

# Chapter 5

## 5 Testing, Selection and Interviews

- Introduction
- The Importance of Selection
- Factors Affecting the Selection Process
  - Other HR Functions
  - Speed of Decision Making
  - Organizational Hierarchy
  - Applicant Pool
  - Type of Organization
  - Probation Period
  - Legal Considerations
- The Selection Process
- Application Forms
- Preliminary Interview
  - Television Interview
  - Virtual Job Interview
  - Videotaped Interview
- Basic Concepts in Testing
  - Reliability
  - Validity
  - How to Validate a Test
- Types of Test
  - Tests of Mental Abilities
  - Tests of Physical Abilities
  - Job Knowledge Tests
  - Personality Tests
  - Interests Tests
  - Achievement Tests
  - Polygraph Tests
  - Pencil-and-Paper Honesty Tests
  - Work Samples
- The Employment Interview
  - Types of Interview
  - Structured Versus Unstructured Interview
  - Types of Questions Used in an Interview
  - Contents of An Interview
  - Administering the Interview
  - Common Interviewing Mistakes
  - Conduct an Effective Interview
- Conditional Job Offer
  - Background Investigation and Reference Check
  - Medical Examination
  - Complying with Immigration Law

### Objectives

At the end of the chapter, students are able to:

- Describe the selection process
- Identify the primary purpose of selection activities
- Understand the various types of employment testing and apply them to various vacant positions
- Recognize the basic concepts of testing and how to validate a test
- Discuss the problems associated with job interviews and means of correcting them
- Analyze and review the selection process of an organization

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Mary has just graduated with a Bachelor of Economics and is currently looking for a job. She sees an advertisement for the position of Assistant Economic Planner in Job Street and applies for the job. She goes for the job interview two weeks later and meets her classmate, Agus there. Both of them filled in some application forms and sat for a Mathematics, Language and IQ tests. Mary was called for an interview later in the afternoon where she met the Head of the Economic Planning Unit and the Human Resource Manager. After a week, she received a job offer from the company.

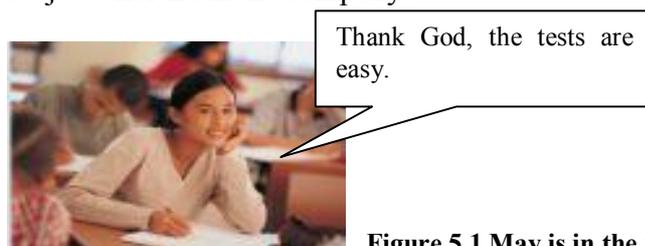


Figure 5.1 May is in the midst of taking the tests

5

The example above illustrates part of the recruitment and selection process. Selection is the process of choosing the best individual for a position in an organization from a group of applicants. In this case, Mary was the most suitable individual for the job.

## 5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF SELECTION

Selection is an important process because organizations aim to select the best person for the job. The reasons for selecting the right employees are listed below:

- i. A manager's performance is dependent on the performance of his subordinates. If his subordinates perform well, his performance will be good too. Therefore, he needs to ensure that his subordinates have the right skills, attributes and attitudes.
- ii. An organization would need to incur a high recruitment and hiring cost if it continuously selects the wrong employees. This is because employees who do not fit in the job or organization culture will be ineffective and probably will leave the organization. The failure of selecting the right person may cost the organization between two to five times an employee's annual salary (Mondy & Noe 2005, p.162-163).
- iii. An organization needs to understand the legal implications of hiring the wrong person. For example, the implications of hiring a foreign worker without a working permit. This could lead to a substantial amount of penalty fees and tarnish the organization's reputation.
- iv. Selecting the right person could lead to an excellent level of productivity. Researches have shown that top performers contribute from 5 to 22 times more value to an organization than mid-level or lower performers (Mondy & Noe, 2005, p.162).



I must motivate them well. If they perform well, my performance will also be good

Figure 5.2 A manager motivates his employees through participative management

### 5.3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process can also be affected by environmental factors such as the following:

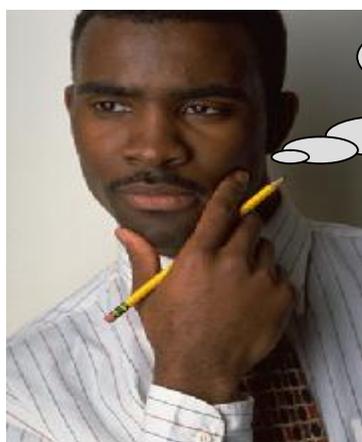
#### 5.3.1 Other HR Functions

Other HR functions can also affect the selection process. For example, if the compensation package in an organization is better than its competitors, the organization has a good chance of hiring the best-qualified applicants as evidenced by organizations such as Petronas, Tenaga and IBM.

#### 5.3.2 Speed of Decision Making

The time given to make a selection decision will have an impact on the selection process. The quality of the selection decision will decrease as shorter time is allocated to make the decision.

Bureaucratic organizations will also not be able to select best candidates for the job. This is because they take too much time in making decisions. The best candidates would have worked for a more efficient employer.



Although I want to work for A Berhad, I can't wait for their decision any longer. It has been 2 months. I better work for CD Sdn Bhd.

Figure 5.3 Effect of Slow Decision Making

### 5.3.3 Organizational Hierarchy

Different selection methods are used for different positions. For instance, an applicant for the position of a receptionist may be required to attend one interview whereas an applicant for the position of a doctor may need to attend a series of interviews and background checks.

