

Sophisticated Selection or Simple Success?

Assessment Centres are without doubt an incredibly useful tool to determine where in the organisation your talent lies. However there appears to be a trend developing for HR managers to specify increasingly more 'sophisticated' assessment centres in the hope that their bigger and better tools will somehow find the talent hidden in the organisation. Well here's a free tip – bigger and more complex is not always better!!

Many designers of assessment processes are misled to think that more criteria, more tests, more exercises, more complexity somehow leads to a more sophisticated centre and therefore better results. Think for a minute about the task – finding the best people you have against a template for a role. For most roles there are only a few (really not that many) critical factors for success. Find these and measure them very well. Don't be tempted to spread the assessment centre across so many criteria that none are given the attention they deserve and that your assessors, many of whom may only practice this skill once or twice a year, are overloaded with too much data.

Keep the process simple but robust. Here's the recipe for a great assessment centre and more importantly a great selection result:

- 4-5 clear criteria for success in the job (defined as competencies)
- High quality assessors (not line manager pressed reluctantly to do their duty)
- A few good exercises and tests, each doing its specific role robustly
- Sufficient time for writing up the data you collect into real meaningful insights

Why are these few simple ingredients so important? Well think about the experience of finding a really excellent car – what's going to make the experience of driving more or less impressive – the nature of the chassis and steering dynamics, or the number of cup holders the car has? Will the response of the engine be more important than the colour of the carpets in the boot – of course it is – so why do we think an assessment centre that tries to cover the full specification of the role be better than one that really examines the important issue to be successful in the job. Simple, robust, and professionally managed works every time.