

Introduction

It is indeed the job of the human resource professional to design a selection process that yields the best information about a candidate's strengths, weaknesses, aptitudes and skills. It is quite a daunting task to try and match people and the organisation in question. This should be done through a rational decision making process. Human resource professionals have the option of choosing a person-job criterion fit, a person-function fit or a person –organisation fit. The latter model will be analysed and the disadvantages and advantages of the model will be examined in detail below in relation to Tesco Ireland, Price Water house Coopers and Marks and Spencer as case studies ¹

The design of a selection process by the human resource professional

The person-organisation fit criterion is based upon an organisation's values and norms. Under the rational decision making model of selection, there are six rigorous steps that must be followed in order to bring out all the crucial traits in candidates. The first step involved is the identification of human resource needs within the firm. It entails monitoring the organisation and specifying exactly what is required in the organisation. Secondly, human resource professionals ought to identify the exact assessment methods they feel will bring out the best out of candidates. The most appropriate method for this is through diagnosis of the problem. Afterwards, human resource should select a list of candidates that fit their criteria. In line with that, an organisation should have alternate solutions. The fourth aspect of the model is applying the selected assessment methods to each candidate. This is where an organisation identifies alternatives to their solutions. The fifth step will involve selection of the most suitable candidate. According to

¹Greenberg J & Baron R (1999): Behaviour in Organisations, 7th Edition, New York; Prentice Hall

the generic decision making model, this will involve choosing the best alternative and then implementing it. Finally human resource professionals should evaluate their choice so as to endure its credibility.²

Unfortunately, this model has some shortcomings. This is because it is prone to individual biases. The model presents constraints on the amount of information available to the company. On top of this, there is very little room for application of science, instead prediction takes more precedence. Another pitfall to the model is the fact that the organisation's goals and values are deemed as the most crucial yet there may be instances when the organisation should apply more rational decision making. Lastly, there are instances when the various stakeholders involved in the decision making process have conflicting interests. Others may feel the need to highlight their importance or powers. This comes in the way of choosing the best candidate.³

On the other hand, rational decision making is also advantageous to an organisation for a number of reasons. First of all, it allows any one organisation to look for the most viable decision making process. Besides, there is room for improvement of the process.⁴

An example of a Company that follows the person-organisation fit models is Tesco Ireland. Most of the selection procedures followed by this retail chain actually fall under the generic rational

² Druker, J. (1995): Misunderstood and undervalued? Personnel Management in Construction, Human Resource Management Journal, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 77-91

³ Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (1997): Human resource management; a contemporary perspective; London; Financial Times

⁴ Taylor, S. (1998): Employee Resourcing; London; CIPD

decision making process. First of all, the firm goes through the first and second steps. However, this is a process that is not repeated every time the organisation has a vacancy. This is because the Company's needs may not necessarily change drastically with time thus implying that the same needs present within the Company during the last time it had a vacancy are most likely going to be the same needs again. Also, the organisation may find that there are certain assessment methods that work best for the organisation. In this case, Tesco has already established befitting assessment methods and these are the procedures it adheres to. The assessment methods include; psychometric tests, interviews, assessment centres. However, it should be noted that from time to time, these assessment procedures are prone to modification. This is the job of the Human resource professionals in the Company.⁵

Afterwards, the Company embarks on the third step of the generic rational decision making model, that is; selection of the right candidates from a list. It posts its vacancies on the recruitment section of the Company website. At this point, interested persons can obtain application forms and fill them. Candidates who fill in the application forms correctly will be subjected to a psychometric test. The psychometric tests are done in order to sieve out candidates with the wrong abilities, skills and knowledge. It is a complex mix of test questions that candidates must complete. Here, candidates are expected to make the most out of their chances to expose both their verbal and numerical skills. On top of this, they are also expected to bring out their strengths while the Company tries to assess their weaknesses. Besides, the Company hopes to gauge their attitudes and aptitudes through the latter mentioned test. The main

⁵ Kaufman, A. & Kaufman, N. (1990): K-BIT: Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test manual: Circle Pines, Minnesota; Journal for American Guidance Service, pp57

disadvantage of such a method of selection is that it mainly focuses on candidates' personalities rather than skills.⁶