### 5.3.4 Applicant Pool

HR managers can do a better selection if there is a larger number of a qualified applicants for a particular job. The labour market can also affect the selection process. For example, an expansion in the labour market could lead to a larger applicant pool, thus, increasing the probability of a better selection process.

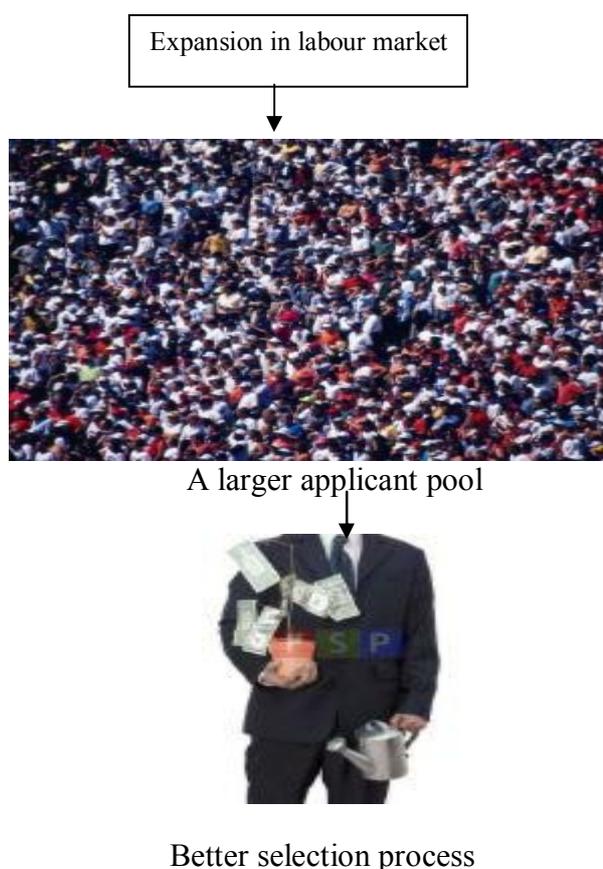


Figure 5.4 Effects of an expansion in the labour market

A selection ratio is the number of people hired for a particular job compared to the total number of individuals in the applicant pool (Mondy & Noe 2005, p.165).

$$\text{Selection} = \frac{\text{Number of open positions}}{\text{Number of available applicants}}$$

If the selection ratio is 1, this means that the open position has only one qualified applicant. The lower the ratio means that the manager has more choices in making a selection decision.

### 5.3.5 Types of Organization

The type of organization can also influence the selection process. The table below shows the various selection methods used for different organizations.

TYPES OF ORGANIZATION	SELECTION CRITERIA
Private Sector	Job-related personality factors
Public Sector	Examination results

Table 5.1 Types of selection criteria used for various types of organization

### 5.3.6 Probation Period

Most organizations use a probation period to assess and monitor employees' performance. This period will be used to gauge whether the organizations made the right hiring decision. If employees are performing well during this period, they are expected to continue their good performance upon receiving confirmation. Employees who are under-performing are usually asked to leave or given another opportunity by extending their probation period.

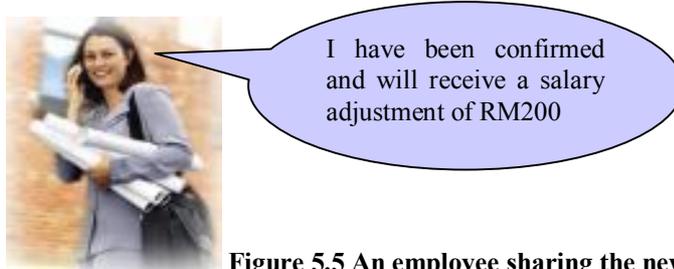


Figure 5.5 An employee sharing the news of her confirmation

### 5.3.7 Legal Considerations

HR managers must be well-versed with the employment and immigration laws of the country as this knowledge would assist them in their selection process, especially, foreign workers. The managers need to ensure whether the foreign workers are eligible to work in Malaysia before issuing the Letter of Offer.

