

Symposium/Forum

TITLE

Time After Time: Creating a Culture of Development by Assessing at Multiple Times

ABSTRACT

Organizations that promote a culture of learning and development among their employees are more likely to adapt and remain afloat in the turbulent environment in which most business are facing today. This symposium will discuss how assessing employee performance using varied methods and at different times can help to create culture change over time. The symposium will address the implementation of these methods as well as help practitioners to better understand the implications of changing assessment scores from time-one to time-two. The symposium will address the processes and the obstacles involved with using individual assessments to create long term change in the learning and development aspects of an organization's culture.

SUMMARY ABSTRACT

Time After Time: Creating a Culture of Development by Assessing at Multiple Times

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One of the principal tactics for organizations seeking to remain competitive in today's rapidly evolving market is to create a culture in which employees are enabled to continuously improve and develop themselves. A culture of continuous learning is one in which employees are encouraged and supported in their efforts to grow and apply what they are learning (Huan, Rode, & Schroeder, 2011). Numerous studies have shown that organizations with a learning and development focus are better able to adapt to the changing business environment (Gunu & Sanni, 2016; Tortella et al., 2015). Now, more than ever, continuous learning is paramount to the continued success of the organization (Van Breda-Verduijn & Heijboer, 2016). One of the ways to achieve this objective is to implement a variety of assessments and measures, such as 360-ratings, in basket work samples, and situational judgement tests (SJTs), in the organization so that employees have the opportunity to develop themselves through the use of these tools and reflect upon their time performance over time (Brent et al., 2015; Dai & Peterson, 2010; Lievens & Thornton, 2005).

Our symposium will begin with a brief (3-5 minute) discussion on the challenges of developing a culture of learning. One of the major challenges of building an organization with a developmental organizational culture is resistance to change. This resistance to change can be due to a variety of reasons but primarily it is because individuals are comfortable with the way that they have always done the job and do not feel a need to learn a new method or develop their skills (Matin & Alavi, 2007).

Organizational leaders must also be supportive of employees who attempt to try something new. When failure is always punished, instead of encouraged to be learned from, employees will not feel comfortable taking risks when transferring new knowledge back onto the job (Papmehl, 2004). Lack of trust and misunderstandings between leaders and employees can only damage the culture that the organization is attempting to promote. Furthermore, leaders may expect to see noticeable changes in employees' behavior or performance immediately following an assessment or a coaching session occurs but this is not a realistic expectation.

In order to overcome these barriers, is it critical to not only identify the gaps in the organization, but to help employees and organizational leaders to understand that it is okay to talk about these gaps. By allowing employees to be open and honest about their developmental challenges, an environment is created that refocuses on development instead of blaming someone for what they might not know.

After setting the stage for the merits of using individual assessment as tool for organizational culture change, our research presentations will begin with a 10 minute presentation by McClure, et al., in which she will present data on measuring leader development at two different points in time. The study is part of a multi-year program within a state agency that has been attempting to become a destination employer by steadily seeking to create a culture of development and skill improvement. Through an endeavor to measure the effectiveness of a leadership training program, this study examines time one and time two 360-ratings of current and emerging leaders in a state-run organization. Findings suggest differences in time one and time two ratings and increased performance through enhanced skills and abilities. Further exploration of the data revealed several other factors and variables which contributed to the

changes in ratings. These will be discussed and the value of using 360 degree feedback at multiple times will be highlighted in the presentation.

The second 10 minute presentation by Reichin, et al., will integrate situational judgement test (SJT) data collected at two separate times from a state highway patrol promotional process. This agency sought to create culture change by developing a promotional process that would advance employees who were able to make more effective leadership decisions, understood the application of leadership, and were well-informed regarding departmental policies and procedures. In an attempt to determine the extent to which the repeated use of the SJT increased the decision making and leadership skills assessed in the SJT, Reichin examined two years of the SJT results. While a variety of studies have examined retesting situations and their impact on test scores, no studies have examined the impact of retesting in a promotional setting regarding a SJT. While initial analyses suggest that SJT scores were lower at time two than at time one, Reichin, will discuss how these results are not unexpected given the nature of the organization and the promotional process. Specifically, several of the top performers in year one were not inclined to re-test in year two, or were promoted by year two. The results of this study highlight the slow pace or organizational culture change and some of the obstacles encountered in organizational change initiatives.

