TARGETED SELECTION
A BEHAVIORAL APPROACH TO IMPROVED HIRING DECISIONS (BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY)

A MONOGRAPH BY
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FOREWARD

Accurate employee selection decisions have never been more vital to organizational success. Advances in technology and changes in organizational structure and responsibilities have increased the demand for high-quality job applicants who, if hired, will grow into productive contributors to organizational success. This demand, when combined with a competitive job market and significant legal compliance requirements, means that hiring processes and decisions are increasingly complex and challenging.

Development Dimensions International, Inc. (DDI), offers a proven selection system called Targeted Selection® that, when properly applied, can produce positive results in a wide range of areas of concern to organizations, from turnover to on-the-job success and return on investment.

Targeted Selection® incorporates the following concepts with the training necessary to apply them:

- Focus on job-related behavior.
- Use past behavior to predict future behavior.
- Assess both job fit and organization fit motivation.
- Organize selection elements into a comprehensive system.
- Apply effective interviewing skills and techniques.
- Use data integration to make the best hiring decision.
- Make a positive impression on applicants; sell them on the job and the organization.

On the following pages are 20 common selection problems that DDI consultants have collected from observing more than 1,000 selection interviews. These observations, supported by published research studies (see References, page 20), have led to a better understanding of how interviews work and how different aspects of the interview affect decision making. In addition to reviewing these problems, this monograph will discuss how applying Targeted Selection® can address common selection problems and improve the quality of selection decisions.
COMMON SELECTION PROBLEMS

1. Interviewers fail to seek complete and consistent information from applicants on the specific competencies needed for success in the job.

When asked to identify the skills and requirements of successful job performance, managers who were selecting individuals for the same position in an organization provided conflicting and inconsistent responses. Although some discrepancy in responses can be attributed to semantics, even when common definitions are established, the lists of their target competencies varied, both in what was being sought and the competencies' perceived importance.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) mandates that selection processes be based on specific, accurately defined, and well-documented essential job requirements (competencies). EEOC mandates stipulate that these competencies are to be communicated so that everyone involved in the selection process shares a common understanding of their definition and intent. The EEOC also states that the selection process must be applied consistently and that all applicants for the same job be evaluated against the same job-related competencies. These mandates cannot be met if various interviewers are seeking information from applicants on different competencies.

Even when competencies are clearly defined and documented, research has shown that experienced interviewers become complacent, asking the same questions or focusing on a few competencies that are easy to evaluate. The resulting lack of complete coverage of skills and abilities in the interview process limits an interviewer's understanding of an applicant's potential for success in the job.

2. There is excessive overlap in competency coverage.

Several interviewers asking similar questions of an applicant leads to redundant competency coverage. Such overlap means that the interviewers share the same limited information when evaluating an applicant. Although some overlap of competency coverage is desirable as a check on the reliability of the information and to ensure full coverage of the most critical competencies, excessive overlap means that data is not being obtained for all competencies. Failure to consider all data results in a selection process that is neither fair nor effective.
3. Interviewers misinterpret applicant information.

Several practices can cause an interviewer to misinterpret applicant information.

> Playing amateur psychiatrist.
An interviewer who tries to determine an applicant’s underlying personality traits or innate talents to establish job motivation is playing amateur psychiatrist. So too is an interviewer who asks applicants to describe themselves in a sentence or to name three strengths or weaknesses. Because most hiring managers are not trained in this approach, they can easily misinterpret applicants’ responses.

> Asking theoretical questions.
The best predictor of future performance is past performance. However, many interviewers ask what the applicant would or should do instead of asking what the applicant actually did. Relying on theoretical information leaves applicants’ responses open to interpretation, which can create a false impression of their abilities. This approach also puts the interviewer in the position of being persuaded by an applicant’s ability to sell himself or herself.

> Projecting personal attitudes, motives, and feelings onto an applicant.
Consider an interviewer who is highly motivated and achievement oriented. If this interviewer looks for similar characteristics in an applicant, he or she may misinterpret applicant responses by making assumptions based on personal perspective. In addition, interviewers who project their own attitudes, motives, and feelings often fail to follow up on the details of the applicant’s behavior, assuming information that is not given. For example, an interviewer might assume that an applicant who reports receiving excellent grades in college is highly motivated. This interviewer is not inclined to ask additional questions; if he or she had, the applicant’s responses might reveal that the good marks resulted from an easy course of study.

4. Interviewers ignore job fit motivation.

Many interviewers focus only on an applicant’s skills, asking whether the applicant can do the job but not asking about the applicant’s motivation to want to do the job. A capable person might not be motivated to do a job if that job does not result in personal satisfaction.

