

INTRODUCTION

At the pinnacle of Rugby in Australia (State and National), it is often said that “the players virtually pick themselves”. There seems to be some truth in this, at least when it comes down to final selection from a small squad of players who have been competing directly against one another e.g. Queensland V New South Wales. Maintaining the competitive edge of our flagship teams depends not only on the performance of existing elite players, but also on the identification, development and selection of future representative players at all levels.

In business (human resource development) it has been beneficial to draw on aspects of teamwork and personal motivation from sport to provide role models for managers and others. There may also be a place for drawing on some aspects of human resource system from business and applying them to sport.

In particular the system procedures for staff selection may have a place in not only ensuring an objective selection process in Rugby, but also to assist with talent identification from outside of the traditional centres of Brisbane and Sydney for inclusion in training squads. The potential for more objective selection has been made possible through the squad management system and scientific fitness and strength testing.

HUMAN RESOURCE SELECTION

In organisations, “Selection” is the process of gathering information and making decisions about applicants for positions. It is important that all aspects of this process are carried out effectively and professionally, as the quality of staffing decisions will determine to a large extent the quality of an organisation.

The first step in staff selection is to define the job or role and to determine the competencies (attributes and abilities) needed in the role. This process is known as job analysis.

Job Analysis

Many decisions in the human resources field rely on information about jobs. Job Analysis is no more than a systematic process for collecting and analysing this information. In selecting an applicant for a job, we need to know what attributes (abilities, experience, personality etc) they should possess in order to perform the job tasks effectively.

The most obvious way of collecting this information is to talk to somebody who is very familiar with the job, and to watch a job-holder in action. However, over the past decade there has been a growing awareness that this process should be based on a more rigorous, systematic procedure. This is partly a result of the growing number of psychometric tests, questionnaires and job simulations which are now providing a greater quantity and complexity of information concerning the individual at work. This growth has not only led to an increasing need for more accurate and sophisticated job information but has increased the complexity of the decisions which need to draw on this information. One technique with some relevance to Rugby is described below.

Critical Incident Technique

As the name suggests it is a procedure for collecting observed incidents which have proved very important or critical to performance. An incident is defined as “any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences to be made about the person performing the act” and to be critical, “the incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects”. What emerges hopefully are those essentials of job performance which make the difference between success and failure.

Assessment Techniques

There are a range of techniques that have been used for assessing potential job performance to aid the selection process. How “valid” are these different techniques?

With tests we are able to estimate by a number of standard methods, the margin of error around our measurement and profile decisions accordingly. This is known as the concept of *Test Reliability*.

In testing we are concerned to establish whether the test actually does the job for which it is being used, that is to establish the test's *Validity*.

At the top of Validity Ladder comes the *Assessment Centre* which is the most valid method of assessing people at work. This is not altogether surprising because Assessment Centre involve a range of techniques, like group activities, in trays, tests and structured interviews used to assess a set of clearly defined job criteria.

Of rather lower validity comes interviewing with graphology and astrology giving no better than chance prediction.

HIGH VALIDITY	Assessment Centres
	Ability Tests
	Personality Questionnaires
	Group Activities
	Bio-data
	In-trays
	Interview
	Graphology
LOW VALIDITY	Astrology

Occupational Tests

An occupational or psychometric test is a standardised sample of behaviour which can be described by a numerical scale or category system.

Occupational tests (abilities, personality, interests and motivation) are now used for all types and levels of job selection: from unskilled factory worker to senior management positions. Most of this usage tends to be in larger organisations, clearly because they employ more staff, but also because they have more readily appreciated the difficulties of obtaining comparable assessments from different interviewers.

Interviewing

Interviewing by trained personnel against a clear person specification can achieve a great deal. Nevertheless interviewing can be a chancy business. We have all attended badly conducted interviews where we have not been given the opportunity to show our relevant experience or abilities or where the interviewer has made wrong interpretations of our responses.

It has been shown that the social interactions or ‘chemistry’ of the interview can lead to different interviewers reaching variable impressions of the same candidate. The personal liking effect and the tendency for untrained interviewers to make judgements of candidates ‘as soon as they walk through the door’ can lead to serious errors and considerable prejudice in the selection process. Tests aid the selection by ensuring that candidates are treated equally on properly administered and relevant exercises.

Tests can be used to challenge stereotyped judgements made by interviewers and to enable a more objective analysis than is possible by interviewing alone. And it is for these reasons that the introduction of relevant tests, following a rigorous job analysis exercise, forms part of many organisation's equal opportunities programme.

