or which candidate will take the lowest offer. Also, as the "HR Oops!" box emphasizes, job candidates, confidence does not necessarily mean they are competent. Rather, the people making the selection should look for the best fit between candidate and position. In general, the person's performance will result from a combination of ability and motivation. Often, the selection is a choice among a few people who possess the basic qualifications. The decision makers therefore have to decide which of those people have the best combination of ability and motivation to fit in the position and in the organization as a whole.

Multiple-Hurdle Model
Process of arriving at a selection decision by eliminating some candidates at each stage of the selection process.

The usual process for arriving at a selection decision is to gradually narrow the pool of candidates for each job. This approach, called the **multiple-hurdle model,** is based on a process such as the one shown earlier in Figure 6.1. Each stage of the process is a hurdle, and candidates who overcome a hurdle continue to the next stage of the process. For example, the organization reviews applications and/or résumés of all candidates, conducts some tests on those who meet minimum requirements, conducts initial interviews with those who had the highest test scores, follows up with additional interviews or testing, and then selects a candidate from the few who survived this process. Another, more expensive alternative is to take most applicants through all steps of the process and then to review all the scores to find the most desirable candidates. With this alternative, decision makers may use a **compensatory model,** in which a very high score on one type of assessment can make up for a low score on another.

Compensatory Model
Process of arriving at a selection decision in which a very high score on one type of assessment can make up for a low score on another.

Whether the organization uses a multiple-hurdle model or conducts the same assessments on all candidates, the decision maker(s) needs criteria for choosing among qualified candidates. An obvious strategy is to select the candidates who score highest on tests and interviews. However, employee performance depends on motivation as well as ability. It is possible that a candidate who scores very high on an ability test might be "overqualified"—that is, the employee might be bored by the job the organization needs to fill, and a less-able employee might actually be a better fit. Similarly, a highly motivated person might learn some kinds of jobs very quickly,

Style over Substance

Employers intend to pick the candidates who will perform the best on the job, but often they may be picking the candidates who perform best in the job *interview*. According to an experiment conducted at the University of California at Berkeley, people assume candidates are competent when they behave with confidence, whether or not they actually demonstrate competence.

In the experiment, people were assigned to teams of four to solve math problems. The team members gave leadership roles to the member who dominated the group by speaking with confidence, declaring opinions more often, and using body language that signaled certainty. Whether or not that team member had the best math skills, the team members rated that person as highly competent.

Applying that experiment to employee selection, it's important for an interviewer to sort out whether a candidate is simply speaking with confidence or actually providing evidence of competent behavior. Unless the job requirements focus on an ability to inspire confidence, the candidate's assertive behavior may not be the most important trait to measure. Instead, the employer probably needs to base the selection decision on more objective criteria.

Source: Based on Caitlin McDevitt, "The Competence-Confidence Disconnect," *Inc.*, April 24, 2009, www.inc.com.

Questions

1. For what kinds of jobs would it be relevant to look for a candidate who behaves confidently in a job interview?
2. When conducting job interviews, how can you increase the likelihood that you are evaluating relevant job skills, not just deciding who is most persuasive?

potentially outperforming someone who has the necessary skills. Furthermore, some organizations have policies of developing employees for career paths in the organization. Such organizations might place less emphasis on the skills needed for a particular job and more emphasis on hiring candidates who share the organization's values, show that they have the people skills to work with others in the organization, and are able to learn the skills needed for advancement.

Finally, organizations have choices about who will make the decision. Usually a supervisor makes the final decision, often alone. This person may couple knowledge of the job with a judgment about who will fit in best with others in the department. The decision could also be made by a human resource professional using standardized, objective criteria. Especially in organizations that use teamwork, selection decisions may be made by a work team or other panel of decision makers.

Communicating the Decision

The human resource department is often responsible for notifying applicants about the results of the selection process. When a candidate has been selected, the organization should communicate the offer to the candidate. The offer should include the job responsibilities, work schedule, rate of pay, starting date, and other relevant details. If placement in a job requires that the applicant pass a physical examination, the offer should state that contingency. The person communicating the offer should also indicate a date by which the candidate should reply with an acceptance or rejection of the offer. For some jobs, such as management and professional positions, the candidate and organization may negotiate pay, benefits, and work arrangements before they arrive at a final employment agreement.