Job fit motivation is important in all jobs, whether in basic skill-level jobs or in highly skilled professional jobs. For example, consider a person with an engineering degree who has applied for an engineering job. It is possible that the person’s job motivation has changed since earning the degree or that the degree was an intermediate step toward another employment goal. Although the person has the credentials and ability to be an engineer, he or she might not be satisfied (motivated) in the job.
Or consider the promotion of an excellent salesperson to sales manager. Different aspects of selling might have excited and motivated the person to excel in sales (e.g., meeting new people, persuading difficult customers, making successful closes). However, there may be aspects of the sales manager job that the salesperson does not find motivating (e.g., having limited direct customer contact, needing to coach and develop others), so performance in that job lags.

Failure to gauge job fit (matches between what is available in the job and what the applicant likes and dislikes) is closely related to poor job performance and turnover. People who are not motivated to do a job most likely will not be productive employees.

5. Interviewers ignore organization fit motivation.

Organization fit is defined as an individual’s compatibility with an organization’s values and mode of operation. It’s important to uncover matches and discrepancies between what the organization offers and what the applicant likes and dislikes to make the most informed prediction of how well an applicant will “fit in” with the organization. As with job fit, failure to gauge applicants’ organization fit is closely related to poor job performance and turnover. People who do not find personal satisfaction with the organization’s values and mode of operation probably will not be productive or eventually will seek employment with a more compatible organization.

6. Interviewers’ judgments are affected by biases and stereotypes.

An interviewer’s biases can reflect negatively or positively on applicants for reasons that have no relationship to the job responsibilities. For example, an interviewer might be biased against an applicant whose shoes are not polished or who has an unusual hairstyle. An interviewer might be biased for an applicant who belongs to certain college groups or who shares common interests with the interviewer. In addition, classifying an applicant into a stereotype such as “typical engineer” or “college dropout” might bias an interviewer’s evaluation of the person. Interviewers often are unaware of their prejudices and how they affect personnel decisions, but biases or stereotypes do not represent job-related factors.

7. Interviewers permit one competency to influence their evaluation of other competencies.

The “halo effect” means one outstanding accomplishment creates an impression of success that, in the interviewer’s eyes, can obscure less successful
behavioral examples in other equally important competencies. The halo effect also can have the opposite impact, making an applicant’s weakness in one competency obscure important strengths in others.

The competency Oral Communication is prone to the halo effect. Interviewers often mistake skill in speaking for effectiveness in other areas. On the other hand, an interviewer might form a negative overall opinion about an applicant who has strengths in other job-related areas but whose oral communication skills are mediocre or poor.

8. Interviewers allow applicants to control the interview.

Poorly managed interviews—for example, when interviewers let applicants talk at length about information unrelated to the job—do a disservice to the interviewer and the applicant. Similarly, interviewers who ask applicants, “Tell me about yourself,” will not get much behavioral information that is related to the job’s target competencies. Interviewers who fail to keep the discussion focused and to manage the amount of detail an applicant provides leave it to chance that the interview will yield critical, job-related information.

9. Interviewers make quick decisions about applicants.

Many interviewers make a quick decision about an applicant based on initial impressions or information (e.g., information in the person’s application or resume, the person’s attire, or even a handshake). Whatever the basis for such decisions, the interview’s accuracy is diminished because the interviewer’s objectivity is clouded by this first-impression reaction. Studies have shown that after making a decision, individuals tend to seek more information to confirm the decision and to reject information that contradicts the decision. In many cases an interviewer will stop gathering information after making a quick decision about an applicant. Interviewers who make decisions before gathering all the facts will not have the information they need to evaluate an applicant fairly and accurately.
10. Interviewers focus on negative information about applicants.

Many interviewers focus on obtaining negative examples of behavior and fail to seek positive behavioral examples because they believe that they have more to lose by hiring an unqualified applicant than by rejecting one who is qualified. This approach does not result in a balanced picture of the applicant’s past behavior and diminishes the interviewer’s ability to differentiate between an average applicant and a potentially outstanding one.

11. Selection elements are not organized into a system.

A selection system that is not well organized might not be applied uniformly to all applicants within a job category. Without a consistent process with well-defined decision points, there is no way to ensure that all applicants reaching a particular stage in the system will be treated the same way, thus exposing the organization to possible legal challenges. In addition, valuable resources are wasted in an unorganized system. For example, if important screening elements, such as resume and phone screenings and on-campus interviews, are not well-defined and implemented at the right stage, then time, money, and effort will be wasted conducting in-depth interviews with applicants who could have been screened out earlier in the process.