Tesco also subjects candidates to the fourth step in the generic model which is application of assessment methods to short listed candidates. Candidates are taken through an interview process. The purpose of this step is to determine whether applicants fall under the Competency framework. The interview is normally conducted by Tesco's senior manager. The main advantage of such a selection tool is that the organisation can test a candidate's ability to handle high stress situations. On top of this, the employer is given the opportunity to give feedback to the candidate i.e. there is a two way communication between the parties. Candidates can clarify any uncertainties they may have towards the Company. In addition, the employer can also clarify some uncertainties that were presented in the job application forms. However, there are also some disadvantages present when using this selection tool. First of all, the method is prone to bias and stereotypes This is because interviewers are most likely going to choose candidates who they like even without having solid reasons for this. There is also a tendency to stereotype non-verbal candidates. Most employers assume that when a job applicant does not talk too much, then they may not have the right qualities for the job. Yet there is more to a candidate than just their appearance. Lastly, interviews may prevent certain candidates from displaying their capabilities in case they get nervous.⁷

⁶ Dainty, A. (2000): Improving employee resourcing within construction organisations, Proceedings of the ARCOM 2000 Conference; Glasgow; Vol. 1; pp. 49-59

⁷ Murray, H. A. (1943): Thematic Apperception Test manual, Cambridge MA; Harvard University Press, pp 257

Thereafter, the company takes candidates through assessment centres. Here, candidates are placed in groups composed of eight members each. The Company sets aside four selectors to achieve this. The assessment centres are expected to last the whole day. The main advantage of assessment centres is that there is creation of the workplace scenario. This implies that candidates have the opportunity to display their abilities to fit in with the organisation. Again this fall in line with the 'person-organisation' fit criterion. Another advantage of assessment centres is that the organisation has the opportunity of analysing candidates' team work ability. Since members are placed in groups of eight, they must have an ability to cooperate and listen to team members in order to be successful at their tasks. The disadvantage of this assessment tool is that candidates may get tired because it involves long durations of time. Some candidates may not be able to endure the long grilling and may even end up leaving before the exercise is over. Therefore, this is not a candidate friendly method.⁸

Lastly, Tesco Ireland reviews the choices they have made dafter a period of six months. What the Company normally does, is that it creates files for all the candidates that appear within the premises. This implies that even candidates that failed in the first step will still have a chance. The Company normally reviews applicants' files even when the position is filled because they want to make sure that they made the right decision and to have proof of this. Another review is again done one year after the vacancy was filled. If the applicant chosen is doing the job well, then job applicant files are eliminated. However, if the person's work is not effective, then Tesco

⁸ Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (1997): Human resource management; a contemporary perspective; London; Financial Times

will examine their mistakes within the assessment procedures and come up with another plan of action.⁹

Another model of selection is the Incremental decision process model. The model involves three major steps. The first is called the identification phase. First, the human resource personnel must recognise that there is need for a selection process within the Company. Afterwards, the company then analyses the exact needs within the company. This is called the diagnosis aspect. The second step involved in the process is called the development phase. In this step, Companies ought to search for the right assessment procedures. After collecting a variety of methods, then screening should be done to eliminate some inappropriate selection methods. Thereafter, the human resource department is expected to design the best method to fit the organisation. The third and final step in this model is the selection phase. A company should engage in judgement where evaluation and choice are merged. An analysis of available candidates should then be done. Thereafter, the company is expected to bargain on the available choices. Finally, there is authorization of the model.¹⁰

A Company that has adhered to the incremental decision-making process is Marks and Spencer. The reason why the Company uses this method of evaluation is that it has a large number of candidates to interview at any one time and needs vary with time. On top of this, the company is

⁹ Tesco Ireland (2008): The selection process, retrieved from <http://www.tesco.com/> accessed on 23rd March 2008

¹⁰ Greenberg J & Baron R (1999): Behaviour in Organisations, 7th Edition, New York; Prentice Hall

at the forefront of embracing technological advances within their selection processes. It is therefore necessary to follow a gradual process such as the incremental decision process model.¹¹

In the year 2007, the company applied the model in the following ways; first of all, it identified the need for a rigorous and comprehensive selection process. It realised that there were numerous vacancies in a number of its expansion stores with similar positions to be filled. The Company then examined all the procedures available. It could engage in manual selection processes or it could go through online recruitment. After sieving out the advantages and disadvantages of each, the company opted for online recruitment procedures. The Company then designed the best method to fit the organisation. This was done by merging technological methods and also through selection by the human resource department.¹²

Thereafter the company embarks on the selection phase. Here, candidates interested in the position advertised by the company are given the option of completing online application tests. Afterwards, candidates are given the opportunity to do online tests. These tests are marked through the system and feedback may be given to the candidate one hour after they started applying for the job. Then the Company gives applicants a chance to book interviews for themselves. This is where the sieving process begins. Here, the Company conducts a panel interview and a one on one interview. Within the interview, the Organisation intends on highlighting some of the abilities and knowledge that candidates possess. Here are some sample questions asked by Marks and Spencer

¹¹ Holigrocki, R. et al (1999); Introduction to the Parent-Child Interaction Assessment; Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, pp 413-428

¹² Torrington, D. (1991): Employee resourcing; London; IPM

What are the reasons why Marks and Spencer should employ you?