The person who communicates this decision should keep accurate records of who was contacted, when, and for which position, as well as of the candidate's reply. The HR department and the supervisor also should be in close communication about the job offer. When an applicant accepts a job offer, the HR department must notify the supervisor, so that he or she can be prepared for the new employee's arrival.

thinking ethically

TAINTED BY ASSOCIATION

In a scandal involving fraud worth tens of billions of dollars, Bernard Madoff admitted to authorities that he had involved investors in an extensive Ponzi scheme—promising steady, favorable returns but using funds invested by new clients to pay phony returns to older clients. Eventually, a plunging stock market made the scheme impossible to maintain; it finally unraveled when Madoff was turned in to authorities by his sons and confessed to fraud.

The fallout extended well beyond losses to investors. Employees of Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities lost their jobs when the firm became insolvent. About 200 people had worked for the firm, and when Surge Trading bought its remaining assets, only about 30 stayed on. Now those who lost their jobs are struggling to rebuild their careers in spite of having a notorious name on their résumés. The association with Madoff is a red flag whether or not they were involved in the illegal and unethical behavior.

Eleanor Squillari was Madoff's assistant. Concluding that she would never find another job in the finance industry, she attended beauty school in the hopes of being able to land a job in a hair salon. Elaine Solomon is still trying to figure out what she can do next. She had been assistant to Peter Madoff, brother of Bernard and the firm's chief compliance officer. Now no one has interest in hiring her.

SOURCE: Based on Aaron Lucchetti, "Not Exactly a Résumé Highlight: Madoff Work," *Wall Street Journal,* December 8, 2009, http://online.wsj.com.

Questions

1. Imagine that you work in the HR department of a financial services company. How would you react to an application from a highly skilled employee with experience at Bernard Madoff's firm? How much would it matter whether you believe the person knew what was going on? How, if at all, would your response change if you worked for a manufacturer?
2. What ethical criteria should you apply to making selection decisions involving people who once worked for Bernard Madoff (or some other firm with ethics or legal problems in its history)?
3. How important is it to you to work only for organizations with high ethical standards? Why does it (or doesn't it) matter to you?

SUMMARY

LO1 Identify the elements of the selection process.

Selection typically begins with a review of candidates' employment applications and résumés. The organization administers tests to candidates who meet basic requirements, and qualified candidates undergo one or more interviews. Organizations check references and conduct background checks to verify the accuracy of information provided by candidates. A candidate is selected to fill each vacant position. Candidates who accept offers are placed in the positions for which they were selected.

LO2 Define ways to measure the success of a selection method.

One criterion is reliability, which indicates the method is free from random error, so that measurements are consistent. A selection method should also be valid, meaning that performance on the measure (such as a test score) is related to what the measure is designed to assess (such as job performance). Criterion-related validity shows a correlation between test scores and job performance scores. Content validity shows consistency between the test items or problems and the kinds of situations or problems that occur on the job. Construct validity establishes that the test actually measures a specified construct, such as intelligence or leadership ability, which is presumed to be associated with success on the job. A selection method also should be generalizable, so that it applies to more than one specific situation. Each selection method should have utility,

meaning it provides economic value greater than its cost. Finally, selection methods should meet the legal requirements for employment decisions.

LO3 Summarize the government's requirements for employee selection.

The selection process must be conducted in a way that avoids discrimination and provides access to persons with disabilities. This means selection methods must be valid for job performance, and scores may not be adjusted to discriminate against or give preference to any group. Questions may not gather information about a person's membership in a protected class, such as race, sex, or religion, nor may the employer investigate a person's disability status. Employers must respect candidates' privacy rights and ensure that they keep personal information confidential. They must obtain consent before conducting background checks and notify candidates about adverse decisions made as a result of background checks.

LO4 Compare the common methods used for selecting human resources.