It is often suggested that the change (or delta) which manifests between assessments is due to “practice effects as opposed to actual KSAO or behavior change. To address the aforementioned argument, the third 10 minutes presentation by Thompson, , et al., will discuss the findings of a study in which time-one and time-two scores were the result of back-to-back retesting of in-basket work samples. Although there is a plethora of research examining retesting situations and practice effects as they relate to cognitive ability tests and knowledges tests,

research on in-baskets and practice effects is severely limited. More importantly, organizations often use in-baskets and other assessment center methods as a base-line for employee development efforts. Organization wide efforts such as these often start with an initial assessment to highlight to the employees what the organization's expectations and culture will be like in the future. These assessments are then used as a spring board to other development activities and training. When these efforts are concluded with another in-basket or assessment, it may be assumed that higher scores are due to KSAO or behavior change, but the impact of practice effects (regarding the in-basket, etc.) cannot be ruled out. The findings from the final study will lead to greater insights and understanding about the implications of practice effects on work sample assessments.

Mark Frame will briefly integrate the findings of the studies and provide guidance on how practitioners can use individual assessment to create a culture of learning and development. His presentation will conclude with practical tips and suggestions on how to deal with potential obstacles before they become problematic. Emilie Seyfang will then moderate a "Question and Answer" session with the audience for the final 10 minutes of the session. Taken as a whole, these presentations will help shed light on practice and retesting effects over multiple implementations of an assessment and how these assessments can be used to measure and affect culture change within organizations. These findings have both practical and theoretical implications for organizations and the employees seeking to grow and develop within these organizations, which will be further discussed during the symposium.

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Leading the way in state-run leadership development programs

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Organizations are using a variety of strategies and processes for leadership development programs in an effort to effectively develop their leaders. When creating leadership development programs, organizations have a variety of methods that can help them develop leaders, such as executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, personality measures, and job assignments (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004). Arguably the better methods are those that change across time and can be measured longitudinally because it is not simply about the leader developing, but is also about having the ability to *measure* the leader's development and progress across time.

There is an obvious practical advantage for organizations to be able to measure the development of their leaders. When an organization can quantitatively measure leader development, they are a step closer determining the effectiveness of their leadership development program, which is even more advantageous for the organization. When times are tough, leadership development and training programs are often the first cut to save money. This is particularly true for those in the public sector that are more susceptible to budget cuts and whose organizational priorities change with each new administration. Having the ability to show

the effectiveness of such programs is critical for human resource personnel in the position of having to defend their leadership development programs and budget allocation.

One method that is often used in leadership development programs is 360-degree feedback, which is notably useful because it allows the employee to receive feedback from multiple perspectives (often ratings by supervisors, subordinates and peers) and compare those perspectives to their own self-ratings. 360-degree feedback also tends to be a more affordable and less time consuming than other methods of leadership development and can be combined with other, more expensive methods, such as executive coaching (Hazucha et. al., 1993). Furthermore, 360-degree feedback is conducive to tracking change across time. Many organizations that use 360-degree feedback use it as a baseline measure (time one) and then again as a follow up measure (time two) upon the completion of the leadership development program. This allows the organization to see how much the leader has changed on a specific skill or competency and can give them areas of strengths and weaknesses to continue working on following the completion of the formal program.

Research has acknowledged that leadership development is a process that lends itself to longitudinal research design, which makes 360-degree feedback a logical choice for many leadership development programs. As previously stated, 360-degree feedback is oftentimes the cheapest option and the measure can be given at different points in time to track leader development from multiple perspectives. The multiple perspectives obtained is a sizable benefit to this method, as the organization can compare the leader's self-ratings of improvement to the perceived improvement by others, such as peers, subordinates and the leader's boss (Day et. al., 2014). When longitudinal 360-ratings and another developmental intervention, such as feedback

sessions or executive coaching, are combined, there is a potential for an excellent leadership development program to emerge.

The current study examines the differences in time one and time two 360-ratings of a state-run, year-long leadership development program aimed at current and emerging leaders across the state, which consists primarily of the developmental methods previously discussed and is a longitudinal design.

