

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data



Ghaziabad

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ABSTRACT

“Competency Assessment and Handling Post Assessment-Centre Data”

- The increasing popularity of the Assessment Centre method in assessing competencies has stimulated a great amount of research concerning its effectiveness as the nature of the assessment centre method makes it especially vulnerable to loss of validity by careless practice.
- Author’s own experience as an assessor (psychologist) in over 35 assessment centres with 6 different Organizations aroused a concern regarding the scientific rigour of assessment centres and was the impetus for this research.
- Assessor Training was seldom provided and only on the spot inputs and clarifications were provided by the consultant/facilitator of the assessment centre which would interfere with the flow of the process. Feedback to the participants was provided, but against a backdrop of inadequate assessor training the quality of inputs to the assesses becomes questionable.
- Research by Spychalski, et al. (1997) on assessment centre practices in 250 Organisations in the US reveals that designers and users of assessment centres adhere to recommendations on content of assessor training. They deviate from recommendations made in professional Guidelines involving other practices (e.g. informing participants about various aspects of assessment centre process, length of assessor training, evaluating assessors, validating centre results).



ABSTRACT contd..

“Competency Assessment and Handling Post Assessment-Centre Data”

- The present research is based on interviews with senior HR professionals, consultants and practitioners in Indian and Multinational Corporations in India. Effective handling of Post assessment data appears to be a weak link in many companies. Ideally, assessment centres should translate into an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that is made between a manager and an employee. Often consultants leave the data with HR, resulting in lack of any follow-up action.
- Inputs from interviews and secondary data are analyzed against the backdrop of “professional guidelines” to see what companies can do so that results of assessment centres are effectively utilized.



Objectives & Methodology:

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

□ Objective

The objective of this research is to study how effectively organisations “Handle post-Assessment Centre data”.

□ The Sample

□ **Procedure:** The objective of this research is achieved by interviewing senior HR professionals and practitioners in 20 organisations against the backdrop of

Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Centre Operations



Ethical Guidelines for Assessment Centres

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The Standards and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Centre Operations (prepared by an International Task-Force on Assessment Centre Guidelines, 2000) have been written and give detailed recommendations for assessment centre operations. If followed, these guidelines should maximize the benefits to be obtained by users of the AC method.



Principal steps in establishing an assessment centre:

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1. Determine objectives of program
2. Get buy-in from key people
3. Define dimensions to be assessed
4. Select exercises which will bring out the dimensions
5. Design assessor training and assessment centre program
6. Announce program, inform participants and assessors, handle administrative details
7. Train assessors

8. Conduct assessment centre

9. Write summary reports on participants
10. Feedback to participants – a summary of performance at centre and development actions
11. Evaluate centre
12. Set up procedures to validate centre against a criterion of job success



This research is focused on the last 4 steps of AC

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9. Write summary reports on participants
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11. Evaluate centre
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RESULTS

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		Mean Score	S.D.
1	discussion between different assessors	3.85	0.93
2	integration of candidate information	3.63	1.01
3	effective handling of post-Assessment-Centre data	3.63	0.78
4	feedback to assessees and recommendations made	3.45	0.83
5	follow-up procedures to aid both the assessee and his/her managers to effectively use the results	3.25	0.85
6	utilization of Assessment Centres in the organisation	3.45	0.83
7	procedures to validate the Assessment Centres	2.5	0.83

Mean Scores & Standard Deviations on the various aspects of Post-assessment Centre Handling of Data



FINDINGS

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- ❑ Organisations are handling post-Assessment Centre data in many different ways.
- ❑ Some companies are utilizing the data collected for development of the assesseees by coaching / mentoring / training, etc.



FINDINGS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- ❑ Some companies have a long-term view of ACs. They give 360 degree data or data from Performance Management System (PMS) to the consultants to combine with data from AC in order to make the AC outcomes more effective. This combination gives any participant a very holistic picture about himself to make an IDP.
- ❑ By having follow-up training with the consultants, client Organisation knows how much gap has been covered by each candidate annually.