Nearly all organizations gather information through employment applications and résumés. These methods are inexpensive, and an application form standardizes basic information received from all applicants. The information is not necessarily reliable, because each applicant provides the information. These methods are most valid when evaluated in terms of the criteria in a job description. References and background checks help to verify the accuracy of the information. Employment tests and work samples are more objective. To be legal, any test must measure abilities that actually are associated with successful job performance. Employment tests range from general to specific. General-purpose tests are relatively inexpensive and simple to administer. Tests should be selected to be related to successful job performance and avoid charges of discrimination. Interviews are widely used to obtain information about a candidate's interpersonal and communication skills and to gather more detailed information about a candidate's background. Structured interviews are more valid than unstructured ones. Situational interviews provide greater validity than general questions. Interviews are costly and may introduce bias into the selection process. Organizations can minimize the drawbacks through preparation and training.

LO5 Describe major types of employment tests.

Physical ability tests measure strength, endurance, psychomotor abilities, and other physical abilities. They can be accurate but can discriminate and are not always job related. Cognitive ability tests, or intelligence tests, tend to be valid, especially for complex jobs and those requiring adaptability. They are a relatively low-cost way to predict job performance but have been challenged as discriminatory. Job performance tests tend to be valid but are not always generalizable. Using a wide variety of job performance tests can be expensive. Personality tests measure personality traits such as extroversion and adjustment. Research supports their validity for appropriate job situations, especially for individuals who score high on conscientiousness, extroversion, and agreeableness. These tests are relatively simple to administer and generally meet legal requirements. Organizations may use paper-and-pencil honesty tests, which can predict certain behaviors, including employee theft. Organizations may not use polygraphs to screen job candidates. Organizations may also administer drug tests (if all candidates are tested and drug use can be an on-the-job safety hazard). A more job-related approach is to use impairment testing. Passing a medical examination may be a condition of employment, but to avoid discrimination against persons with disabilities, organizations usually administer a medical exam only after making a job offer.

LO6 Discuss how to conduct effective interviews.

Interviews should be narrow, structured, and standardized. Interviewers should identify job requirements and create a list of questions related to the requirements. Interviewers should be trained to recognize their own personal biases and conduct objective interviews. Panel interviews can reduce problems related to interviewer bias. Interviewers should put candidates at ease in a comfortable place that is free of distractions. Questions should ask for descriptions of relevant experiences and job-related behaviors. The interviewers also should be prepared to provide information about the job and the organization.

LO7 Explain how employers carry out the process of making a selection decision.

The organization should focus on the objective of finding the person who will be the best fit with the job and organization. This includes an assessment of ability and motivation. Decision makers may use a multiple-hurdle model in which each stage of the selection process eliminates some of the candidates from consideration at the following stages. At the final stage, only a few candidates remain, and the selection decision determines which of these few is the best fit. An alternative is a compensatory model, in which all candidates are evaluated with all methods. A candidate who scores poorly with one method may be selected if he or she scores very high on another measure.

KEY TERMS

achievement tests, p. 170
aptitude tests, p. 170
assessment center, p. 171
behavior description interview
   (BDI), p. 175
cognitive ability tests, p. 171
compensatory model, p. 178
concurrent validation, p. 161

construct validity, p. 162
content validity, p. 161
criterion-related validity, p. 160
generalizable, p. 162
Immigration Reform and Control
   Act of 1986, p. 165
multiple-hurdle model, p. 178
nondirective interview, p. 174

panel interview, p. 175
personnel selection, p. 158
predictive validation, p. 161
reliability, p. 160
situational interview, p. 175
structured interview, p. 175
utility, p. 162
validity, p. 160

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What activities are involved in the selection process? Think of the last time you were hired for a job. Which of those activities were used in selecting you? Should the organization that hired you have used other methods as well?

2. Why should the selection process be adapted to fit the organization's job descriptions?

3. Choose two of the selection methods identified in this chapter. Describe how you can compare them in terms of reliability, validity, ability to generalize, utility, and compliance with the law.

4. Why does predictive validation provide better information than concurrent validation? Why is this type of validation more difficult?

5. How do U.S. laws affect organizations' use of each of the employment tests? Interviews?

6. Suppose your organization needs to hire several computer programmers, and you are reviewing résumés you obtained from an online service. What kinds of information will you want to gather from the "work experience" portion of these résumés? What kinds of information will you want to gather from the "education" portion of these résumés? What methods would you use for verifying or exploring this information? Why would you use those methods?

