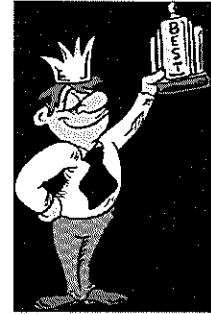


Recruitment Myths & Promotion Appeals

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NT Public Sector Merit Selection

- ◆ Pursuant to PSEMA selection is based on the merit principle.



What does the Promotion Appeal Board determine?

- ◆ Only ground of appeal is that "the appellant has superior merit to the person selected"
- ◆ Appeals have only 3 possible outcomes:
 - ◆ Disallowed
 - ◆ Allowed
 - ◆ CEO directed to re-advertise

PAB Process

- ◆ Board is made up of 3 persons: Chairperson, agency nominee, union nominee
- ◆ Appeal will usually be heard within 5-6 weeks of the date of notification of selection

PAB Decisions

- ◆ New practice is to give detailed reasons for decision. This is being done with a view to demystifying the process and hopefully providing useful advice regarding improving selection processes and avoiding appeals in the future.
- ◆ PAB will also begin publishing summaries of decisions

What is Merit?

Defined in PSEMA as: The capacity of the person to perform particular duties, having regard to the person's:

- ◆ **knowledge**
- ◆ **skills**
- ◆ **qualifications and experience**
- ◆ **potential for future development**

◆ Note: "**EEO diversity the person brings to the workplace**" – Will soon become another aspect of the definition of merit

Merit Selection Guide

- ◆ Employment Instruction Number 1 – Part 10:
“All employees involved in the selection process should refer to agency selection procedures and to the “Merit Selection Guide”.
- ◆ The Guide “provides the principles and guidelines for the filling of vacancies in the NTPS”.

Merit Selection Guide

- ◆ Is flexible, non-prescriptive, does not require specific processes to be followed
- ◆ Does not set out any hard and fast rules for assessing merit or running selection processes
- ◆ **Replaced** the ‘Green Book’ which is no longer the guide to NTPS selection practices

How is Merit Assessed?

Assessment process is chosen to suit the circumstances of the vacancy and the business environment in which it operates and, in **most** cases, is carried out by a panel.

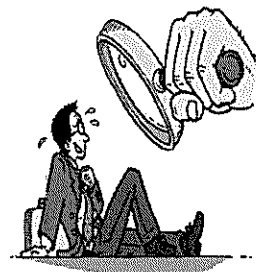
(Note: Does **not** say there must be a panel, does **not** say that the panel must be 3 persons)

How is Merit Assessed?

- ◆ The panel is responsible for conducting an assessment process which ensures the most meritorious outcome and which **will withstand scrutiny**.
- ◆ (Presumably this means scrutiny not only from the Promotions Appeal Board, but also by the applicants themselves.)

Interviews

- ◆ The Merit Selection Guide states clearly that “an interview is only one method of assessment that **may** form part of the selection process”



Myth #1: An interview must be held in every selection process

- ◆ If the panel understands that it is possible to make a merit based selection without even conducting an interview, perhaps they will be more likely to remember that they should not place too much reliance on interview performance

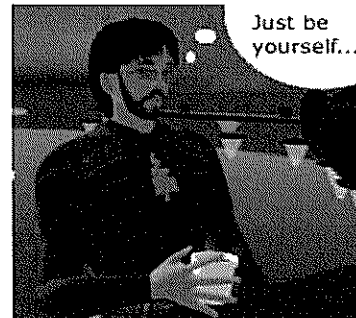
- ◆ Note: Of course there will be many times when an interview is a useful way to gather more information from applicants and, more importantly, to give applicants the opportunity to explain things that might not be known by the panel or able to be supplied by referees (e.g. – Their vision for new projects they might be expected to develop in the job?)

