Lesson n 04 : Recruitment, Selection, & Placement

Once I-O psychologists understand what a job entails, and the requirements that are necessary to do the job, they can use this information to assist an organization in a wide variety of ways. Generally, this information will be used to aid the hiring process in an organization–quality job analysis information can help with this process in a variety of ways.

The hiring process actually begins with recruitment—before people can be hired into an organization, they must first apply for an open position. **Recruitment** refers to the process of attracting people to submit applications for open positions within an organization. Today, recruitment often takes advantage of technology, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and internet job boards like Indeed.com and Monster.com. In their attempts to recruit people to apply for a job opening, organizations will typically describe the requirements of the position, including educational requirements, and the main tasks and responsibilities associated with the position. Organizations may also attempt to describe aspects of the culture of the organization, such as the feel of the work environment, or the values or mission of the company. An organization that describes itself as "fast-paced" or "competitive" is likely to attract rather different applicants than an organization that advertises "teamwork" and "cooperation."

Once an organization has recruited an applicant pool, the organization must decide how to assess the applicants, and the formal hiring process begins. The process used to evaluate job candidates and decide which ones to hire is typically referred to as *personnel selection*. Personnel selection is one of the oldest topics in I-O psychology, dating back to the very roots of the field at the start of the 20th century (Farr & Tippins, 2010; Ployhart, Schmitt, & Tippins, 2017). **Selection** usually involves administering a series of instruments, such as tests or interviews, to job applicants; the instruments are often scored and combined with other information, such as letters of recommendation, to help employers select the best applicant(s). The selection instruments an organization uses are commonly referred to as *predictors*, and helping organizations

develop effective predictors are one of the most common roles that I-O consultants engage in. Common predictors that I-O psychologists help develop include tests of various qualities (such as intelligence, personality and other traits), and interviews (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Determining the right combination of predictors to give applicants for a given job is a central topic for consultants that assist with personnel selection, and involves the consideration of many factors, including cost, time, legality, validity, reliability, practicality, and acceptance in the business world. Selection often occurs in multiple stages. During the initial stage, it is common for applicants to participate in some initial screening assessments to "weed out" unqualified applicants. Following this, subsequent stages in the selection process attempt to select the optimal candidate from the qualified applicants that remain after screening.

What predictors do the best job of helping organizations choose qualified applicants? One of the most consistent findings in I-O psychology, based on decades of research, is that **general mental ability**, or intelligence, is the single most effective predictor of job performance in nearly all jobs, and especially complex jobs (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004). One of the reasons this is the case is that general mental ability helps predict a person's ability to learn new information and skills, a critical component of success in virtually any job.

Beyond general mental ability tests, many other predictors have been found to be effective for predicting employee success as well. **Personality tests**, such as those measuring the Big 5 traits, have also been found to successfully predict which applicants will make effective employees. In particular, the Big 5 trait conscientiousness has been found to predict performance in a wide variety of jobs. This is not surprising, given that people high in this trait are typically hard-working, reliable, and organized, all traits that should lead to success in most jobs (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). Additional predictors, such as simulations and work samples, can be used to successfully assess a person's ability to handle actual job-related tasks in realistic settings (Scott & Reynolds, 2010).

What about interviews? **Interviews** have long been used by organizations to help make hiring decisions, and they remain one of

the most commonly-used predictors in organizations today (Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002). Interviews can be written to evaluate a variety of applicant characteristics and qualifications (Landy & Conte, 2010). Research on the effectiveness of interviews is mixed. Most interviews used in organizations tend to be fairly flexible conversations, where the interviewer is free to ask an applicant a wide variety of different questions. Each applicant may be asked different questions, and the questions may not be directly related to the job the applicant is applying for. These interviews are typically known as **unstructured interviews**, and, despite their prevalence, they are not very effective predictors for evaluating applicants. One reason for this is that the information gained from one applicant's interview might be quite different from the information gained from another applicant's interview, thus making it difficult to compare "apples to apples."

Fortunately, interviews can be improved by making the interview process more **structured**. Strategies for structuring an interview include deciding on a consistent list of questions that will be asked of all applicants, ensuring that the questions are related to the content of the job, and using a scoring system to evaluate applicants' responses. Structured interviews that have these features are much more effective at predicting which applicants will be successful in a given job (Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Stone, 2001). I-O consultants often help organizations to design and implement structured interviews to improve the organization's selection process. Unfortunately, many organizations continue to rely on traditional unstructured interviews, which are much more prone to errors and subjective evaluations of job applicants. This divide between the predictors that I-O psychologists know are effective, and the predictors that many organizations utilize, remains an important concern for many I-O psychologists today.