FINDINGS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Some companies use the data for carrying out ‘trend analysis’ by having Assessment Centres periodically and by involving the same consulting firm carry out all three activities, viz.
 - developing the competency model
 - assessing competencies
 - providing feedback to the participants

- The advantages that accrue to these companies are as follows:
 - consulting organization knows client’s competency framework inside-out
 - same reporting formats are used
 - participants see similar reports and thus relate to them better



FINDINGS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Some companies while conducting repeat ACs with the same participants do so with the objective of monitoring the process led by the external consultant. This could be adopted as a check and balance of the AC; specially when external agencies are involved.
- Many companies outsource AC activity to reputed consultants with limited personal involvement i.e. with the idea of generating greater objectivity. The recommendations generally get accepted by senior managers who otherwise possibly would have questioned their management.



FINDINGS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Some senior managers use the data from Assessment Centres to validate their own decision-making process without involving the concerned participants/managers. This data proves to be majorly useful for the management's own decision making.
- Discussion on post AC data with assesses is very limited in case of recruitment or promotion. This may be justified in case of recruitment but may fall woefully short in case of promotion.



FINDINGS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Many small and big Indian organisations are conducting ACs as a “one-off” activity. In many cases AC is used as a “fad”.
- It can thus be seen that different companies are utilizing post Assessment Centre data in a limited /restricted way. While it is understood that no single entity can use post AC data across the spectrum. Using the data in a more comprehensive manner would provide greater dividends.





RECOMMENDATIONS

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

I. WRITING SUMMARY REPORTS ON PARTICIPANTS ASSESSOR CONFERENCE

- Discussion between assessors is extremely important as it determines the overall rating of the candidate. Since it is a consensus building exercise and not only for arriving at an average score; every assessor needs to interact objectively.
- All efforts need to be aimed at eliminating subjectivity and biases in order to make discussions useful.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

I. WRITING SUMMARY REPORTS ON PARTICIPANTS ASSESSOR CONFERENCE

- Assessor discussions can be made more effective by training of assessors and by providing them with an assessor manual. Audio-visual recordings would make the process majorly effective.
- Competency Dictionary should be well laid out with the behavioural indicators. These should be very clear and form the basis of evaluation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

I. WRITING SUMMARY REPORTS ON PARTICIPANTS ASSESSOR CONFERENCE

- Organisations should willingly complement internal and external assessors. Internal assessors understand the company culture, job-fitment, etc. better compared to external assessors while external assessors bring in greater objectivity.
- The Mix of Internal and external assessors can be in the ratio of 70:30 or 60:40.
- It is vital that Organisations select neutral internal assessors as 60-70% of AC is composed of them.




RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

I. WRITING SUMMARY REPORTS ON PARTICIPANTS ASSESSOR CONFERENCE

- Selection of external consultants has to be done with due diligence; wrong selection would cause irreparable damage.
- It is essential that the internal assessors do not get over-awed by the reputation of the consultants and conversely the consultants do not impose themselves on to the management.





Many recommendations which are made for ‘Writing summary reports’ are more related to the first seven steps; however, if these activities are not done diligently there will be direct repercussions on handling post-assessment centre data.

Hence, in the planning stage itself post assessment activity needs to be well crafted.

Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

I. WRITING SUMMARY REPORTS ON PARTICIPANTS ASSESSOR CONFERENCE

- Research shows that assessors' conference is not doing an efficient job of processing information the AC generates and that their discussions should be complemented by a statistical analysis of the data.
- Spsychalski *et al.* (1997) found that only 14% of American ACs use statistical analysis in the assessors' conference.
- Kudisch *et al.* (2001) found that 65% organisations in their research used a consensus discussion, only 15% used statistical integration and 20% used a combination of integration methods.



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

I. WRITING SUMMARY REPORTS ON PARTICIPANTS ASSESSOR CONFERENCE

- Reilly, Henry & Smither (1990) use experienced assessors to generate checklists of behaviour relevant to each dimension, and find these increase dimension focused rating.
- Ryan *et al.* (1995) found that **video-recording** results in more accurate observations of group discussions, but does not improve the accuracy of ratings. Watching video-recordings is also very time-consuming and time tends to be short in most ACs.