Do you adapt easily to our working environment?

Are you more comfortable working with groups or individuals?

Illustrate how you were a team player

Illustrate how you have displayed initiative before

Illustrate how you have shown leadership

Why are you suitable for the job?

What are the reasons why you want to work with us¹³

There are certain advantages that panel interviews present that may not be present in other aspects of selection. First of all, other interview processes are left in the hands of one individual, then it is subject to biases. However, when there is more than one individual conducting the interview, then it is possible to determine the most appropriate candidate with minimal biases. On top of this, it is also possible to establish a sort of consensus rather than leaving everything down to one individual. Panel interviews allow candidates to display their ability to deal with large numbers that come out in the organisation. This is a very useful trait because Marks and Spencer retail stores are usually large. There are high numbers of customers who walk in and out of their stores. Therefore, employees who plan on working for the Company should have good people skills. This easily comes out in the panel interviews.¹⁴

¹³ Taylor, S. (1998): Employee Resourcing; London; CIPD

¹⁴ Millon, T. (1994): Millon Clinical Multi-axial Inventory-III, Minneapolis MN; Journal for National Computer Systems, pp 17

Job applicants are also expected to attend assessment centres. The advantages and disadvantages of the process have been discussed in the Tesco Case study. However, there are differences in how the method of assessment is conducted. First of all, candidates are expected to take part in in-tray activities. Here, a number of documents are placed on trays and they are expected to arrange them in order of importance. The Assessment centres also involve the use of presentation. Here, candidates are given certain topics that affect the running of the Company and then they are expected to give their views about it. Candidates are also expected to deal with customers problems within the assessment centres. They are given a certain scenario, say, a consumer purchases groceries that happen to have gone bad They are then asked to deal with the situations. Candidates are also placed in assessment centres to practice their team work abilities. This is because Marks and Spencer expects them to engage in discussion exercised. Successful candidates in this area are those ones who display the best group interaction techniques. They are also expected to make reports about chosen topics affecting the Company. Lastly, applicants are given a tour around the store. Here, they are told to make some discussions about the different segments of the store.¹⁵

The last phase of the incremental development model is judgement. Here, the Company looks at all the aspects of the selection process. Candidates who succeed are the ones who did well in most of the activities availed to them. This means that even though some candidates may not do well in certain aspects of the interview, they may still do well in others.¹⁶

¹⁵ Onrec (2008): Marks and Spencer Wins Onrec Awards, retrieved from <http://www.onrec.com/onlinerecruitment> accessed on 23rd March 2008

¹⁶ Dainty, A. (2000): Improving employee resourcing within construction organisations, Proceedings of the ARCOM 2000 Conference; Glasgow; Vol. 1; pp. 49-59

Another company that follows the incremental-decision-making model is the Price Waterhouse& Coopers Company. This Company first assessed all the methods of selection available. It then zeroed in the most applicable ones and designed the selection process. This was then followed by the selection phase. This is based upon the selection process designed in the former phase. It entails a number of processes.¹⁷

First of all, the Company utilises application forms as one of the first selection tools. The main advantage of this selection tool is that the Company is given the opportunity to sieve out excess numbers of candidates. This is because sometimes job responses may be overwhelming. Certain candidates apply for positions that are not suited for. Some of them lack even the minimum qualifications required to fit into the Company. Therefore, there is a need for the company to eliminate such candidates so that they can minimise time wastage on those who do not have even the slightest possibility of making it. Another advantage of this selection tool is that there are minimal chances of applying biases. This is because biases are usually formed upon physical contact with a certain candidate. But since application forms are sent before that can be done, then it minimises the chances. On the other hand, one must be careful when using this selection tool because sometimes candidates fill in wrong information and it may lead to misleading choices. Aside from that, even when the right information has been displayed, some candidates may lack paper qualifications but have the right attitude and personality for the job. The job application forms have very minimal ways of depicting those aspects.¹⁸