## 5.4 THE SELECTION PROCESS

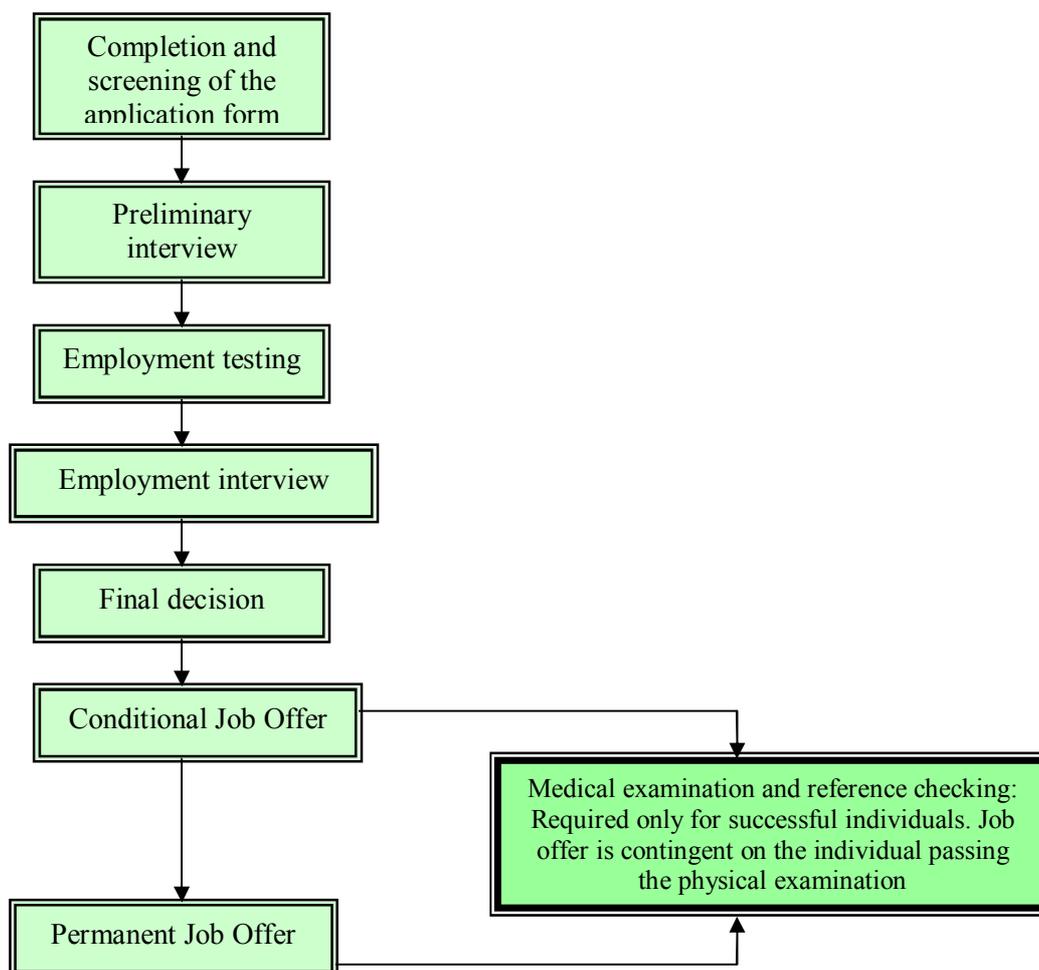


Figure 5.6 The selection process  
Source: Adapted from Byars & Rue, 2003

The diagram above shows the steps involved in the selection process. Most organizations use a series of screening and selection tools such as application forms, interviews and tests depending on the type of vacant position. Successful applicants must pass all the screening and selection tests.

## 5.5 APPLICATION FORMS

Most organizations receive and review the applicants' resumes and cover letters after placing a recruitment advertisement. The HR personnel will determine whether the applicant's experiences, abilities and skills match the requirements for the position. If there is a match, the HR personnel will call the potential applicants for a preliminary interview.

Prior to the preliminary interview, the applicants are required to fill up the application form. An application form contains sections for name, address, telephone number, education, work history, training and seminars attended, references and interests. There are also preprinted statements in the application form such as certification that everything is true and permission

given to conduct a background and reference check. Upon signing the application form, the applicant agrees to all the preprinted statements.

## 5.6 PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

The preliminary interview is conducted to eliminate applicants who are unqualified and uninterested. The interview provides an opportunity for the organization to inform applicants on the various vacant positions in the organization, steer a prospective employee to another position and also an avenue for the applicant to ask questions about the organization. Apart from face-to-face preliminary interviews, there are other methods of conducting these interviews as listed below.

### 5.6.1 Telephone Interview

The interview is conducted via telephone. This method is cheaper and provides more accurate answers in judging an applicant's interpersonal skills, intelligence and conscientiousness. An organization can also screen a larger number of candidates using this method. However, it lacks the advantages of face-to-face contact and non-verbal behaviours.



*Maggie, Could you tell me about yourself?*

Figure 5.7 Conducting a telephone interview

### 5.6.2 Virtual Job Interview

In a computerized interview, applicants are given questions in a multiple-choice format and they answer the questions via pressing a key. These types of interviews are usually used for screening candidates for face-to-face interviews. The program is able to reject unsuitable candidates by measuring the response time and accuracy of each answer. Advantages of this method are that it saves the managers' interviewing time and people are more honest with computers as answers are usually factual.



*Hmmm. What can the answer be? A or C?*

Figure 5.8 An applicant answering the multiple-choice questions

### 5.6.3 Videotaped Interview

A videotaped interview may use a structured interview where the interviewer will videotape the candidate's responses. The interviewer can only repeat a question to ensure fairness among the candidates. Executive search firms usually use this method.



Figure 5.9 Videotaping an interview

5

## 5.7 BASIC CONCEPTS IN TESTING

Prior to administering the employment tests, an organization needs to ensure that all its employment tests must possess an acceptable level of reliability and validity. Therefore, an organization needs to validate the tests to ensure the effectiveness of the employment tests.

### 5.7.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the test (Dessler & Tan 2006, p.128). The organization can test this concept by:

- a) giving the applicants the same test at various times or providing them with a test now (retest estimate)
- b) giving the applicant a test and then an equivalent test later (equivalent form estimate)

If the applicants score consistent marks on both tests under the same conditions, the tests are said to be reliable.

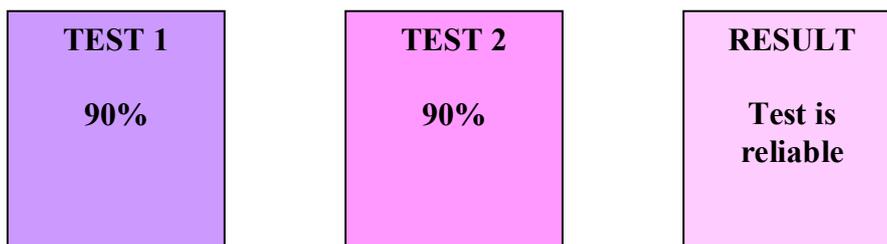


Figure 5.10 If the applicants score the same marks on both tests, the test is reliable

### 5.7.2 Validity

Validity tells us whether the test is measuring what it is supposed to measure. Validity usually provides evidence that performance on the test will predict subsequent performance on the job.