12. Interviewers’ judgment is affected by pressure to fill the position.

The pressure to fill an open position can come from a variety of sources: how long the position has been open, the degree to which business or resources are affected by the open position, or the level of attention paid to the vacancy by senior management. Research indicates that hiring managers lower their selection standards when they are under pressure to fill positions. They may rationalize negative information about applicants and overemphasize the impact that training might have without taking into consideration that some competencies are less easy to learn than others or...
13. Decisions are affected by the relative quality of other applicants.

After an entire day of interviewing unacceptable applicants, an average applicant makes a much more favorable impression on an interviewer than he or she might if compared to a field of more qualified applicants. Hiring managers who make decisions based on the relative quality of an applicant instead of the actual criteria required to do the job run the risk of taking the best of a bad lot rather than continuing the search for a truly qualified applicant.

14. Interviewers take insufficient notes during the interview.

Many interviewers rely on their memory, taking few or no notes during an interview. Some interviewers don’t even try to recap after an interview. Without thorough notes to refer to, an interviewer is left with only his or her impression of or feeling about an applicant. Studies indicate that, without notes, one can recall little more than one-fourth of the facts discussed immediately after an interview concludes. Such limited retention can lead to decisions that are based on feelings, not facts.

Interviewers who lack good notes do not have the facts and information they need to justify competency evaluations and make accurate hiring decisions. In such situations the interviewer is apt to cluster ratings around the middle of the rating scale, indicating that an applicant is “OK, not very good or very bad.” Also, failure to take notes gives an advantage to the first and last applicants.

15. Interviewers use different rating and evaluation standards.

Some interviewers give high ratings only to applicants whom they consider to be perfect. Some interviewers never give low ratings. Inconsistent standards lead to inaccurate assessments of applicants and poor hiring decisions. Interviewers should be trained to use a consistently applied standard. Skill practicing with feedback is a key element to making this training successful.
16. Applicant information is not discussed systematically.

Interviewers’ discussions about applicant data often are haphazard or, worse, subjective (e.g., the applicant “looked like a nice person,” “didn’t seem very motivated,” “is not our kind of person”). When competency evaluations are not discussed systematically and justified with solid behavioral examples, applicants are not fairly evaluated, gaps in information and relationships between pieces of information are not uncovered, and biases and stereotypes are allowed to influence decisions.

17. Interviewers don’t put their best effort into interviews.

Over time, even well-trained and motivated interviewers might slip into easier, less-demanding interview styles—simply going through the motions rather than conducting an effective, in-depth interview. Quality hiring decisions depend on interviewers’ maintaining the standards of effective interviewing—taking the time to prepare for the interview and asking enough planned behavioral questions to discover the maximum job-related information from each applicant.

18. Interviewers’ skills diminish over time.

An interviewer who receives feedback on his or her effectiveness is better able to maintain or improve his or her interviewing skills. Because opportunities for feedback are rare in most organizations, it can be difficult for interviewers to know whether they are conducting effective interviews and pursuing important facts. Many organizations overlook the benefits of refresher training as a way to ensure that interviewers are doing the best possible job and improving or maintaining their skills.
19. **Applicants react negatively to the interviewing process.**

A high percentage of applicants withdrawing from the selection process or rejecting job offers might signal that the interviewing process is creating a negative impression.

A thorough interview process takes into consideration how applicants are treated before, during, and after the interviews. If that element is missing from the process, situations can arise that will foster a negative reaction to the interview process and the organization, such as:

- Applicants’ waiting for long periods before or between interviews.
- Poorly structured or redundant interviews.
- Interviewers who take phone calls or allow other interruptions during the interview.
- Interview questions or treatment that leaves applicants angry or let down or feeling that they were not treated fairly.
- Interviewers who don’t give applicants a chance to respond completely.

This kind of treatment can suggest to the job applicant that the organization has a negative, inconsiderate atmosphere. Under these circumstances, if a job offer is made, an applicant might very well reject it.

20. **Applicants aren’t sold on the advantages of the job, organization, or job location.**

An interview is an information-gathering process for the interviewer. It also gives applicants an opportunity to obtain information about the position and the organization. Interviewers should be able to share stories or experiences that will sell specific features of the job, organization, or location to applicants. Applicants are not impressed with vague statements such as, “The organization encourages creativity” or “The organization takes care of its people.” Applicants also will react negatively if several interviewers repeat the same facts about the job, organization, or location but do not answer their questions.
HOW TARGETED SELECTION OVERCOMES COMMON INTERVIEWING PROBLEMS

Development Dimensions International’s Targeted Selection program helps organizations overcome or minimize the common selection problems outlined on the previous pages. In addition, it can be tailored to meet the needs of various jobs, organization levels, and types of applicants. When properly applied, Targeted Selection can produce positive bottom-line results including a decrease in turnover, a greater probability of job success for people hired using the program, and an increase in return on investment. (See discussion of validity research below.)