7. For each of the following jobs, select the two kinds of tests you think would be most important to include in the selection process. Explain why you chose those tests.

   a. City bus driver
   b. Insurance salesperson
   c. Member of a team that sells complex high-tech equipment to manufacturers
   d. Member of a team that makes a component of the equipment in (c)

8. Suppose you are a human resource professional at a large retail chain. You want to improve the company's hiring process by creating standard designs for interviews, so that every time someone is interviewed for a particular job category, that person answers the same questions. You also want to make sure the questions asked are relevant to the job and maintain equal employment opportunity. Think of three questions to include in interviews for each of the following jobs. For each question, state why you think it should be included.

   a. Cashier at one of the company's stores
   b. Buyer of the stores' teen clothing line
   c. Accounts payable clerk at company headquarters

9. How can organizations improve the quality of their interviewing so that interviews provide valid information?

10. Some organizations set up a selection process that is long and complex. In some people's opinion, this kind of selection process not only is more valid but also has symbolic value. What can the use of a long, complex selection process symbolize to job seekers? How do you think this would affect the organization's ability to attract the best employees?

BUSINESSWEEK CASE

BusinessWeek   Limits on Credit Checks

It's hard enough to find a job in this economy, and now some people are facing another hurdle: Potential employers are holding their credit histories against them.

Sixty percent of employers recently surveyed by the Society for Human Resources Management said they run credit checks on at least some job applicants, compared with 42 percent in a somewhat similar survey in 2006.

Employers say such checks give them valuable information about an applicant's honesty and sense of responsibility. But lawmakers in at least 16 states from South Carolina to Oregon have proposed outlawing most credit checks, saying the practice traps people in debt because their past financial problems prevent them from finding work.

Wisconsin state Rep. Kim Hixson drafted a bill in his state shortly after hearing from Terry Becker, an auto mechanic who struggled to find work. Becker said it all started with medical bills that piled up when his now 10-year-old son began having seizures as a toddler. In the first year alone, Becker ran up $25,000 in medical debt. Over a four and half months period, he was turned down for at least eight positions for which he had authorized the employer to conduct a credit check, Becker said. He said one potential employer told him, "If your credit is bad, then you'll steal from me."

"I was in deep depression. I had lost a business, I was behind on my bills and I was unable to get a job," he said.

Hixson calls what happened to Becker discrimination based on credit history and said his bill would ban it. "If somebody is trying to get a job as a truck driver or a trainer in a gym, what does your credit history have to do with your ability to do that job?" Hixson asked. He said he knows of no research that shows a person with a bad credit history is going to perform poorly.

Under federal law, prospective employers must get written permission from applicants to run a credit check on them. But consumer advocates say most job applicants do not feel they are in a position to say no.

Even though more companies are using credit checks, only 13 percent perform them on all potential hires, according to the Society for Human Resources Management's most recent survey. Mike Aitken, the group's director of government affairs, said a blanket ban could remove a tool employers can use to help them make good hiring decisions.

Aitken pointed to a 2008 survey by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners that found the two most common red flags for employees who commit workplace fraud are living beyond their means and having difficulty meeting financial obligations. The same survey estimated American companies lost $994 billion to workplace fraud in 2008.

Aitken said someone who cannot pay his or her bills on time may not be more likely to steal, but might not have the maturity or sense of responsibility to handle a job like processing payroll checks.

Becker, the Milton, Wisconsin, resident with bad credit, has found work dismantling cars at an auto recycling company that did not ask to run a credit check. He worries, though, about friends in the auto industry who are looking for work and coming up empty-handed because of credit problems.

"It just seems like once you fall behind, you're behind," he said. "It's really hard to get back on the right financial track."

Questions

1. How well do you think credit checks meet the effectiveness criteria of (a) reliability; (b) validity; (c) ability to generalize results; (d) high utility; and (e) legality?
2. For what kinds of jobs might a credit check be a useful selection method? For what kinds of jobs would it be unhelpful, inappropriate, or unethical?
3. Imagine that you are an HR manager at a company operating in a state where credit checks of job applicants have been banned. What other selection methods could you use to pick honest and responsible employees?