For instance, if a job applicant for the position of secretary can type 120 words per minute, it is assumed that she would be able to perform well in the job as typing speed is a valid criterion for job success.

In employment testing, there are two types of validity as shown below:

### 5.7.2.1 Criterion Validity

This validity assumes that people who scored well in the test would perform well at work. Therefore, if the job applicant as per the example above, can type 150 words per minute, she is able to perform well in an actual working environment.



*She types very fast. She will do well in this company.*

Figure 5.11 Criterion Validity

### 5.7.2.2 Content Validity

In content validity, an organization needs to identify the work behaviors needed for the job via analyzing the job analysis. Then, it combines samples of actual, observable and on-the-job work behaviors into a test. A test on telephone etiquette and computer skills tests for a call center operator would be an example.

5

### 5.7.3 How to Validate a Test

After understanding the testing concepts in employee selection, we must prove that the test scores can predict job performance accurately. Therefore, industrial psychologists will conduct the validation process with the assistance of the HR department.

The validation process consists of five steps used in criterion validity:

**a) Analyze the job and write the job descriptions and job specializations by getting inputs from the line managers.**

- We need to identify the traits and skills that can be used to predict successful job performance. These traits and skills are called predictors.
- The way to measure the success of a job is called criteria and it may focus on production-related criteria (quantity and quality), personnel data (absenteeism and length of service) or judgments of worker performance.
- For example, the predictors for a lecturer may include qualifications and previous working experience. Criteria selected to predict your test may include number of student complaints and number of student failures.

**b) Select the Tests**

We need to select tests that can measure the traits and skills that are important for job success. Employers usually decide based on experience, past research and gut feel and would usually combine a number of tests into a “test battery”. The purpose of a test battery is to measure some predictors simultaneously such as numerical ability, interpersonal skills and presentation abilities. All tests must be in line with employment laws, ethical and protects the test takers’ privacy.

**c) Administer the Test**

- When administering the test, we can select two methods i.e. concurrent validation or predictive validation.
  - Concurrent validation refers to asking current employees to take the tests and then compare their scores to their current job performances. Although we can get performance data easily, it should be noted that our current employees may not be a good sample as they already have on-the-job training.
  - Predictive validation refers to asking applicants to take the test but hiring them based on existing selection methods. After a year or 6 months, the HR personnel will compare their job performance to their earlier test scores. The results will inform us whether the tests are good predictors or not. Therefore, predictive validation is a more reliable validation.

**d) Relate Your Test Scores and Criteria**

This step involves finding a strong relationship or connection between the scores (predictor) and performance (criterion). An expectancy chart will be used to show the relationships graphically.

**Dessler & Tan 2005, p.199**

**Figure 5.12 Expectancy Chart**

**e) Cross-validate and Revalidate**

An organization needs to validate the tests a few times on different samples of employees before using them as a selection method. At a minimum, an expert should revalidate the test periodically (Dessler & Tan, 2006, p.132).

**5.8 TYPES OF TESTS**

Once the applicants have passed the preliminary interviews, the organization would invite them to perform some employment testing. There are many types of tests used for employee selection. However, most organizations usually select a few tests and all tests would have different weightage according to the types of positions and size of the organization. The tests are as follows:

### 5.8.1 Tests of Mental Abilities

Mental abilities or aptitude tests measure a person’s ability to learn and perform a job. It measures applicants’ intelligence, memory, vocabulary, verbal fluency, inductive reasoning, perceptual speed, spatial and numerical ability (Mondy & Noe 2006, p.175). The purposes of each test are shown in the table below

Types of Tests	Purpose
Verbal-aptitude test	Measures a person’s ability to think, plan and communicate with words
Numerical test	Measures a person’s ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide
Perception speed test	Measures a person’s ability to recognize similarities and differences
Spatial test	To measure a person’s ability to visualize objects and determine their relationships
Reasoning test	To measure a person’s ability to analyze facts and make good judgments in a logical way
Intelligence test (IQ)	To measure a person’s general intellectual abilities

Table 5.2 Types and purposes of the various selections tests  
Source: Adapted from Byars & Rue 2003, p.163



Figure 5.13 A group of job applicants doing some selection tests

For example, an applicant applying for a computer programmer’s position may be required to take an intelligence test to evaluate his numerical ability, logical thinking via problems presented and vocabulary.

### 5.8.2 Tests of Physical Abilities

These tests are also called psychomotor abilities tests and measure strength, coordination and dexterity. For example, lifeguards are tested for their swimming and lifesaving skills before they are employed.



Figure 5.14 Physical tests for lifeguards

### 5.8.3 Job Knowledge Tests

Job knowledge tests measure a candidate’s job-related knowledge. For example, some financial institutions require Trade Finance candidates to take either a written or oral examination on international practices and also case studies on job-related problems.

### 5.8.4 Personality Tests

Personality tests are self-reported measures of emotional stability, social attitudes and various traits of character. The result of the test reveals a person's needs, attitudes, motivations and behavioral tendencies. Five factors that build a person's overall personality are:

- a. the relative need for stability
- b. whether a person is an introvert or extrovert
- c. whether a person is innovative or efficiency inclined
- d. whether a person sticks to his idea or accepts others' ideas
- e. whether a person is linear or flexible in achieving his goals

These tests contain questions measuring the five factors which would give an insight into a person's leadership and teamwork skills and personal assertiveness. For example, a salesperson must be an extrovert, flexible and innovative. Nevertheless, personality tests are hardly used due to its low validity and reliability.

