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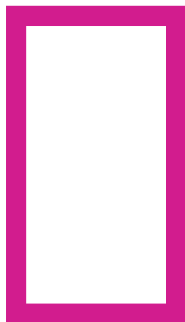
By Dr Tony Cockerill, Founder of the Centre for High Performance Development



We're taking a fresh look at our assessment procedures and I'm very interested in getting better data on our talent. Not only what they can do, but also what they will actually do in the workplace. What's the best approach?

Work psychologists first wrote about the difference between what people can do, and what they actually will do in the 1950s. Today, this distinction is widely understood. When we talk about what people are capable of, we are referring to their maximum performance. When we talk of what they actually do, day-to-day, we are referring to their typical performance. For a number of reasons, people don't always work to their maximum potential. This can be because of the environment in which a person is working, for example some jobs don't give people adequate autonomy to perform at their best. Alternatively, it

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can be just because it's not possible to always work at a maximum, just as people can't run as fast over 10 kilometres as they can over 100 metres. Another reason is that some people are just not as conscientious or achievement-oriented as others.

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You can take some insight here from psychologists. They have outlined the criteria for determining whether or not a selection test is a test of maximum performance:

- . The candidate must know they are being evaluated.
- . The candidate must have been instructed to maximise performance.
- . The test must be short enough to enable the candidate to perform at their maximum over the period of the test.

Based on the above, an assessment centre is clearly a good measure of a person's maximum performance. They know they are being assessed, they are instructed to perform at their maximum, and the duration of the assessment centre is short enough to allow them to do that.

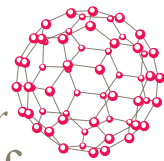
However, the same can't be said for a 360-degree feedback assessment. The candidates don't know they're being assessed, they haven't been told to maximise their performance, and the time over which they're being assessed is considerably longer. For these reasons, when it

comes to selection we would always advise using objective measures of maximal performance, such as situational judgement tests or simulation-based assessments over 360-degree feedback.

There's a final point to stress here and that is to do with the content of your assessment centres. For these to be really effective you need to be mindful of the following:

- . You should use the same competency model in your assessment centre as you do in your 360-degree feedback. You need to make sure that your candidate has strengths in the area that you need them, not just against some generic framework.
- . The assessments need to be robust. Too often we see psychometrics which have little rigour or validity and that's just a risk you can't afford to take.
- . Finally, make sure that your assessments have scales rather than simple answers to ensure that you get as accurate a picture as possible of your candidates.

Creating this consistency between selection and performance assessment criteria, we argue, is one of the easiest steps HR departments can make toward an internally consistent HR function.



Centre for High Performance Development