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Different types of assessors differ in ways in which they conduct the integration of assessment centre results. This explains why centres using psychologists as assessors produce higher validity coefficients vis-a-vis centres using managers as assessors.
- In assessment centres with more psychologist assessors, more time gets spent on 'integration' rather than on 'reporting'. Spychalski *et al.* (1997) thus contend that improvements in centre validity can be realized by spending more time integrating candidate data.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

II. FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS – A SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE AT CENTRE AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

- Feedback should be provided in a mature and holistic manner. IDPs should be made along with the participants.
- Findings **MUST** be shared with the assesses despite any reservations that the management may have, otherwise it becomes a redundant exercise.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

II. FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS – A SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE AT CENTRE AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

- Results have to be taken seriously by the Organisation. Management should share the responsibility and ownership of the process and not leave the candidate alone. Management needs to be in touch with the participants, take them along as stake-holders and provide them adequate resources and support.

- Constructive usage of assessments and results for the benefits of both the Organisation and participants.



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

II. FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS – A SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE AT CENTRE AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

- Thornton & Krause (2009) report that studies have shown participants in development programs often do not follow-up on plans. Placing more responsibility and control in the hands of the department head may ensure more follow-up activity after the program.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

III. EVALUATE CENTRE

- A well defined competency framework is essential for successful ACs. This needs to be revisited every time a new assessment centre starts.
- Its very important that a post assessment center session is conducted to summaries the result as well as conclude the program meaningfully (will make better sense to the participants on his/her report).



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

III. EVALUATE CENTRE

- In an international research by Kudisch *et al.* (2001) only one third of the programs reported any method of evaluation being carried out.
- In another international study, Thornton & Krause (2009) report the following:
 - Little systematic evaluation is done; little documentation is prepared.
 - Participants are rarely asked for evaluation.
- Spychalski *et al.* (1997) surveyed 291 organisations in the US (data collection in 1990) found that 50% or fewer of the organisations test the reliability or validity.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

IV. SET UP PROCEDURES TO VALIDATE CENTRE AGAINST A CRITERION OF JOB SUCCESS

- The end-objective has to be clearly defined right in the beginning – how Organisation wants to use the results, the criteria of success of an AC, target audience, time at hand, budget, economic viability, etc.
- AC should not be “one-off” activity, it needs to be a continuous process. A minimum of 5 years need to be invested.
- Any AC should be linked to the next program in the company.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

IV. SET UP PROCEDURES TO VALIDATE CENTRE AGAINST A CRITERION OF JOB SUCCESS

- Continuously tracking those who passed through the AC will help in validating the assessment centre.



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Research shows that although predictive coefficients of Assessment Centres are generally high, some Assessment Centres have low predictive validity.
- In fact the observed validity coefficients of Assessment Centres reviewed in research by Gaugler *et al.* (1987) ranged from
- $-.25$ to $+.78$.
- These kinds of results affect the usage of ACs by practitioners and should be of serious concern.



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Research by Schmitt *et. al.* (1990) shows that Assessment Centres work when they are operationalized as they were intended, i.e. raters are selected and trained appropriately and efforts to maintain quality control in the implementation of the centre are made on a continuous basis. When the centre becomes a fad or a way to legitimize the actions of an organisation the centre validity deteriorates.



Research

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

There are certain issues with respect to assessment centres that persist in Asian organizations:

- • Complexity of Implementation
- • Clear behavioural description of competencies
- • Availability of assessors
- • Assessor training
- • Inter-rater reliability
- • Appropriateness of selection tools
- • Validity of exercises
- • Organizational commitment in terms of time and resources
- • Involvement of line managers
- • Feedback to participants
- • Data security



CONCLUSION

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- ▣ Assessment Centres (ACs) are essential for assessing Competencies and the cost of not doing ACs is far greater than the cost of doing it.



CASE

Competency Assessment and Handling Post-Assessment Centre Data

- Case study of an organisation to show excellent ways in which it handled post-assessment centre data and made assessment centres a part of its organisational culture.



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THANKS