Don't interview when you don't have to

- ◆ Remember: An interview is just a tool to gather more information – **if you need it!**

Interviews

- ◆ Merit Selection Guide states that selection panels: **"should not place an over-reliance on an applicant's performance at interview"**



Do we put too much emphasis on interview performance?

"They were relatively equal in the quality of their applications, however, at interview, the panel felt that they were slightly more impressed by X's performance, particularly his oral communication."

"However, while they met all of the essential and desirable selection criteria, the panel felt that their performance at interview was slightly behind that of [the successful applicant]"

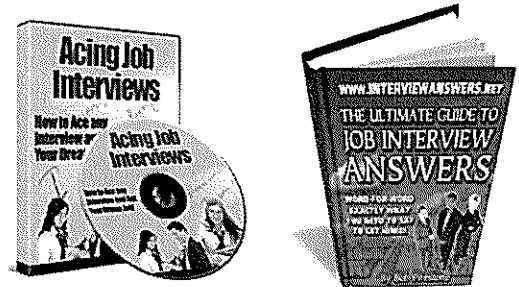
Do we put too much emphasis on interview performance?

- ◆ "Z met all of the selection criteria, showing a sound understanding of the role and demonstrating a good capacity to perform the job. Her application was also of a high standard, however, during the interview, while all of Z's answers were technically correct, the panel believed she could have provided a greater depth to her answers, when compared with others."

Do we put too much emphasis on interview performance?

- ◆ "Examples at interview lacked the same detail as the successful applicant"
- ◆ "Unlike the successful applicant, the Panel regularly needed to prompt him to respond to the question"
- ◆ "She didn't perform well at interview and was advised in her feedback session that she should obtain training in better presenting herself at interview "

What are we really assessing at interview?



Groups particularly disadvantaged by interview process:

- ◆ Indigenous persons
- ◆ People from non-English speaking background
- ◆ Some persons with disabilities
- ◆ Shy, modest persons
- ◆ Older women (and men) who may have been raised to not 'big-note' themselves

The ability to impress at interview is not synonymous with merit!

- ◆ **Warning:** Over reliance on interview performance, without due consideration of other assessment methods, may result in the Promotions Appeal Board sending selections back to be readvertised, on the basis that merit has not been adequately assessed

Myth #2 – If you are on the selection panel you must not bring your 'personal' knowledge of the applicant to the interview and selection process

- ◆ This practice has the potential to result in very flawed selection processes, particularly in the case of applicants who perform very well on the job, but very badly at interview.

Effect of this Myth

- ◆ Panel members may know very well that the person floundering for an "example" of something they've done on the job is actually quite capable of and regularly performs the task being asked about – yet they may have been told that they cannot use this knowledge, not even to prompt the applicant.
- ◆ This does not make sense

Confession Box



"Don't make the assumption I already know what you can do in this job, you have to convince me just like the other interviewees"

Rationale for this may be that it is 'unfair' to other applicants if one applicant receives the benefit of a panel member's knowledge of their actual work performance.

However, the best way to deal with this isn't to not let that information be considered at all. Rather it is to make sure that you give the other applicants the same benefit, by going to their supervisors to get similar information.

Debunking the Myth

A person who is being considered for selection by a panel that includes someone who knows firsthand about their actual work performance, **should** be able to make the assumption that the person already knows what they can do on the job, and will bring that knowledge to the selection process.

The danger in not considering the actual knowledge of a person's ability to perform a job:

- ◆ "You work so hard for years, do everything right, get along with your co-workers, and your supervisor praises you at every performance review – and then you get nervous and do badly at interview, or don't give the example they want on your application, and the job goes to someone else."

Promotion Appeals

- ◆ Warning: Several appeals have been allowed, or directed to be re-advertised specifically because of failure to properly consider the knowledge panel members, or direct supervisors who were not contacted, had of the appellant's actual ability to perform the job.