### 5.8.5 Interest Tests

Interest tests are tests that compare a person's interest with the interest of successful people in a specific job. If an organization selects people who have the same interest with successful people in the same occupation, it is more likely that the applicants will be more successful (Dessler & Tan 2006, p.135). Although the interest tests can be used as a selection tool, its primary use has been in career planning and guidance.



Figure 5.15 Taking a personality test

### 5.8.6 Achievement Tests

Achievement tests measure what a person has learnt in terms of qualifications, job knowledge, and analytical and cognitive abilities. Achievement tests are also used in employment screening.

### 5.8.7 Polygraph Tests

The polygraph or lie detector records physical changes in a person's body such as changes in blood pressure, respiration and perspiration as the person answers questions. The polygraph operator makes a judgment whether the person is telling the truth or not based on the physiological measurements recorded on paper.

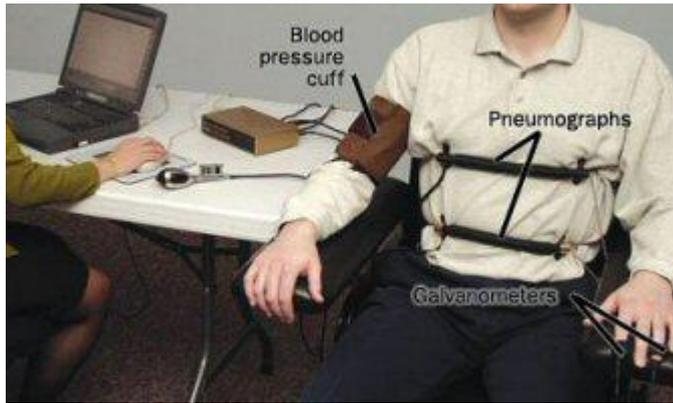


Figure 5.16 Polygraph test

### 5.8.8 Graphology

Graphology or handwriting analysis assesses an applicant's personality, emotional problems and honesty via his handwriting. A trained analyst usually analyzes it.

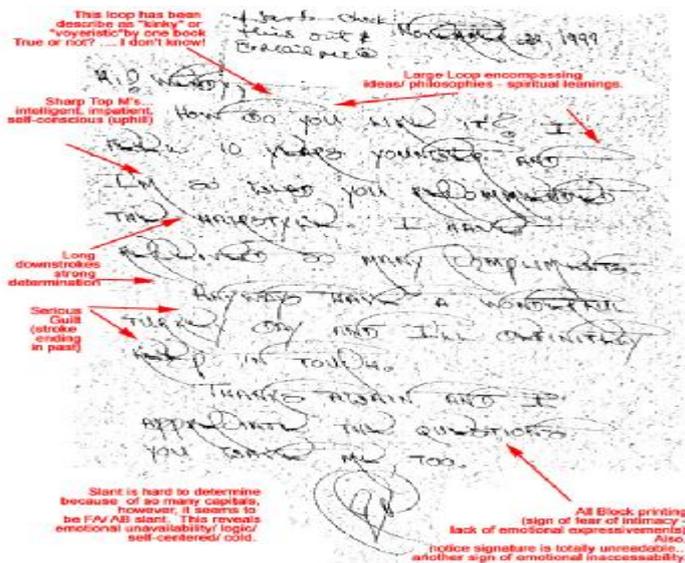


Figure 5.17 Graphology

### **5.8.9 Paper-and-Pencil Honesty Tests**

This test is a psychological test designed to assess the job applicants' tendencies to dishonesty and other forms of counterproductivity. It measures attitudes such as tolerance of others who steal, acceptance of rationalization for theft and admission of theft-related activities (Dessler 2006, p.221).

What happens when employers detect dishonest candidates? Among the actions that they can do are as follows:

- a) Ask blunt questions
- b) Listen so that you can learn as much as possible about the person
- c) Do a credit check. Include a clause in your application form that gives you a right to conduct background checks, including credit checks and motor vehicle reports.
- d) Check all employment and personal references
- e) Use paper-and-pencil honesty tests and psychological tests
- f) Test for drugs. Develop a drug-testing program and give each applicant a copy of the policy
- g) Establish a search-and-seizure policy and conduct searches. Give a copy of the policy to the applicant where it states that all properties are owned by the organization and may be inspected routinely. Applicant must sign and acknowledge receipt and agreement to the policy.

5

### **5.8.10 Work Samples**

Work samples and simulations measure the job performance directly. The examples of this type of tests are as follows:

#### **5.8.10.1 Work Sampling for Employee Selection**

Work sampling consists of getting an applicant to perform some critical tasks or task that forms part of the job as evidenced by the job analysis. The work sampling test, assessment criteria, assessment form and training for the assessors are jointly developed by the line managers, employees and HR personnel.

For example, applicants applying for a position of a lecturer are usually required to present a mock lecture during the selection process. They will be evaluated based on the relevance of the topic, knowledge of the subject, delivery style, use of materials and ability to stimulate discussion and handle questions.