Methods

This program consists of a pre-360-degree feedback measure, bi-monthly summits training the participants on competencies chosen by an executive committee of the State, intermittent coaching sessions and a post-360 measure to determine improvements in the competencies following their training. The 360-measures are based on the eight competencies the participants are trained on throughout the year and the participants have two individual coaching sessions, along with a group coaching session at each of the bi-monthly summits.

The archival dataset consisted of four cohorts. Participants in the program came from various departments across the state. Following their admittance to the program, participants and their manager, selected subordinates and selected peers took a 360-survey that covered the eight competencies that the state believed all leaders within the state needed to understand and exhibit in order to be effective leaders. These competencies were selected and revised as needed by an executive committee within the state. Once they had their scores participants met with their assigned coach to create an ongoing developmental plan that was updated following each training summit. Throughout the year participants went to the summits to be trained further on the competencies through lectures, discussions and experiential activities. Speakers and activities were not standardized and change from year to year. During these summits participants had the

opportunity to meet with their coach in a group setting to discuss their competency and how it related to leadership. A second meeting with their assigned coach occurred halfway through the program. Finally, at the end of the program the participants engaged in a 360-post measure and graduated from the program.

Results

Exploratory analyses revealed differences between the pre- and post-360 measures. These differences were influenced by a myriad of factors relating to individual coaches and the years of experience of the participants in the leadership development program. For instance, as can be seen in Figure 1, it appears that participants' years of experience influenced improvements in performance scores, but this improvement depends on the specific coach used. The nature of these relationships, interactions between them, and the results of additional analyses will be discussed, as well as the implications on research and practice in the field of coaching.

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Scores decline on second SJT administration: Will third time be the charm?

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Personnel selection is the process used to determine the people who comprise an organization. The major types of selection tests include cognitive ability tests, personality tests, physical ability tests, job knowledge tests and work samples (Human Resource Management, 2016). Selection tests are not only used for hiring job applicants, but also for promotion (EEOC, 1978; U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 1999).

Retesting in Personnel Selection

SIOP's Principles (2017) states that "employers should provide opportunities for reassessment and reconsidering candidates whenever technically and administratively feasible". Further, the EEOC's Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978) state that "users should provide a reasonable opportunity for retesting and reconsideration. Where examinations are administered periodically with public notice, such reasonable opportunity exists, unless persons who have previously been tested are precluded from retesting". Organizations may allow candidates to retest to increase perceptions of fairness in the application process or to expand the applicant pool (Brogden, 1949; Gilliland, 1993).

Scores Increase with Experience

Research on retesting has been done specifically in law enforcement (Hausknecht, Trevor, & Farr, 2002; Maurer, Solamon, & Troxtel, 1998), military (Carretta, 1992), fire departments (Dunlop, Morrison, & Cordery, 2011; and in many school admissions contexts (Lievens, Buyse, & Sackett, 2005; Lievens, Reeve, & Heggstad, 2007; Puddey, Mercer, Andrich, & Styles, 2014). There have been a variety of tests examined in the retest literature, including cognitive ability tests (Bartels, Wegrzyn, Wiedl, Ackermann, & Ehrenreich, 2010; Hausknecht, Halpert, Dipaolo, & Gerrard, 2007; Hausknecht et al., 2002; Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert, 1984; Lievens et al., 2005; Lievens et al., 2007), personality tests (Kelley et al., 1994; Walmsley & Sackett, n.d.) and knowledge, skills and ability tests (Carretta, 1992; Dunlop et al., 2011; Lievens et al., 2005; Van Iddekinge, Morgeson, Schleicher, & Campion, 2011). Generally, scores increase with experience.

Situational Judgement Tests

SJTs aim to measure how a candidate would respond to a situation in a work setting (McDaniel & Nguyen, n.d.). These tests are developed most commonly by using critical incidents (Campion, Ployhart, & MacKenzie, 2014). These critical incidents may be developed by supervisors with no guidance, just simply by remembering important events that have happened to them, or they may be given certain competencies derived from a job analysis in which to frame the critical incidents around (McDaniel & Nguyen, n.d.). Developing these critical incidents is the first step in developing SJTs, the next step is to shorten these incidents into stems that can be used as part of the test, and then develop possible responses to each of the incidents. These are then reviewed by subject matter experts (McDaniel & Nguyen, n.d.). SJTs may be used for selection or for training and development, and can measure as few as 2

dimensions or as many as 12 dimensions (Campion et al., 2014). Some of these constructs may include job knowledge, job skills, team work, leadership, interpersonal skills, conscientiousness and cognitive ability (Campion et al., 2014; McDaniel & Nguyen, n.d.).

