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A cross country comparison of best practices in recruitment and selection

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ABSTRACT

This study examines best practices in hiring related to the recruitment and selection process in English-speaking countries with an Anglo-Saxon heritage. Since such countries share a similar cultural backgrounds and histories, best practices are likely to be somewhat similar. Studies of best practices were examined in the following countries: United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand. After looking at commonalities across “best practices” studies, the current investigation presents a common set of such practices in terms of usage.

Keywords: human resources, management, recruitment, selection

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INTRODUCTION

Effective hiring decisions are critical to any firm's competitive position. A person who is hired pursuant to an appropriate process that matches the job requirements will normally meet or exceed established performance standards. Conversely, not following an appropriate process may result in hiring a person that does not meet the requirements of the job. The monetary cost associated with a poor hiring process can range from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars per employee. Over the course of such a person's employment, substantial additional costs can be incurred that are associated with lost productivity, decreased morale, public relation problems, loss of goodwill, and even lawsuits and disruptions to the business.

Numerous studies demonstrate that effective recruitment and selection can lead to improved productivity, reduced turnover, increased job satisfaction, and increased employee engagement and commitment. Catano, Wiesner, Hackett, and Methot (2010) suggest that effective recruitment and selection practices can definitely result in higher profitability.

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The countries reviewed in this study all have a common history going back in time to the British monarchy and the British legal system based on common law, precedent, and legislative decision making (i.e., laws) that are then interpreted and administered by a judicial branch of government. These countries also share another similarity. They have a relatively limited number of written statute laws that must then be interpreted by a court system in terms of how those laws apply to specific situations (Doupnik and Perera, 2012.).

In contrast to common law countries, nations like France have a code law system. In code law, many more laws govern a greater range of human activity (Doupnik and Perera, 2012). Some legal scholars suggest that code law leads to more vague laws because such laws are more likely to be made by politicians with less input by experts in the field.

This study focuses on countries with a British heritage due to the common language and many similarities among cultural dimensions such as value systems, work practices, religions, beliefs, and history.

THE SAMPLE AND RELATED DATA SOURCES

To get a sense of how each country engages in best practices in recruitment and selection, studies, reports, and governmental guidelines used in each country were examined.

For the United States of America's governmental sector, recruitment and selection practices from the "Recruitment and Selection Best Practices Guide", developed for use by the Department of Veterans Affairs (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012) were compiled. This guide identifies and describes a five step process to choose appropriate employees. The details of this process are shown in Exhibit 1(Appendix). For the United States private enterprise sector, a study of best practices performed by a major consulting firm was examined. Six of the most common practices were identified (Coco, 2011).

For Australia, three best practices reports and guidebooks were used. For the country's governmental sector the detailed ten-step process developed by the Department of Planning and Community Development (State Services, 2012) was examined. For their private sector the nine step practices model developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission (Australian Human

Rights Commission, 2004) was used. For the public educational sector the researchers looked at the four step process detailed in the “Recruitment and Selection Process Checklist” (University of Queensland, 2012). The best practices from the Australian sources may be reviewed in Exhibit 2 (Appendix).

For the United Kingdom, educational and governmental best practices found in “Recruitment and Selection Best Practice Guidelines,” that identifies a seven step process (University of London, 2012) were used. The compilation of recruitment and selection practices from the United Kingdom textbook, *Human Resources Practices* (Jackson, Martin, and Whiting, 2012) was used to identify best practices in the private sector. In that text, eight best practices are described. The United Kingdom best practices are shown in Exhibit 3 (Appendix).

For Canada there is a well-regarded graduate level textbook that is widely used across the country. Well-documented with supporting validation studies, *Recruitment and Selection in Canada*, is applicable to a cross section of government, education, and industry. The text thoroughly presents the seven steps and provides empirical evidence of why these steps should be followed (Catano, Wiesner, Hackett, and Methot, 2010). The Canadian best practices may be shown in Exhibit 4 (Appendix).

For New Zealand the Human Resource Institute of New Zealand, is regarded as the focal point and a well-regarded source for human resources best practices in the country. The Institute’s publication, “Recruitment and Selection,” outlines seven steps (New Zealand, 2011). The New Zealand best practices are shown in Exhibit 4 (Appendix).