Targeted Selection incorporates the following components (or concepts) with the training necessary to apply them.

1. Focus on job-related behavior.
2. Use past behavior to predict future behavior.
3. Assess motivational fit.
4. Organize selection elements into a comprehensive system.
5. Apply effective interviewing skills and techniques.
6. Use data integration to make a better hiring decision.
7. Make a positive impression on applicants; sell them on the job and the organization.

COMPONENT 1: FOCUS ON JOB-RELATED BEHAVIOR.

Focusing on job-related behavior in an interview is a core tenet of Targeted Selection. Common selection problems (including failing to seek competency-related information and excessive overlap in competency coverage) are addressed if interviewers focus every selection system element, including the interviews, on job-related behavior as defined in the target competencies. Managers using the Targeted Selection system know what competencies to target for a position and how to obtain information on each competency. Because each interviewer covers a subset of job-related competencies, all competencies are covered at least once and the most important competencies several times.

Job-relatedness is key to fair and accurate selection decisions and to complying with equal employment regulations worldwide.

The Targeted Selection system:

- Uses a process called “work analysis.” This systematic analysis of how a job is performed identifies the competencies required for success in a job. These critical job requirements are the focus of every selection system element, including interviews. Targeted Selection program managers are trained in how to conduct work analyses.

Research into the use and validity of the Targeted Selection program has yielded the following findings:

- Targeted Selection has resulted in a 32 percent increase in job/offer acceptance ratios.
- Targeted Selection clients consistently have reduced turnover by up to 50 percent.
- More than 75 percent of hires selected by Targeted Selection were considered to be above-average performers.
- Managers have reported that using Targeted Selection increased their confidence in finding the right hires by 66 percent.
- Clients who use Targeted Selection to fill customer representative positions have reported as much as a 22 percent increase in customer satisfaction scores.
Teaches interviewers about competencies, the importance of the competency information for which they are interviewing, and how that information can reflect on-the-job performance.

Provides learning and practice of interviewing skills and techniques to identify and assess competencies.

Uses structured interview guides with planned behavioral questions that elicit behavioral examples for each target competency. A guide’s note-taking spaces help interviewers seek, obtain, and record job-related behaviors.

Generally uses multiple interviews so that all competencies are covered at least once and the most important competencies are covered several times. (Although multiple interviewers represent the best approach for many jobs, one or two interviews will suffice for some jobs, such as entry-level service representative positions.)

Uses a sound process for effective decision making during data integration, the step in which all the interviewers discuss and integrate the data about all applicants before making a hiring decision.

**COMPONENT 2: USE PAST BEHAVIOR TO PREDICT FUTURE BEHAVIOR.**

When combined with a focus on critical job requirements, the Targeted Selection system’s use of past behavior to predict future behavior solves many of the problems commonly associated with other selection techniques, such as the failure to seek specific job-related data and misinterpreting applicant data. Targeted Selection interviewers learn to gather complete examples of past behavior that are directly related to the job’s target competencies.

If a job requires someone who can solve problems, it is important that interviewers look for a person with a history of success in troubleshooting. Research has shown that behavioral interviewing is a strong and accurate predictor of success on the job.

**COMPONENT 3: ASSESS MOTIVATIONAL FIT.**

Targeted Selection interviewers learn how to focus on specific competencies that indicate whether an applicant can do the job. They also learn how to assess an applicant’s motivational fit for the job and the organization. This knowledge allows interviewers to identify key indicators of turnover and predict, with a great degree of certainty, whether a person will (1) be satisfied in the job and (2) stay with the organization over time.

In Targeted Selection, motivation is not evaluated in the abstract. A work analysis identifies characteristics (i.e., facets) of the job and organization that are both most present and most absent. Targeted Selection job fit/organization fit interview questions are designed to explore an applicant’s likes and dislikes related to these facets. For example, if the target job requires great attention to detail, an applicant might be asked, “Tell me about a job you had that required high attention to detail. How satisfied/dissatisfied were you with that, and why?”

After an interviewer understands an applicant’s stated likes and dislikes, the interviewer can use mismatches to predict job fit. When the applicant is someone the organization wants to hire, the interviewer can use the matches to better sell the job, organization, or location to the applicant. Doing so addresses the problem of losing a top applicant because he or she hasn’t been sold on the advantages of the job, organization, or location.

DDI’s Motivational Fit Questionnaire can be used to analyze an applicant’s likes and dislikes as they relate to the job or organization. A computerized analysis of the questionnaire responses highlights matches and discrepancies between the person’s likes and dislikes and what the job and organization offer. The analysis also provides relevant questions that can be used in follow-up interviews.
COMPONENT 4: ORGANIZE SELECTION ELEMENTS INTO A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM.