Situational Judgement Tests and Retesting

Lievens & Sackett (2007) examined whether it was possible to create alternate forms of SJTs. As part of this research, they tested the various methods of creating alternate forms and examined retest effects depending on which approach they took. They found that retest effects were larger when the same situations were used and some words were just changed rather than when the situations completely changed. Further, Lievens, Buyse, & Sackett (2005) examined retest effects with SJTs in a high stakes admission setting. Within-person analyses of the results found that participants improved by one-third of a standard deviation on the second attempt at the SJT.

While these two studies contribute tremendously to the retesting research, they still leave gaps in the literature. Both studies were evaluated in an admissions context. Further, the first study aimed at creating parallel forms, and the main purpose was not to examine retest effects, but rather to use that to help support validity of the parallel forms. The current study aims to examine SJTs in a high stakes work setting. Finally, past research has examined SJTs used in the initial selection process, but the current study will examine SJTs in a promotional process.

Methods

Research Questions

Hypothesis 1: When candidates retest using an SJT in a promotional process, scores will be higher the second time.

Participants

Data was collected from 68 state highway patrol officers who were applying for promotion over three years. The majority of participants were male (85.3%). Ages ranged from 28 - 57 years ($M = 43.59$, $SD = 6.69$). Finally, 76.5% of participants were Caucasian and 7.4% of participants were African American.

Measures

Situational Judgement Test (SJT)

This test was used to assess candidates' preferred course of action given a specific situation. One-hundred and fifty situations were generated and brought to the highway patrol command staff for evaluation. These situations represent actual scenarios that the candidates are likely to encounter on the job and were developed using *Critical Incidents of Performance Interviews*. Each Critical Incident of Performance Interview were conducted by a team of two. One interviewer was in charge of asking questions and taking some notes, and the other interview was in charge of taking detailed notes. The command staff served as our SMEs. The SMEs were able to get rid of items, or they were asked to rank the options given after each situation. Four response options were given, and SMEs were asked to rank the various courses of action 1 (best option) to 4 (worst option). They were also able to alter some response options. If command staff reached a pre determined threshold of agreement, items were included.

Results

Using a within person design, a one sample t-test ($\alpha=.05$) was conducted to determine if scores in 2016 were significantly different than scores in 2015. Results indicated that scores were actually lower in 2016 ($M = 27.83$, $SD = 6.19$) than in 2015 ($M = 34.21$, $SD = 4.39$), $t(67) = 11.98$, $p < .001$. These results did not support our hypothesis.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine retest effects of an SJT during the promotional process. Not only have SJTs been under-researched, but the focus of most research is on that initial selection of a job candidate. The current study aimed to help close the gap in the literature by assessing retest effects during the promotional process. Results indicated that time-two scores were significantly lower than time-one scores. This is surprising considering that much of the research says that scores increase on retest. Perhaps these individuals just weren't ready to retest or perhaps there were some other factors going on at the same time that caused scores to decrease.

One strength of the current study is the within-subject design. Although the sample size is small, the research provides a picture of retest effects of 68 individuals who retook the same SJT in two consecutive years. Another strength of the current study is the high stakes setting in which the assessments are being taken in an organizational context.

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Practice Effects in In-basket simulations: Back to back performance champs?

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One of the key challenges for organizations is hiring the right employees. Rarely is it practical for all applicants to come in and do the job before they are hired. A popular alternative to doing so, however, is to have applicants complete a simulation of the job. This simulation can provide valuable insight regarding the applicant's potential performance. The current paper aims to further understand practice effects by comparing performance in completing multiple in-basket simulations.