ANALYTIC METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

To determine a consistent typology and rank ordering of best practices across the five countries, a comparison of each study’s ranking of processes other was conducted. Across the nine best practices studies a total of eleven distinctly different processes or activities were identified. The most frequently identified processes were conduct a job analysis, build a competency model, test applicants, evaluate applicants, identify competencies, advertise and attract applicants, short list applicants, interview, reference check, select the person, induct and orient, and planning for the job.

The next step was to put each study’s processes into a matrix using a simple weighting scheme. If an activity appeared, it received one point and if absent, no points were awarded. Conducting a job analysis appeared in five studies, identifying competencies appeared in six studies, advertising and recruitment in seven, shortlisting in five, interviewing in six, screening and reference checking in five, selecting in all nine studies, inducting and orienting in six, testing in one, evaluating in one, and finally, planning for the job appeared in one study.

The last step involved setting a minimum threshold of usage. A cut point reflecting predominant usage was established. If a best practice appeared in at least fifty five percent of the studies (55% or 5 out of 9), then it was considered a best practice across the countries examined. Using this minimum threshold method, the most universally recognized best practices are: (1) conduct a thorough job analysis to identify the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for successful job performance; (2) build a competency model for successful job performance against which applicants can be evaluated; (3) advertise for the position and engage in related recruiting activities in order to attract qualified applicants; (4) develop a short list of applicants who have the minimum qualifications needed for the job; (5) interview applicants who are deemed most qualified from the short list; (6) conduct reference checks and background checks,

(7) evaluate applicants based on interviews and related evidence gathered from reference and background checks and select the person to fill the job, and (8) conduct orientation activities designed to induct the newly hired person into the organization. The percentage list of occurrences is in Exhibit 5.

CONCLUSION

In today's competitive environment most organizations are under pressure to improve employee job performance. Consequently, the need to identify the best practices related to recruitment and selection is of increasing importance. Based on a careful examination of best practices in several common law countries this study suggests that there is a universal set of best practices in the recruitment and selection process. Future research that expands the sample to include countries using other legal contexts and which vary more in their cultural dimensions should yield interesting insights into the extent these processes are indeed universal.

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APPENDIX

EXHIBIT 1		
Country and Source of Best Practices' Study		
COUNTRIES	United States of America	United States of America
SOURCES	Department of Veterans Affairs	Coco Training & Consulting, Inc.
B		
E		
S		
T	job analysis	recruit high quality people
I	outreach and recruitment	make contact with these people
C	interview	interview process, evaluate and compare interview results
A	reference check	
P	selection decision: hiring	select the best fit for your situation
R		Continuously check up on the new hire to ensure they are meeting expectations
O		
S		
T		
I		
S		
T		
E		
D		

EXHIBIT 2			
Country and Source of Best Practices' Study			
COUNTRIES	Australia	Australia	Australia
SOURCES	Department of Planning and Community Development	Australian Human Rights Commission	The University of Queensland
S	planning	develop	vacancy
C	job analysis	selection criteria	applications and short listing
E	position description and key selection criteria	advertising	selection
T	recruitment attraction	short listing	follow-up
I	short list application	application forms	
S	selection process	testing	
T	reference checking	interviewing	
L	selection decision	referee reports	
	induction/orientation evaluation	make decision	

EXHIBIT 3			
Country and Source of Best Practices' Study			
COUNTRIES		United Kingdom	United Kingdom
SOURCES		Royal Holloway University of London	Human Resource Practices; 5th Edition
E		identifying the vacancy	job analysis
C		obtaining approval to recruit	identify competencies
T		attracting suitable candidates	attracting applicants
I		short listing	candidate data collection
S		selection	candidate assessment
T		appointment	comparison
E		induction	employment checks
D			offer the job

EXHIBIT 4			
Country and Source of Best Practices' Study			
COUNTRIES		Canada	New Zealand
SOURCES		Recruitment and Selection in Canada	Human Resources Institute of New Zealand
B	E	job analysis	conduct a job work analysis of the position to be filled
S	T	build competency model	create a modified job description and person specification
E	S	recruitment	advertise
S	T	screen applicants (includes reference checks	screening and skill matching
T	E	interview	short list the ones that match the skills
E	S	selecting/make decision	select the person
S	T		conduct proper employee induction
T	E		

EXHIBIT 5		
Number of Occurrences of Best Practices		
Job Analysis	5	56%
Competencies Identified	6	67%
Advertising/Recruitment	7	78%
Short Listing	6	67%
Interview	6	67%
Reference check	5	56%
Selection	9	100%
Induction	6	67%
Job Planning	1	11%
Testing	1	11%
Evaluation	2	22%