In a comprehensive selection system:
- The selection elements are ordered sequentially.
- The system is applied uniformly to all applicants within a job category.
- Decision points are established, ensuring that all applicants reaching a particular stage in the system are treated the same.
- Tests and simulations are used to screen applicants and supplement information obtained from the interviews.

A well-organized selection system provides an efficient process that saves time and money and conforms to EEOC requirements. Targeted Selection administrators learn how to design a thorough, organized selection system for any job or job level.

FIGURE 1: Selection System for Sales Representative

A WELL-ORGANIZED SELECTION SYSTEM PROVIDES AN EFFICIENT PROCESS THAT SAVES TIME AND MONEY AND CONFORMS TO EEOC REQUIREMENTS.
The appropriate sequence for some selection elements, such as screening interviews, is relatively straightforward, while the position of others, such as reference checks, is debatable. Figure 1 on page 12 illustrates a typical selection system for a sales position that incorporates screening interviews and reference checks as well as a behavioral simulation that is administered by one interviewer. (See pages 15–18 for more information on behavioral simulations and tests.)

**COMPONENT 5: APPLY EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES.**

The goal of Targeted Selection training is to give interviewers the skills they need to ensure that they gather complete and specific data from applicants, thus addressing many of the problems commonly found in selection systems.

- Targeted Selection interviews use behavioral, nontheoretical questions. When applicants are asked theoretical questions (“What would you do...?” “What should be done...?” “What are you going to do about...?”), their answers can be easily misinterpreted. Behavioral questions, on the other hand, prompt answers that describe specifically what the applicant did, has done, or has said. The examples below illustrate how a theoretical question can be rephrased to make it a behavioral question.

**FIGURE 2: A Comparison of Theoretical and Behavioral Interview Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORETICAL</th>
<th>BEHAVIORAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; When might you feel it necessary to introduce change in your job?</td>
<td>&gt; When have you felt it necessary to introduce change in your job? Tell me about the change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; How would you approach a particularly difficult customer?</td>
<td>&gt; What was your most difficult sale, and how did you approach it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; How would you change your job?</td>
<td>&gt; What changes in your job have you recommended?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because applicants don’t always provide complete behavioral examples, no matter how well a question is worded, Targeted Selection interviewers learn how to ask follow-up questions to generate more specific information. Follow-up questioning helps to eliminate the problem of interviewers’ making decisions about an applicant too quickly. Interviewers also use follow-up questions to obtain additional examples of behavior.

- It’s not uncommon for applicants to dislike some aspects of a job, organization, or location. However, if there are real opportunities for satisfaction and fulfillment to counterbalance what the applicant doesn’t like, then that person, once hired, likely will be productive and satisfied. Targeted Selection interviewers learn how to determine the reasons behind a person’s likes and dislikes (that is, what motivates him or her to perform effectively). This information helps interviewers understand the degree of an applicant’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with key aspects of the job, organization, or location that might affect the person’s determination to stay with the organization over time.

- Each Targeted Selection interview guide includes structured, multipart note-taking space. The various segments allow the interviewer to note the key elements of a behavioral example: the Situation or Task the applicant faced, the Action he or she took, and the Results of that action. These “STARs” provide the interviewer with a fact-based record of job-related data that aids the interviewer in making accurate hiring decisions.

- Targeted Selection teaches the skills and techniques that help interviewers manage time so that they can cover all the assigned competencies during the interview. In addition, interviewers learn techniques to direct the discussion into and through areas that are most important to cover. These techniques help them maintain control of both the time and the flow of information.
Building rapport with the applicant by maintaining his or her self-esteem during the interview fosters a positive impression of the interview and the organization. Meeting applicants’ personal needs by building rapport does more than make them feel good about the interview; it also creates an atmosphere that encourages the applicants to give open and complete responses, even when discussing sensitive and negative topics.

Targeted Selection interviewing skills and techniques are an effective tool in ridding interviews of bias, stereotypes, and the halo effect.

**COMPONENT 6: USE DATA INTEGRATION TO MAKE A BETTER HIRING DECISION.**

Each interviewer in the Targeted Selection process is responsible for covering specific competencies. To do that, they are trained to focus on gathering enough complete examples of behavior to evaluate an applicant in their assigned competencies.

Targeted Selection interviewers use a standard rating scale to evaluate applicant data, and then they meet to share and discuss all the applicant data and their ratings in a data integration session. Because only behavioral examples can be used to support competency ratings, the discussion focuses on facts, thus eliminating the possibility of misinterpreting applicant responses. The systematic data integration process results in a consensus profile of each applicant’s strengths and weaknesses in the job’s competencies before an overall hiring decision is made. Doing so overcomes the problems encountered when applicant evaluation is haphazard and subjective.

