

Assessment Centres

Wouldn't it be great to be able to observe the behaviour of a person before you actually employ them. Imagine you were a "fly on the wall" at the group meeting your potential recruit is having at this very moment in their current workplace. You observe the following:

1. Your potential recruit stands up and physically pushes aside the other person who is talking and working on the whiteboard
2. They then take charge of the whiteboard and start talking over the rest of the group.
3. What would you think about their behaviour?

We observed this behaviour in an Assessment Centre group exercise we facilitated and it shows a distinct benefit of an Assessment Centre approach. You actually see their behaviour.

Niche Consulting is experienced in designing and running Assessment Centres for our clients. An Assessment Centre has the following features:

- Multiple participants assessed
- Multiple competencies or areas assessed
- Multiple exercises and methods of assessment
- Multiple assessors evaluate the responses to the assessments



The International Task Force on Assessment Centre Guidelines (2000) provides the following guidelines on what an Assessment Centre should encompass.

<http://www.assessmentcenters.org/pdf/00guidelines.pdf>

Importantly the Task Force emphasises the need for a thorough job analysis, the training of assessors and the use of multiple methods and simulations (behavioural exercises).

The following outlines some of the assessments used and types of behavioural exercises that are often included:

Assessments - multiple assessment techniques are utilised to measure the desired behaviours from multiple sources, these assessments may include:

- ◆ Ability Tests
- ◆ Personality Questionnaires
- ◆ Self Assessments
- ◆ Interviews
- ◆ Simulations (see below)
- ◆ 360 degree review data (typically in DCs)
- ◆ Situational Judgement Tests
- ◆ Portfolio analysis

Simulations - Job related simulations or behavioural exercises are designed to elicit overt behavioural responses from the participant. Examples of types of simulations that can be used are:

- ◆ Group exercises
- ◆ Presentation exercises
- ◆ In-tray or inbox work samples
- ◆ Role plays
- ◆ Fact finding exercises
- ◆ Writing exercises



Benefits of an Assessment Centre Approach

A well designed and implemented Assessment Centre has significant benefits for an organisation which include:

- Candidates generally accept the Assessment Centre process is fair.
- An Assessment Centre can be an effective job preview for candidates.
- A well run Assessment Centre may show case the organisation and sell it to the candidates
- Improves the buy-in from managers who are often trained and used as assessors.
- Improves the quality of candidates selected.
- Reduces the number of “incorrectly rejected” candidates.
- It is a legally defensible approach
- Spin off benefits such as training and new skills managers benefit from when trained as assessors.
- Development Centres have added benefits such as candidate self insight during the activities and therefore are more likely to accept and see their development areas.

It is important to note that the Assessment Centre method may not always be a suitable approach especially if there are other more cost effective and valid approaches available or when there is no buy-in from managers to the process.

It is also **not recommended** to implement an Assessment Centre or Development Centre process unless there is enough time to:

1. complete a robust job analysis
2. design the centre carefully
3. train personnel thoroughly
4. run the centre professionally.