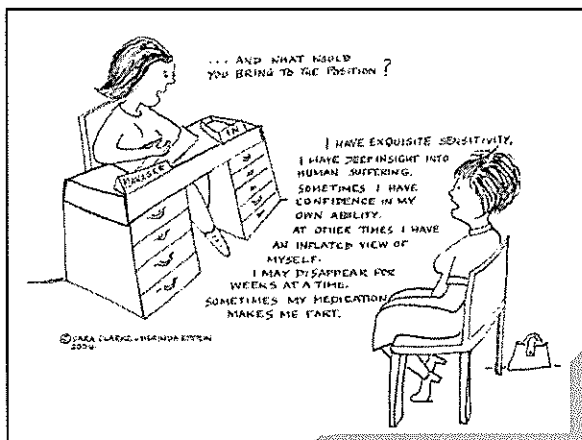
Myth # 3 – At interview you must ask the same questions of every applicant

- ◆ This myth has probably based on the premise that it would be unfair to ask one person a very hard question, and another a very easy one. However, it is easy to see that it is not sensible, or useful, to ask the same questions of someone already working in a job, as you might want to ask someone from outside the public service, or from another area.

- ◆ The fact that this myth has grown up suggests that interviews have ceased to be a way to find out useful information from an applicant, and instead moved to a "right or wrong answer" approach.
- ◆ Panels should feel free to ask anything they want that will help them to better assess the merit of the candidate and give the applicant a better chance of providing useful information

Questions at Interview

- ◆ Panels should ensure the questions they ask of applicants really are relevant to the person's merit against the position
- ◆ Perhaps, if the panel wants meaningful answers, not affected by nervousness, thought should be given to telling the candidates well in advance, perhaps even the night before, exactly what the panel is interested in hearing about (might save many a sleepless night for applicant)



Myth # 4: Interview questions can only go directly to specific selection criteria

- ◆ There is no 'rule' that interview questions must be linked directly to a selection criterion, and sometimes trying to do so results in stilted, unhelpful information being gathered at interview.

Interview Questions

- ◆ An example: For the selection criterion "*Proven ability to lead and manage personnel effectively, including the ability to capacity build, mentor, and guide indigenous staff*" the question asked at interview was: "*What is your vision for this position and what is your understanding of the genesis of the position?*"

This question, along with several similar ones used in this selection process, was one of the reasons the appeal board directed the position be re-advertised, stating that: "*The Board was unable to see any clear linkage between the interview questions and the criteria that would allow the panel to meaningfully assess and differentiate between the candidates.*"

The PAB went on to say " *It is the view of the Board that the selection process and the questions asked at interview unfortunately created a situation where there was more emphasis on responses to questions at interview than to the actual merit of the applicants against measurable criteria.*"

Myth #5: Job descriptions must always include 'essential' selection criteria

- ◆ The merit selection process does not require that specific 'essential' criteria be stated and it is likely that current NTPS selection practices identify far too many criteria as being essential. Other than truly essential skills or qualifications – eg. ability to use a computer, driver's licence, accounting skills, medical or legal training, etc) it would perhaps be better to avoid making criteria 'essential'.

Where possible it is quite acceptable, and perhaps even preferable to have 'General' rather than 'Essential' Criteria

- ◆ The CPE has expressed a clear view that in most cases it would be preferable to just list 'general selection criteria' and let the panel decide what weight to give the various aspects of a person's merit (skills, experience, qualifications, knowledge, and potential for future development) against those general criteria.