The structured data evaluation and data exchange processes overcome, or at least minimize, many common selection problems:

> Because interviewers must substantiate their competency ratings with specific behavioral examples, the potential for biases, subjectivity, and stereotypes influencing their decision making is reduced.

Interviewers are less likely to let their skills slip over time because they know they have to provide specific information from the interview.

> Because hiring decisions are delayed until all data has been discussed, interviewers can no longer make decisions too early in the selection process. Problems are further minimized because several interviewers hear the facts presented and reach a conscious decision on competency ratings.

**COMPONENT 7: MAKE A POSITIVE IMPRESSION ON APPLICANTS; SELL THEM ON THE JOB AND THE ORGANIZATION.**

Research consistently shows that individuals are more prone to accept job offers when interviewers are enthusiastic about the job and organization and are genuinely interested in helping the applicant make the best job choice. Targeted Selection supports that finding:

> Structured interview guides are designed to avoid excessive overlap in competency coverage and to facilitate an organized and efficient interview process that applicants will appreciate.

> Interviewers are assigned specific information to provide to applicants about the job, organization, and location. These assignments avoid repetition and ensure that all the important information is given. In addition, Targeted Selection interviewers are trained to highlight aspects of the job, organization, or location that are a good match with the applicant's likes and dislikes.

> The Targeted Selection system keeps applicants informed about what happens throughout the process so that they aren’t wondering if and when a decision will be made.

Creating a positive image cannot be overemphasized. It plays an increasingly critical role in the competition for the best people, and it can increase the percentage of job offers accepted. In addition, even people who are not offered a job—people who might be future clients or suppliers—can influence public opinion of the organization in a positive way if the interviewing process leaves a positive impression.
TARGETED SELECTION PROGRAM AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

United States law demands fair and equal employment opportunity for all citizens. Federal and state laws require consistent and job-related selection processes. Penalties for ignoring or violating federal hiring laws are severe, often amounting to large settlements in the millions of dollars. European countries have equal concerns under European Union regulations.

The Targeted Selection system has several features that make it particularly appealing to organizations concerned with equal opportunity in hiring.

The Targeted Selection system:

> Uses job-related competencies. Targeted Selection focuses on competencies that have been identified through work analysis to be important to job success. All interview questions are aimed at these competencies, and the discussion of the applicant's behavioral data is structured around them. The selection system's content matches the job's content.

> Trains interviewers to base hiring decisions on applicants' past behavior. Targeted Selection interviewers learn to gather complete behavioral information from applicants about past behavior that is directly related to the job's target competencies. Also, interviewers use common rating standards to evaluate the data so they can directly connect past behavior to future behavior.

> Avoids areas of illegal questioning. Through background reading, examples, and self-tests, Targeted Selection interviewers learn the areas of potential risk in interview questioning. They also learn to phrase questions clearly and carefully and ask only legal, job-related questions.

> Provides for consistency in handling applicants. The Targeted Selection system is organized and designed to be applied uniformly to all applicants within a job category.

> Minimizes biases and stereotypes. In the Targeted Selection data integration process, each interviewer describes the information he or she gathered from the applicant and uses that information to justify competency ratings. Then the group evaluates competencies based on all the available data, not just each individual's own data. The process is designed to control biases and stereotypes, maintain hiring standards, and ensure fair and accurate selection decisions.

> Trains interviewers to use structured interview guides to ask planned behavioral questions and follow-up questions designed to elicit behavior in the target competencies.

> Trains interviewers in effective note taking. Interviewers are taught how to take notes during an interview so they can record behavioral data that will be used to document selection and promotion decisions.

SUPPLEMENTARY TARGETED SELECTION COURSES

Organizations using the Targeted Selection system can supplement the interviewer training with additional courses that address specific aspects of an effective selection process. They include:

TS®: Interviewing for Technical Skills. This course shows interviewers how to supplement the behavioral data gathered during a Targeted Selection interview by gathering data on a candidate's technical skills, relative to the skills required for success in the position.
**TS®: Strong Start**: This course carries the selection process into the new hire’s first days on the job. In this course, participants learn to use selection data and job requirements to build a development plan for the new hire that will begin on day one. They’ll also learn how to help the new hire begin building a network of people who will help ensure continued job success.