In-basket Simulations

An in-basket exercise (also known as an inbox exercise) is a simulation in which the participant responds to memos, emails, messages, and mail as if they were in the job (Schippmann, Prien, & Katz, 1990). In-baskets allow the organization to simulate what the job would include. In addition, there is usually a time constraint to finish the in-basket, allowing assessors to measure behavior under time pressures. Participants are often given background information about the organization, an organizational hierarchy chart, a calendar, instructions, blank stationary, and a timer (Thornton, & Mueller-Hanson, 2004). In-baskets allow organizations to assess potential performance, without the risk that performance errors harm the organization. Because selection decisions are made using in-basket performance and because employee career decisions may arise from in-basket simulation results, it is imperative to understand factors that can influence in-basket performance.

When using an in-basket, it is important to consider what can and cannot be considered an in-basket. In-baskets are used to predict performance. However, behavioral simulation has to be present for participants to present overt relevant behaviors. Due to this, multiple researchers explain that when participants are able to select from a choice of responses, it is not a true in-basket assessment (Lievens & Thornton, 2005; Lievens, Van Keer, & Volckaert, 2010; Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines, 2014; Thornton & Mueller-Hanson, 2004). The basis of this argument rests on the notion that when selecting a response, the participant is not able to develop their own constructed answer. Therefore, there is no apparent overt behavior. This critical aspect of an in-basket must be apparent no matter how the assessment is completed. In review, an in-basket simulates a day in the job to applicants, in which the applicant is presented with scenarios and information and constructs a response. The in-basket can be used as part of a AC in order to select strong job candidates.

Practice Effects

Practice effects have become a topic of interest in recent years. Practice effects are referred to as any change in test scores from one administration to another (Hausknecht, Halpert, Di Paolo, & Moriarty, 2007). Much of the research has focused on retesting effects in student samples as opposed to job applicants (Lievens, Buyse, Sackett, 2005). Van Iddekinge, Morgeson, Schleicher, & Campion, 2011). Research has concluded that scores on knowledge, skills and ability tests typically increase with experience (Van Iddekinge, Morgeson, Schleicher, & Campion, 2011) as well as scores on cognitive ability assessments (Hausknecht, Halpert, Di Paolo, & Moriarty, 2007). While this research adds to the current literature, it is difficult to find current research which assesses practice effects of completing in-basket simulations. Furthermore, the time allotted between testing periods could potentially impact performance.

One study found that testing effects were larger when coaching was providing between assessments (Hausknecht, Halpert, Di Paolo, & Moriarty, 2007). This finding suggests that a larger time between administrations could have a larger impact on performance. Due to the lack of literature in regard to completing in-basket simulations within a short period of time, the current study aims to investigate this difference.

Research question: Will scores be significantly different on in-basket simulations when completing two assessments back to back.

Method

Participants will complete an in-basket simulation that was developed from a previous study (Fay, 2008). The in-baskets were designed to assess performance without requiring in-depth knowledge. Participants will be provided with the background information for the company, a calendar, job description, and organizational chart. The in-baskets are divided into two locations: Music City and River City. The background information for both Music City and River City is identical. The difference between the locations include a different organizational chart, logo and the individual items. Participants will receive all materials in person.

Distraction Task. Participants will be asked to complete three “distractor tasks” with the intention of obfuscating the true purpose of the study and reduce the likelihood of priming. To that end, three unrelated scales are included in the study to reduce the effects of priming: The Perceptions of Ethical Misconduct Scale (PEMS), Dirty Dozen (DD), Interpersonal and Organizational Deviance Scale (IODS).

Procedure

Participants will complete two in-basket assessments, and will be randomly assigned to one of four conditions. The within-subjects design allows researchers to compare individual

performance on both simulations. Participants will receive an informed consent form electronically after hearing a brief overview of the study. Participants will complete a survey regarding the individual's level of experience. After completing the survey, participants will complete the first distraction survey (PEMS). Participants will then complete the first in-basket simulation. After completion, participants will complete a brief online survey asking about their perception of the in-basket. Next, participants will complete various surveys as well as the next distraction task survey (DD and IODS). Upon completion of the survey, participants will be instructed to complete the second in-basket simulation. Finally, participants will complete the demographic questionnaire, work experience, and perceptions of the in-baskets. After participants finish the survey, all participants will be debriefed on the study. The debriefing statement will include an explanation of why the distractor task was utilized.

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