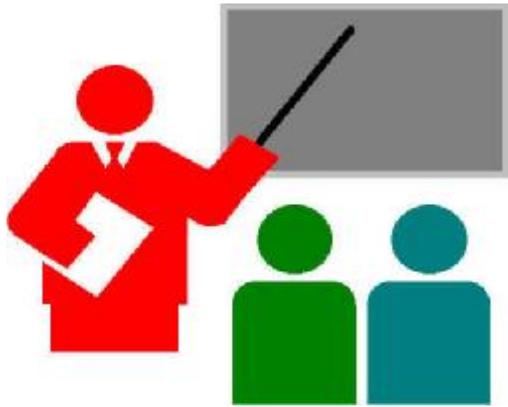


Figure 5.18 Candidate conducting a mock lecture

The advantages and disadvantages of this method are shown in the table below

Advantages	Disadvantages
Better predictor of job performance as applicants find it harder to fake the answers and it is job related	Difficulty in developing good work samples for each job, especially, managerial positions
Minimize discrimination	
Fair to all applicants	

Table 5.3 Advantages and disadvantages of Work Sampling for Employee Selection

### 5.8.10.2 Management Assessment Center

A management assessment centre is a selection technique where approximately ten candidates perform activities similar to those they might encounter in an actual job for two to three days. These centres are commonly used as an internal selection and development tool for managerial positions. The candidates are appraised on their leadership and management potential via the observation of a group of experts (psychologists and practicing managers). The typical stimulated exercises are shown in the following table:

Types of Exercises	Definition	Purposes
The in-basket	Candidates are given reports, memos, telephone messages, letters and other materials for their further action	To evaluate candidates' organizing and prioritizing abilities. The evaluators also review the candidates' actions
Leaderless group discussion	A question is presented to the group. The group is required to provide a decision	To evaluate candidates' interpersonal skills, leadership ability, ability to influence others and degree of acceptance by the group
Management games	Candidates solve realistic	To evaluate candidates'

	problems as members of a simulated company competing in the market place	problem solving, analytical and creative skills
Individual presentations	Candidates are required to deliver an assigned oral presentation	To evaluate candidates' communication skills and persuasiveness
Objective tests	Candidates undertake personality, mental and interests tests	To evaluate candidates' personality and mental ability
Interview	Interview between trainer and candidate	To evaluate candidates' interest, past performances and motivation

**Table 5.4 Simulation Exercises in a Management Assessment Centre**  
 Source: Adapted from Dessler & Tan, 2006

5



**Figure 5.19 Group members discussing on their strategies during the management games**

This is an effective technique for selecting and promoting management candidates but it is very costly and time consuming.

### 5.8.10.3 Miniature Job Training and Evaluation Approach

Applicants receive training and then perform a sample of the job's task. This method assumes that a person who demonstrates what he learns well will also have to ability to learn and perform the job itself.

Although this method tests applicants with actual samples of the job, it is relatively expensive and emphasizes individual instruction during training.

## 5.9 THE EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW

An interview is a procedure to get information from people by asking them questions (Dessler & Tan 2006, p.150). The purpose of an employment interview is to gauge the suitability of the applicant for the job. This is a very important step in the selection process because applicants who reach this stage are survivors. They have already passed the preliminary interview and employment testing.

### 5.9.1 Types of Interviews

Interviews are conducted for various purposes such as employee selection, performance appraisals and exit interviews. However, we will only focus on employee selection interview in this chapter.

### 5.9.2 Structured Versus Unstructured Interview

An unstructured or non-directive interview has no standard format. The interviewer usually asks probing, open-ended questions and encourages the interviewee to talk. This means that applicants are asked different questions although they apply for the same position. Thus, there is no guide for scoring answers.

A structured or directive interview has a standardized set of job-related questions as well as acceptable answers prepared in advance and serves as a guide when evaluating applicants' answers. A structured job interview comprises four types of questions i.e. situational, job-knowledge, job sample simulation and worker requirements questions. This increases consistency across candidates, enhances job relatedness and reduces biases (Dessler & Tan 2006, p.153).



**APPLICANT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

To the interviewer: This Applicant Interview Guide is intended to assist in employee selection and placement. If it is used for all applicants for a position, it will help you to compare them, and it will provide more objective information than you will obtain from unstructured interviews.

Because this is a general guide, all of the items may not apply in every instance. Skip those that are not applicable and add questions appropriate to the specific position. Space for additional questions will be found at the end of the form.

Federal law prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, and in most instances, age. The law of most states also bans some or all of the above types of discrimination in employment, as well as discrimination based on marital status or ancestry. Interviewers should take care to avoid any questions that suggest that an employment decision will be made on the basis of any such factors.

**Job Interest**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position applied for \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the job [position] involves? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want the job [position]? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you qualified for it? \_\_\_\_\_

What would your salary requirements be? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you know about our company? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want to work for us? \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Work Status**

Are you now employed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If not, how long have you been unemployed? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you unemployed? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are working, why are you applying for this position? \_\_\_\_\_

When would you be available to start work with us? \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience**

Start with the applicant's current or last position and work back. All periods of time should be accounted for. Go back at least 12 years, depending upon the applicant's age. Military service should be treated as a job.