**FIGURE 3: How Targeted Selection Overcomes Common Interviewing Problems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Selection Problems</th>
<th>TS® Interview Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on job-related behavior</td>
<td>Use past behavior to predict future behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Interviewers fail to seek application information on the specific competencies needed for success in the job.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There is excessive overlap in competency coverage.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interviewers misinterpret applicant information.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interviewers ignore job fit motivation.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Interviewers ignore organization fit motivation.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interviewers’ judgments are affected by biases and stereotypes.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interviewers permit one competency to influence their evaluation of other competencies.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Interviewers allow applicants to control the interview.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Interviewers make quick decisions about applicants.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Interviewers focus on negative information about applicants.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Selection elements are not organized into a system.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Interviewers’ judgment is affected by pressure to fill the position.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Decisions are affected by the relative quality of other applicants.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Interviewers take insufficient notes during the interview.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Interviewers use different rating/evaluation standards.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Applicant information is not discussed systematically.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Interviewers don’t put their best effort into interviews.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Interviewers’ skills diminish over time.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Applicants react negatively to the interviewing process.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicants aren’t sold on the advantages of the job, organization, or location.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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TOOLS TO SUPPORT A TARGETED SELECTION IMPLEMENTATION

DDI has developed multiple products that aid in administering and implementing the Targeted Selection system, and optimizing its efficiency and effectiveness.

> **Success Profiles: Navigator®**. This software is designed to allow users to perform job analyses to identify competencies, or to take a more thorough approach that also includes motivations, knowledge, and experience—the components that, along with competencies, make up a full Success Profile® for the target position. Success Profiles: Navigator® is the first software to fully automate all the steps in the job analysis process, including performing research, administering traditional job analysis techniques, capturing knowledge and experience facets, managing analysis and confirmation, documenting each process step, and facilitating ongoing competency management.

> **Success Profiles**: Card Sort. Subject matter experts are given a set of cards containing detailed roles for a job or job family as well as common business drivers for organizational strategy. They narrow broad concepts down to critical job challenges by prioritizing the appropriate cards. These job challenges align directly with competencies that help form the Success Profile®. Experts are asked to review roles and business drivers, written in business language, that are related to jobs instead of having to interpret complex or overlapping competency descriptions.

> **Targeted Selection**: Access® (TS: Access®). An easy-to-use online companion to Targeted Selection, TS®: Access® offers interviewers the tools, information, decision-making support, and expert guidance needed for effective and efficient hiring. Targeted Selection program managers can use TS®: Access® to create and distribute interview guides and applicant collateral. It supports the integration of applicants’ interview data and provides expert guidance and tools to sort and compare applicants online.

> **The Motivational Fit Questionnaire.** This questionnaire contains the job and organization facets cited by applicants as common sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Using the questionnaire, an applicant evaluates the importance of the traits via computer or on paper (later optically read into a computer). The computer analyzes the applicant’s preferences against what is available (or not available) in the job or organization. Matches and discrepancies are determined, and suggested questions are provided for follow-up in the interview.

HOW TARGETED SELECTION SUPPORTS A COMPREHENSIVE HIRING PROCESS

The Targeted Selection interviewing system is an integral part of an effective selection process (see Figure 4 below). This process begins with the initial screening step and extends to the point at which the new hire is in the job and reaches full proficiency.

AcqHire®, DDI’s suite of hiring solutions, is designed to improve an organization’s selection capability at each step in the hiring process. Each of the AcqHire® components, including Targeted Selection, can be combined into a comprehensive, integrated system that supports the best possible hiring or promotion decisions.

**FIGURE 4: AcqHire® Suite of Selection Solutions**
In addition to Targeted Selection, AcqHire® brings together the following components:

**Success Profiles℠**—Success Profiles℠ provide a holistic definition of what it takes to be successful in a target position. In addition to competencies, a Success Profile℠ will include experiences, knowledge, and motivations. DDI provides solid job analysis and competency management solutions (including Success Profiles: Navigator® and Success Profiles℠: Card Sort, both described on page 17).

A clear understanding of what defines successful performers ensures that an organization hires, promotes, develops, and retains more of them.

Using Success Profiles℠ makes it possible to:

- Connect your people strategy to your business strategy—keeping your competency models consistent with changes in your business environment.
- Support your entire talent management life cycle—from hiring, to development, and on through succession management—with consistent profiles that provide a common understanding of the job and expectations.
- Mitigate the risks associated with regulatory guidelines and the high cost of placing the wrong person in the job.

**Employment Testing & Assessment**—DDI offers more than 800 employment screens, tests, and assessments covering a full range of skills, competencies, and personal attributes. These tools help an organization process a high volume of job applications quickly and accurately to identify qualified candidates. Using these tools early in the process makes it possible to reduce the size and increase the quality of the applicant pool before more costly and time-consuming phases, such as simulations and assessments.