¹⁷ Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (1997): Human resource management; a contemporary perspective; London; Financial Times

¹⁸ Westen, D. (1991): Social cognition and object relations; Journal of Psychological Bulletin, pp 429-455

Thereafter, the company then administers aptitude tests. These tests usually require short answers and are done within short time spans. They require candidates to display their decision making abilities and those who succeed in the task are usually the ones with the ability to think very fast under high pressure situations. The main advantage of such a method of selection is that it wastes little time. Therefore, the organisation can deal with large numbers of candidates. This is something that Price Waterhouse and Coopers usually faces from time to time. Aptitude tests are also highly appropriate for technical jobs. This is highly suitable for Price Waterhouse and Coopers. On the other hand, aptitude tests also come with their own disadvantages. Because of the pressure and importance placed on passing the tests, candidates may be tempted to cheat and some of them actually go ahead and do so. There are also other factors that may affect a candidate's performance negatively. For example ailing candidates may not perform to their utmost best and this will impede their progress.¹⁹

Afterwards the company performs interviews. Normally the Company posts vacancies on newspapers and the internet. Those application forms that fit the right criteria are chosen for interview. The Company then gives feedback to qualified candidates to attend interviews. This is then followed by assessment of competency frameworks. Here are some of the competency frameworks that have been used by the organisation in the past. Where competency frameworks are the basis upon which companies judge a given candidates;

- skills
- behaviour

¹⁹ Michell, J. (1999): Measurement in Psychology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- abilities

The first aspect that Price Waterhouse and Coopers checks is 'leading change'. The company measures candidates' abilities to create and to be innovative. In relation they are also judged on their knowledge of the external environment. This is because the Company will not be operating in isolation; it will be dealing with other business contacts and before one can join the company, they must have the ability to know the goings on in the external environment. Their level of resilience is also assessed and candidates must show how they can easily bounce back in case of a crisis. Leading change also involves determination of a candidate's plan for their career and their life in general. This aspect is necessary because the Company is in need of finding out whether individuals are ambitious and whether they have some chances of making it in other aspects of the Company.²⁰

'Leading people' is another aspect of assessing a candidate's competency framework. Leadership skills are tested in this area, candidates are asked about certain situations where they have dealt with conflicts and how exactly they did it. The Company is also able to eliminate certain candidates who may seem excellent in theory but lack the personality aspects to get them ahead in the Company. This is because certain candidates seem to lack the ability to deal with diversity. In this process, the company evaluates whether or not an applicant will have the ability to deal with people from a different culture by creating a culture that is unique to Price Waterhouse and Coopers. A candidate's team working abilities are tested here through assessment of their

²⁰ Druker, J. (1995): Misunderstood and undervalued? Personnel Management in Construction, Human Resource Management Journal, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 77-91

decision making processes i.e. whether or not they consult before deciding. Candidates should also have the ability to be enterprising. Candidates who have their own businesses are usually the ones with good entrepreneurship skills.²¹

The determination of competency framework will also involve the determination of a given candidates business acumen. Business acumen is determined by a number of tests. The first one is financial capability. Price Warehouse Coopers is a company centred on financial aspects and employees must have the ability to deal with this type of process by themselves. On top of this, there should also some demonstration of technical capabilities. A good business man is one in possession of the right technical skills. They should be technologically competent. This is because Information technology has become part of all the business functions within the Company therefore no one can pass without possessing this crucial and useful skill in the business world today²²

Conclusion

The two models that have been examined in the report are the Incremental development process and the generic rational selection process. The three case studies fall within these models. Tesco Ireland follows the rational decision making model because there is a need for candidates to fit into the organisation's values. Tesco has a strong culture which is quite difficult to maintain unless the candidates with the right qualities are selected. Price Waterhouse Coopers and Marks

²¹ Beardwell, I. and Holden, L. (1997): Human resource management; a contemporary perspective; London; Financial Times

²² Murray, H. A. (1943): Thematic Apperception Test manual, Cambridge MA; Harvard University Press, pp 257

and Spencer adhere to the incremental development process because they have numerous vacancies with similar posts at any one time. There is a need for the companies to follow these gradual processes because they need to incorporate a sense of order within their decision making processes. Besides, both organisations have diverse business environments and the model best suits such companies.²³

²³ Lancs (2008): Student feedback on selection process, retrieved from <http://careers-main.lancs.ac.uk/docs/Feedback%20Four.doc>. accessed on 23rd March 2008

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