Current or last employer \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of employment from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Current or last job title \_\_\_\_\_

What are [were] your duties? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you held the same job throughout your employment with that company? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If not, describe the various jobs you have had with that employer, how long you held each of them, and the main duties of each. \_\_\_\_\_

What was your starting salary? \_\_\_\_\_ What are you earning now? \_\_\_\_\_ Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your last or current supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like most about that job? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like least about it? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you thinking of leaving? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you leaving right now? \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's comments or observations \_\_\_\_\_

(continued)

What did you do before you took your last job? \_\_\_\_\_

Where were you employed? \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Job title \_\_\_\_\_

Duties \_\_\_\_\_

Did you hold the same job throughout your employment with that company? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If not, describe the jobs you held, when you held them, and the duties of each. \_\_\_\_\_

What was your starting salary? \_\_\_\_\_ What was your final salary? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of your last supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

May we contact that company? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like most about that job? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like least about that job? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you leave that job? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you consider working there again? \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: If there is any gap between the various periods of employment, the applicant should be asked about them. \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's comments or observations \_\_\_\_\_

What did you do prior to the job with that company? \_\_\_\_\_

What other jobs or experience have you had? Describe them briefly and explain the general duties of each. \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been unemployed at any time in the last five years? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ What efforts did you make to find work? \_\_\_\_\_

What other experience or training do you have that would help qualify you for the job applied for? Explain how and where you obtained this experience or training: \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational Background**

What education or training do you have that would help you in the job for which you have applied? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any formal education you have had. [Interviewer may substitute technical training, if relevant.] \_\_\_\_\_

**Off-Job Activities**

What do you do in your off hours? Part-time job \_\_\_\_\_ Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ Spectator sports \_\_\_\_\_ Clubs \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer's Specific Questions**

Interviewer: Add any questions to the particular job for which you are interviewing, leaving space for brief answers. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Be careful to avoid questions which may be viewed as discriminatory.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal**

Would you be willing to relocate? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to travel? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(continued)

Figure 5.20 Example of Structured Interview Guide

### 5.9.3 Types of Questions Used in an Interview

Before we proceed to the contents of an interview, it is important to note that there are three ways in phrasing a question as shown below:

- a) **Closed questions** refer to questions that have only a yes or no response.  
*Example: Did you work with a computer at ABC Company Limited?*
- b) **Leading questions** imply that a yes response is expected from the candidate. This type of questions could destroy a candidate's confidence if his response is negative.  
*Example: You have had work experience, haven't you?*
- c) **Open-ended questions** cannot be answered with a one-word answer. These questions should be used in an interview as it gives an opportunity for the candidates to express themselves which may lead to more meaningful responses.  
*Example: Tell me about your experience working with a college.*

## 5

### 5.9.4 Contents of an Interview

The content or focus of questions can determine the classification of interviews. The classification of interviews is as follows:

#### 5.9.4.1 Situational Interview

In situational interview, the interviewers will ask the interviewee situational questions related to the job. The interviewees will describe how they would handle the situation.

*Example: Suppose a co-worker was not following standard work procedures. The co-worker was more experienced than you and claimed the new procedure was better. Would you use the new procedure?*

#### 5.9.4.2 Behavioral Interview

The behavioral interview is a structured interview where applicants are asked to relate actual incidents from their past relevant to the target job. The interviewers assume that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior (Noe & Mondy 2005, p.184).

*Example: Can you provide an example of a specific instance where you developed a sales presentation that was highly effective?*

#### 5.9.4.3 Job-related Interview

This interview comprises a series of job-related questions that focus on relevant past job-related behaviors. Interviewers will draw a conclusion about the applicant via their answers.

*Example: What factors would you consider when developing a television advertising campaign?*

#### 5.9.4.4 Stress Interview

A stress interview is an interview where the interviewer purposely creates stress for the candidate to gauge how the applicant reacts in certain types of situations. The interviewer

will ask rude questions in order to discover sensitive applicants. However, this type of interview may make applicants lose interest in the organization.

### 5.9.5 Administering the Interview

Interviews can be conducted in many forms such as one-to-one interview, sequential interviews, and panel of interview, mass interview, telephone interviews and computerized interviews. Each form of interview is explained briefly below:

#### 5.9.5.1 One-to-one Interview

The interviewer asks a question and the applicant answers them orally.



Figure 5.21 One-to-one Interview

#### 5.9.5.2 Sequential or Serial Interviews

The interviewee goes for a series of interviews conducted by different people before a decision is made. In an unstructured sequential interview, each interviewer may ask different questions and vice-versa for a structured sequential interview.



Figure 5.22 Serial Interview

### 5.9.5.3 Panel or Board Interview

A group of interviewers interview a candidate in one or more sessions. Panel interviews allow the interviewers to ask follow-up questions based on the candidate's answers which may lead to better hiring decisions. However, this method could be more stressful for the candidate.



Figure 5.23 Panel Interview

5

### 5.9.5.4 Mass Interview

A panel interviews several candidates at one time. Problems are posed to the candidates and the panel will analyze the leadership and initiative skills of the candidates by watching which candidate takes the lead in giving an answer.

### 5.9.5.5 Realistic Job Previews

Some organizations provide a realistic job preview to applicants before any offers are made. It provides information about the job in an unbiased manner such as the job duties as well as the required behavior to fit into the organization and also the company policies and procedures. The purpose of this approach is to develop an accurate perception about the job and organization in the minds of the applicants and minimize the number of unqualified candidates. Apart from that, the organization would have the reputation of being an up-front and ethical employer.



Figure 5.24 Realistic Job Previews

### 5.9.6 Common Interviewing Mistakes

Although interviews are used widely in employee selection, it is low in validity due to several common interviewing mistakes. The mistakes are as follows:

### 5.9.6.1 First Impression

Some interviewers make up their minds about a candidate in the first five minutes and then do not change their assessment of the person's suitability. Therefore, first impressions are especially damaging when the information about the candidate is negative.



Hmm, firm handshake, pleasant smile and speaks well. This is a good candidate and we should not lose her

Figure 5.25 Manager making hiring decision within 5 minutes

### 5.9.6.2 Poor Job Knowledge

If the interviewer does not have sufficient knowledge about the job and traits needed for the job, he could make poor decisions. His decisions would be based on a stereotype of what represents a “good” applicant.