DDI tests and inventories help streamline the hiring process and increase the accuracy of hiring decisions. Tests can be used to identify relative strengths and development areas in applicants in areas such as:

- Analytical skills, problem solving, and ability to handle interpersonal situations in work settings.
- Customer service-related judgment, adapting to work challenges, and taking accountability for one’s work.
- Ability to learn, interpersonal skills, initiative, and work standards.
- Motivational competencies and work style.
- Background in core competency areas.
- Ability to read, understand, make inferences, and apply on-the-job information.
- Specific technical skills.

**Ideal Job Simulations**—Accurate and predictive job simulations let an organization see firsthand how candidates would perform if placed in the job. These simulations offer a deeper view of candidates, reveal insights valuable for future development, and provide a realistic job preview to better attract top candidates and project a positive impression of the job and the organization. Candidates can be evaluated on leadership, interpersonal, sales, decision-making, critical-thinking, and other skills essential for success.

Simulation activities can include, but are not limited to, role plays, in-basket exercises, planning and decision-making exercises, and simulated meetings with peers or direct reports. They are designed to parallel the critical challenges associated with a specific role or job.

Not all selection situations require simulations. Their use depends on how well interviews bring out past behavior and how much time is allocated for the selection process.
**Strong Start**—Beyond on-boarding their new hires, there are ways organizations can accelerate time to productivity and get them up to full job proficiency as quickly as possible. When they don’t, they run the risk of new hires taking longer to reach full job proficiency, decreased job engagement, and higher turnover.

A **Strong Start** transition is made when the organization uses a good selection process and then *begins the new hire’s development on Day One*. A Strong Start should provide the hiring manager with the skills to:

- Provide appropriate orientation to the overall organization, its direction, and values.
- Provide a clear understanding of a position’s/team’s goals and the leader’s expectations.
- Leverage selection data and job requirements to establish a plan to fill in skill and knowledge gaps and assure the new hire of support.
- Help the new hire develop a network of people who will be helpful in getting the person started in the new position and in ongoing job success.

A Strong Start allows organizations to:

- Identify and close performance gaps, reducing the time to reach full job proficiency.
- Give leaders the skills they need to engage new hires, accelerate performance, and monitor progress (see the description of **TS**: Strong Start for New Hires on page 16).

**SUMMARY**

DDI’s Targeted Selection system provides practical solutions to many of the complex problems faced by managers responsible for hiring decisions. The key elements—competencies; structured, behavioral interviewing; a systematic and consistent interviewing system; and the systematic integration of data—are combined in a program that assures accurate, carefully considered, and high-quality hiring decisions supported by technologically advanced administrative tools.

In addition, as part of AcqHire, the Targeted Selection system can be incorporated into a fully integrated hiring process that ensures greater accuracy and efficiency at every key step.
REFERENCES

REFERENCES FOR COMMON SELECTION PROBLEMS


Stewart, G.L., Giluk, T.L., & Shaffer, J.A. (Unpublished manuscript). Decision making in the interview: The role of judgments during rapport building and interviewer characteristics.

REFERENCES FOR GENERAL BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING


For more information, read Delivering Top Talent Through Targeted Selection® Interviewing, a comprehensive view of the value and impact of Targeted Selection. To download, visit http://www.ddiworld.com/pdf/targetedselectionimpactanalysis_rr_ddi.pdf

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William C. Byham, Ph.D., is CEO and Chairman of DDI. In 1970 he developed the first behavioral interviewing system, Targeted Selection®. It is used by more than 3,000 organizations and is available in 10 languages. Dr. Byham is an internationally recognized thought leader, speaker, and author. His most recent book is Leadership Success in China: An Expatriate’s Guide.

For additional information about Development Dimensions International and our systems for building high-involvement organizations, call 1-800-933-4463, or visit www.ddiworld.com.

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In today’s ever changing marketplace, having the right talent strategy is crucial for an organization’s success. Development Dimensions International will help you systematically and creatively close the gap between the talent you have and the talent you need to drive future business strategies.

We excel in:

:: Competency models that are linked directly to your business.
:: Screening and assessment, enabling you to hire the right people with a full range of validated tests and assessments.
:: Behavioral interviewing, helping hiring managers and recruiters make accurate hiring decisions.
:: Performance management to foster individual accountability and superior execution of your strategic priorities.
:: Succession management expertise and assessment systems to help you make critical placement and promotion decisions.
:: Accelerated development to give you people who are more productive faster by offering the widest range of topics for workforce to senior leadership levels.

DDI is all about giving clients the kind of business impact they want over the long term. Our work is tied to an organization’s strategies and becomes part of their business and culture. For multinational firms, DDI has precisely the kind of global resources needed to implement talent initiatives effectively and consistently worldwide.

Take a closer look at www.ddiworld.com.