Example General Criteria- Keep them simple without overlap or duplication

The ideal candidate will:

- 1) be able to quickly research information from a variety of sources
- 2) have highly developed analytical skills
- 3) have excellent written communication skills
- 4) be conscientious and pleasant to deal with
- 5) be able to negotiate outcomes

(Qld Government OPSC Recruitment and Selection Processes October 2007)

Myth #6 – Applicants must address all the selection criteria in their job application and provide examples to support their claims

- ◆ Bear in mind that an overly strict approach to considering job applications may result in losing potentially good applicants – especially those from outside the public sector or other states where there is not this rigid adherence to addressing strict criteria

Job Applications

- ◆ Possible that NTPS selection procedure has been placing far too much emphasis on **how** the job application is written, rather than simply using it as a source of information to help to identify what the person is capable of doing in the job
- ◆ e.g. An application should not be rejected just because it uses bad grammar, unless the job specifically requires good grammar skills

Job Applications

- ◆ It should **not** be fatal to someone's application that they "failed to provide a good enough example in their written application"
- ◆ It should be sufficient 'example' in an application to say "I have been doing this job for x years".
- ◆ There is no requirement that applicants will use the 'S.T.A.R.' (?) system in job applications

Do not place too much weight on the content and quality of the written application alone

- ◆ For all the panel knows the application could have been written by someone else!



Myth #7 – You only need to contact referees if the applicant has performed well enough at interview that they have a good chance at getting the job.

- ◆ This practice virtually guarantees that the person with poor interview skills doesn't get the benefit of their referees to help counter the bad impression made at interview.
- ◆ It is after a poor result at interview that referee reports become even more important

Myth #8 - You cannot contact non-nominated referees

- ◆ Sometimes non-nominated referees are the source with the most current and relevant information about the person's ability to perform the job.
- ◆ If non-nominated referees are contacted, the rules of natural justice create a requirement to give the applicant the chance to hear and respond to any seriously damaging comment.
- ◆ A nominated referee should also always be contacted

Myth #9 – You can only ask referees to address the specific selection criteria and cannot ask questions that go beyond this

- ◆ "Referee checking can be one of the most valuable parts of the assessment process. However its effectiveness can be limited by panel perceptions of what they can, and importantly, cannot, ask of referees."

(Qld Government OPSC Recruitment and Selection Processes October 2007)

Speaking to Referees

- ◆ By simply knowing what information it is appropriate to ask for, panels can add value to the assessment process.
- ◆ Knowing about past performance can alert you to both strengths and weaknesses that may not be obvious from the application and interview

Speaking to Referees

If you want information about both general and specific job performance, then ask!

Things you **can** ask Referees

- ◆ How would you summarise the applicant's performance in general?
- ◆ What degree of supervision do they require?
- ◆ Have there been poor performance issues and what was the outcome?
- ◆ What are the applicant's strengths and weakness in relation to this job?
- ◆ Would you hire this person if you had a similar job in your workplace?

Myth #10 – There **must** be a 'gender balanced' selection panel

- ◆ While this may be a good idea in some specific cases, there may be many job vacancies where there is no reason at all to think that gender balance is required in order to properly assess merit
- ◆ This is **not** a situation that would be likely to lead to a successful promotion appeal, unless some level of discrimination or bias arose out of the process

Myth # 11 - There must be a person from outside the work unit on the panel

- ◆ Many times this is not needed to achieve fairness in assessing merit, and insisting on it can unnecessarily prolong the selection process.

Myth #12 - You cannot make comparisons between the individual and the successful applicant in the written Individual Selection Report

"Rating against specific criteria may be useful to those with identifiable deficiencies. But for applicants who meet or exceed the criteria, **only a comparison against even better applicants will help them understand why they were not selected.**" (Qld Government OPSC Recruitment and Selection Processes October 2007)

- ◆ Lack of understanding as to why the promotee was found to be of superior merit appears to be one of the main reasons why people appeal
- ◆ (This is particularly so in cases where the unsuccessful applicant was found to meet all the selection criteria)
- ◆ The best Individual Selection report should be one that answers all the questions the unsuccessful applicant might have

Why is it important to get selection right?

- ◆ It can be very upsetting and distressing for employees to be unsuccessful in job applications – especially if they are found to be “unsuitable”
- ◆ Also can undermine employee confidence if a person is selected who does not appear to have superior merit.

Questions?

- ◆ Please feel free to contact:

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Questions
are
guaranteed in
life;
Answers
aren't.