Case: When Recruiting on Campus Is Too Costly

Everyone's tightening belts these days, and HR budgets are by no means exempt from the cost-cutting efforts. Even during lean times, many companies are hiring, but they are trying to pick the best people while trying to keep expenses down. For some companies, that includes thinking twice about flying or driving to college campuses to interview prospective employees.

That doesn't mean recruiters have stopped communicating with students. In more and more cases, it does mean the conversation may take place over a distance, using state-of-the-art technology. The interview setup can be as simple as two laptops loaded with Skype software, which allows phone calls and webcam images to be transmitted over the Internet. Or it may involve thousands of dollars' worth of videoconferencing equipment for a more natural approach.

At Liberty Mutual Group, recruiting director Ann Nowak visits a few schools where the company has strong relationships and has found a good pool of talent. But she says, "Sometimes I get inquiries from very strong candidates in the top 10 percent of their class" at other schools, and she doesn't want them to slip away. Although the

insurance company is growing and hiring sales representatives, Nowak can't afford to fly across the country for a handful of interviews, so she has set up an online recruiting and selection system. Students at distant schools can view online presentations about the kinds of positions the company has available. And when an interested prospect seems like he or she might be a good match, Nowak can use Web-based interviewing to narrow her choices. The company invites those who survive the cut to fly to headquarters for an interview.

Anheuser-Busch InBev is another company that recruits on college campuses. Elatia Abate, the company's global director of recruitment and strategy, picked a few schools she deemed worthy of visits. Career counselors at other schools wanted her to interview their students as well, but there wasn't room in the budget. Lean operations have been a hallmark of the brewing company since Belgium's InBev acquired St. Louis–based Anheuser-Busch. However, for candidates whose background looks interesting, Abate will conduct video interviews.

One way schools avoid getting passed by is to subscribe to a service called InterviewStream. For a few thousand dollars a year, the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, company sets up a system that allows recruiters to conduct live interviews online. Or they can develop an automated process in which the InterviewStream system delivers each candidate a series of questions and records a video of the candidate's responses. To conduct this method, the company sends the job candidate an e-mail message inviting him or her to click on a link to a Web site that plays a video of the interviewer asking prerecorded questions. The company using the InterviewStream service chooses which questions will be asked and whether to give candidates the option to review and edit their responses. A webcam on the candidate's computer records the interview, which is then made available for the company's hiring people to review whenever they like.

SOURCES: Diana Middleton, "Non-Campus Recruiting," *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2010, http://onliune.wsj.com; Jeremiah McWilliams, "Drastic Changes, No Apologies," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 15, 2009, Business & Company Resource Center, http://galenet.galegroup.com; "Liberty Mutual Adds Reps, Offices in Massachusetts," *Professional Services Close-Up*, April 3, 2009, Business & Company Resource Center, http://galenet.galgroup.com; and Darren Dahl, "Recruiting: Tapping the Talent Pool," *Inc.*, April 1, 2009, www.inc.com.

Questions

1. Under what conditions would it be practical for a company to send recruiters to college campuses to interview prospective employees, and when would it be impractical? What kinds of companies would you expect to see on your college campus? What kinds would you *not* expect to see?

2. Compare in-person interviewing with video or online interviewing in terms of the effectiveness criteria (reliability, validity, ability to generalize results, utility, and legality). Which method is superior? Why?

3. Why do you think Liberty Mutual adds a face-to-face interview of candidates who did well in their online interview? Do you think it's worthwhile to fly a candidate across the country before making a selection decision? Why or why not? What additional information, if any, could be gained from the effort?

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Review
- Chapter learning objectives
- Test Your Knowledge: Reliability and Validity

Application
- Manager's Hot Seat segment: "Diversity in Hiring: Candidate Conundrum"
- Video case and quiz: "Using Interviews to Recruit the Right People"
- Self-Assessments: Assessing How Personality Type Impacts Your Goal Setting Skills and Analyzing Behavioral Interviews
- Web exercise: National Association of Convenience Stores Employee Selection Tool
- Small-business case: Kinaxis Chooses Sales Reps with Personality

Practice
- Chapter quiz

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