Whereas interviews have been found to be relatively poor predictors of job success the same is not true of occupational tests. Indeed there is more data on the validity of ability tests for predicting training and job success than any other method of selection.

Tests have achieved this success by scaling results against the performance of representative and relevant groups of people. That is, results are interpreted against a Norm Group.

The Validity Ladder, Assessment Centres are high because they include a combination of lower validity techniques (group activities, in-trays and structures interviews).

OBJECTIVE SELECTION IN RUGBY

The traditional selection process for first level representative teams at School, Colts and Country levels in particular has been plagued with criticism of ineffectiveness and even bias. My experience as a Queensland and Queensland Country Colt's Selector (1984-92) confirms some of these views (including my own "bias"). It is not surprising when the selection process involves viewing a large number of players in a restricted number of games. The opportunities for individual to demonstrate their abilities are not the same.

The essentially subjective process is open to the same (unconscious) perception bias that has limited the validity of the personal interview as the sole or main means of staff selection. Even the possible correction of perception "bias" through a committee or panel can be negated by "group think".

The following model of an objective selection process is proposed to improve the reliability and validity of selection. At this point in time it is offered for further discussion and as a stimulus for the applied research needed for its implementation.

OBJECTIVE SELECTION MODEL

Stage	Method	Business Equivalent	Objective	Current Situation
1	Position Analysis	Job Analysis	Establish Attributes and Abilities for Positions	General Descriptions Exist NEEDS FURTHER RIGOROUS ANALYSIS
2	Nominations	Job Application	Establish a Base Group or Squad	Consultative Process Used Plus Selector Observation
3	Testing	Ability Tests	Eliminate Players Below Standard	Testing Procedures Available REQUIRE VALIDATION AND NORMS
4	Skill Drills (Based on Position Analysis)	Assessment Centre	Objectively Compare Abilities	Some Drills Exist REQUIRE MEASURES AND STANDARDS AS WELL AS TRAINING FOR ASSESSORS
5	Practice Game	Probationary Appointment	Validate Selection	Probables v Possibles

True validity can take two main forms, *content* validity and *empirical* validity.

Content validity is concerned with whether the test items are representative of the domain to be measured. Content validity can be assessed by carrying out a detailed analysis of job content followed by matching this information to test content. Through this process, the chosen tests will be measuring relevant skills at the required level (speed, fitness and strength) and will provide a basis for establishing empirical validity.

Empirical validity can be of two kinds; *concurrent* validity, where the potential effectiveness of new methods is evaluated on current representative players or *predictive* validity, where the impact of a new method or test is evaluated by following up the performance of selected individuals some time after initial testing.

Validation

The process of test validation involves correlating individual's scores on that test with their scores on appropriate criterion measures. These indicators of criterion performance must, of course, be obtained from sources independent of the individual in question, such as assessments made by a panel of assessors. Selection in a team should only be one criterion as this can depend on opportunity etc.

Also, in identifying the appropriate criteria which should be used, it is important to have first carried out a job (player position) analysis study in order to identify the key dimensions of effective performance. Job analysis also helps define the range of tests which could be examined in a validity study.

Job analysis should be a consultative process and include input from current Representative Players (Job Incumbents) and Coaches.

Personality

While Personality (self report instrument) Tests are known to have medium validity for job performance, they are rarely used as a means of eliminating or selecting applicants as can be the case with ability tests. Rather they are used to focus the structured interview process i.e. any "questionable" styles or traits are "validated" during an interview.

Perhaps a more important use of these tests is in providing feedback during Management Development and Coaching.

Similarly a number of tests are currently used for Player Development and Coaching in Rugby. I do not propose any change to this application at this time.

For example, I have personally used some Occupational Personality Questionnaires as an aid in improving the coachability of players. The instruments improved my understanding of the individual's style when relating to others, thinking style and coping with stress and emotions. I have only used this information after the player has been selected.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper it has been implied that the model of Objective Selection has particular application when selecting teams such as the Queensland Country Under 21 and Under 19's where the logistics of traditional selection techniques are prohibitive.

The process does have a far wider potential. Australian Rugby is founded on a relatively small player base. It is therefore essential to identify and develop the maximum number of players with "representative potential" from ACT and other States as well as the current major centres.

Position Analysis, Ability Testing and Skill Assessment are essential to this aspect of "Selection". For these to be implemented there needs to be an on-going validation and reliability testing procedure.

As a member of a committee, a selector will have a prime responsibility for the success of a process based on the principle of selection on merit. Faith validity in this process will be increased when selectors are able to demonstrate that they have used a combination of reliable and valid objective selection processes. More importantly we will have enhanced our chances of identifying and developing future Australian Representatives at all levels.

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