

The responsibilities of the HR professional are numerous and varied. These responsibilities result in a workload that requires constant prioritizing and re-prioritizing. Even then, there always seems to be “too much on the plate”. If you decide that it makes sense to explore adding a predictive method to your hiring process, a block of time will need to be set aside in order to systematically investigate all available options.

In many cases HR professionals live with a frustrating paradox. You know that helping to improve your organization’s bottom line is essential to your department’s future growth and viability. Yet it may seem impossible to find the time to do the type of research and planning that necessarily precedes the implementation of any new program that will move you toward this goal.

Because the systematic identification and evaluation of potential vendors is critical to ensuring a sound choice and a successful implementation, you may be tempted to conduct this research and planning yourself, even though you are already overworked. It is at this precise point that many potentially innovative programs—programs that can make important contributions to an organization’s profitability—fail to “get off the ground”.

Fortunately, the necessary background research can be done by an employment specialist who has been informed of the specific criteria that you want to use for evaluating prospective vendors. The staff member should be provided with a list of these selection criteria in the form of a *selection matrix*. The staff member can then complete each “box” in the matrix by holding focused conversations with each prospective vendor, and by thoroughly reviewing each vendor’s written

documentation. By structuring the process in this manner, your staff member will be able to complete this stage of the vendor selection process with a minimal expenditure of time. If resources are appropriately allocated, the research can be easily completed in approximately one to two weeks.

Commonly-Used Vendor Selection Criteria

Vendor selection criteria are extremely straightforward. Most publishers of predictive instruments are readily able to provide documentation that is responsive to your specific selection criteria. The staff member completing the selection matrix should request such written documentation from each prospective vendor.

Examples of commonly-used *technical* criteria include:

- 1) Evidence of validity (accuracy) - This information is located in vendor supplied *User Manuals*, as well as reprints from published articles or technical reports. Such documentation typically includes a range of statistical analyses. These analyses demonstrate the degree to which the predictive instrument is effective in addressing the specific forms of unreliable and unproductive work behavior which are of importance to your organization.
- 2) You should also ask for evidence that the use of the instrument does not discriminate between job applicants on the basis of race, gender, age, or disability. Documentation with respect to race, gender, and age typically involves statistical analyses which

show that the instrument conforms to the requirements of the “four-fifths” rule as defined in the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*. Documentation with respect to disability will most typically indicate whether the instrument identifies a job applicant as an individual with a disability, or whether use of the instrument identifies the existence, severity or extent of a disability.

Many vendors are also able to provide alternative formats for their instruments in order to assist you with the process of reasonable accommodation.

Examples of commonly-used *administrative* criteria include:

- 1) Does the vendor provide consultation to assist with program setup and implementation?
- 2) Does the vendor provide comprehensive training to the all staff members involved in the hiring process?
- 3) Does the vendor provide ongoing consultation and support?

In most cases, prospective vendors are eager to provide documentation of their instrument’s conformance to these criteria. In addition, most prospective vendors provide all of the services contained in this list of administrative criteria *at no additional charge*.

Training and ongoing support are critical to the successful implementation and continued use of a predictive method in the hiring process. For this reason, the vendor should be asked to provide specific information regarding training and the level of ongoing service that is provided.

Ultimately, the single most important issue to evaluate is *which predictive method will best fit into your organization’s existing hiring process*. Considerations such as ease of use are critical to ensuring the effective integration of a predictive instrument.

Once this information has been gathered, you and your staff member can review the completed selection matrix. A selection of one or two vendors for final consideration should be made, and any remaining issues should be identified.

Checking References - Your organization would not hire a new employee without checking his/her background and references. The same is true for new vendor selection. It is recommended that the names of one or two current users of the instrument be requested from each prospective vendor. A staff member (preferably the person who completed the selection matrix) should contact these references. Any remaining questions and issues that you have should be discussed with each reference. These references can provide a candid assessment of how well the instrument fits into their overall hiring process, how well the vendor supports their use of the instrument, what specific results their organization has seen as a result of using the instrument, as well as their general level of satisfaction with the instrument. It is strongly recommended that these issues be discussed with the vendor’s references to insure that proper training and support will in fact be available to you.

Meeting With A Prospective Vendor - In certain circumstances a meeting should be scheduled with a representative of each vendor you have selected for final consideration. *All members of your organization, who will be involved in the vendor selection decision, should attend these meetings*. The attendance and participation of all decision makers will minimize the likelihood of having unresolved questions and issues when the time comes to make your final vendor selection decision.

It is most productive if all participants in the meeting have read the prospective vendor's descriptive materials *prior* to the scheduled meeting. The decision makers should review the completed selection matrix, as well as your staff member's documentation of responses which he/she obtained from the vendor's references. Each attendee should prepare a list of any questions that he/she would like to have addressed at the meeting.

Issues such as training, implementation procedures, administration, scoring, and price can all be discussed candidly at the meeting. A demonstration of the use of the predictive method is oftentimes helpful. This demonstration should include the instructions for administering the instrument to an applicant, procedures for recording responses, methods available for scoring, as well as an explanation of how the generated results are presented.

In planning the meeting, it is essential to schedule enough time for discussion among all the decision makers, after the vendor's representative has left. This is an ideal time for evaluating the vendor's relative strengths and weaknesses in terms of the various categories included in your selection matrix. This discussion and evaluation will ensure that a timely vendor selection decision can be made, without a need to schedule additional meetings of the decision-making staff members.

This approach to the selection of a vendor is straightforward and dramatically *reduces* the time required to locate and select an appropriate predictive method. When done in this manner, it is often possible to complete the entire vendor selection process, including pre-implementation planning, in approximately four weeks.

Training and Ongoing Support - To guarantee the successful use of the predictive method, you should ensure that all members of your organization, who will be involved in the use of the instrument, are trained to use it properly. This training should be provided by the vendor of the instrument. Depending on the vendor, training may be provided at no charge to your organization. The vendor's training and customer service staff should be prepared and available to answer any questions or problems which may arise.

Budget Considerations

Specific budget approval may be required prior to adding a predictive method to the hiring process. For this reason, it is advisable to schedule the vendor selection process so that it is completed *prior* to annual budget preparations. If the vendor selection process is completed before you begin budget preparations, you will be able to provide the appropriate supporting documentation to all individuals and committees that review and approve your budget.

As was discussed previously, it is oftentimes helpful to develop a "*selection matrix*" when considering and comparing more than one pre-employment screening tool. The matrix should consist of those areas most relevant for your organization, with regard to predictive tools. For your convenience, we have provided the following pages, titled "Comparison Checklist" to assist you with the matrix. We believe that this checklist highlights **all** of the areas that an organization would want to assess when considering predictive tools. Please feel free to make copies of the checklist for your own reviewing purposes.