### 5.9.6.3 Candidate-Order-Error or Contrast Error

The order in which applicants are interviewed often influences evaluations. The candidates at interviews may be rated higher if they were preceded by a poor candidate and vice-versa. This means some managers may evaluate an “average” applicant less favourably after interviewing several “good” applicants.

### 5.9.6.4 Pressure to Hire

If there is pressure to hire employees quickly, interviewers may lower their expectations as they need the positions to be filled quickly.

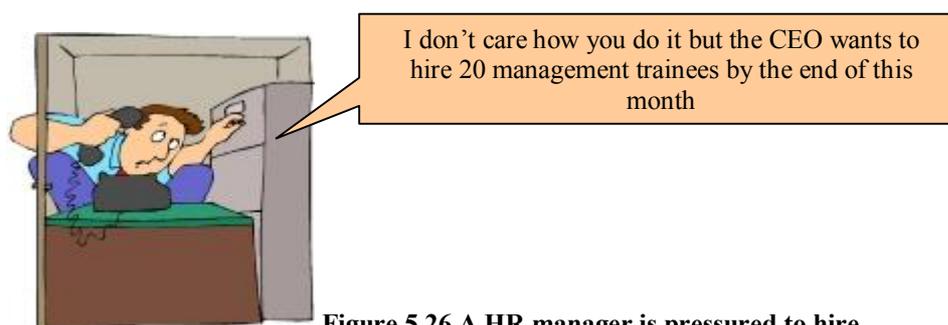


Figure 5.26 A HR manager is pressured to hire

### 5.9.6.5 Impression of Non-Verbal Behavior

Interviewers may also be influenced by the applicants’ non-verbal behavior such as a firm handshake and very confident manner. Some interviewers draw conclusions about an applicant’s personality from their non-verbal behaviors during the interview.

### 5.9.6.6 Effect of Personal Characteristics

Interviews should not be influenced by the applicant’s personal characteristics such as attractiveness, race, gender or the way they dress. Some interviewers tend to hire people who display the same characteristics as them.

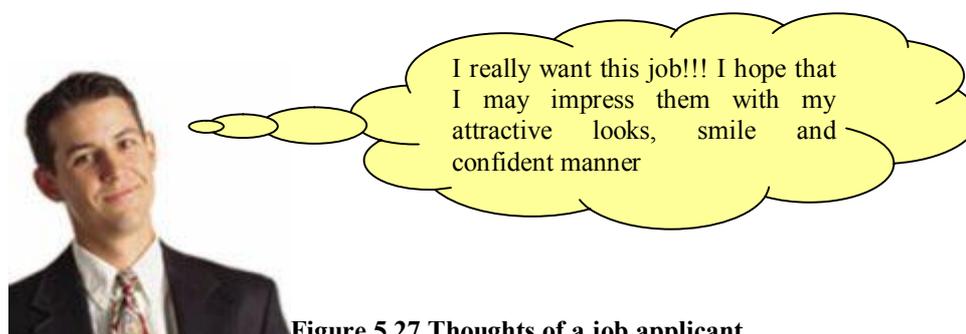


Figure 5.27 Thoughts of a job applicant

For example, an applicant who dresses casually may really perform well in customer servicing but interviewers might select a well-dressed applicant for the job.

### 5.9.6.7 Interviewer Behavior

An interviewer's behavior will have an impact on an interviewee's performance. Some of the behavior plays a role in any interview. Some of the negative behaviors of the interviewer are as follows:

- a) Allowing the interview to be dominated either by the interviewer or the applicant.
- b) The interviewer may forget the interview's content within minutes after its conclusion
- c) The interviewer gives subtle cues such as a smile and nod to telegraph the correct answer
- d) The interviewer has favorable pre-interview impressions of the applicant
- e) The interviewer acts as a psychologist to identify inconsistencies and to probe hidden meanings in everything the applicants say (Dessler 2006, p.249).

Although interviews have low reliability and validity, these weaknesses can be minimized if the interviews are structured and limited to situational and job knowledge questions.

## 5.9.7 Conducting an Effective Interview

Conducting an effective interview can minimize the common interviewing mistakes. The guidelines to conducting an effective interview are as follows:

5

### 5.9.7.1 Structure Your Interview

This means that the interviewer needs to ask more consistent and job-relevant questions such as:

- a) Ask questions on actual job duties
- b) Use job knowledge, situational or behaviorally oriented questions. Evaluation of the interviewee's on objective criteria
- c) Provide training to interviewers on the techniques of interviewing
- d) All candidates are given the same set of questions
- e) Use rating scales to rate answers. Provide a range of possible ideal answers and a score for each question
- f) Use multiple interviews or panel interviews
- g) Use a structured interview form
- h) Control the interview by limiting the interviewers' follow-up questions, using a larger number of questions and prohibiting questions from candidates until after the interview (Champion 1997, cited from Dessler & Tan 2006, p.160)
- i) Take brief notes during the interview to overcome the recency effect. Recency effect happens when the interviewer puts too much weight on the last few minutes of the interview.

**Dessler & Tan 2006, p.159**

Figure 5.28 Examples of Questions that Provide Structure

### 5.9.7.2 Prepare for the Interview

The interview should be conducted in a room with no interruptions. An interviewer should review the job description and job specification so that he or she understands the job requirements, review the candidate's application and note down issues that need further clarification from the candidate and prepare the interview questions. The interview questions

should cover areas such knowledge and experience, motivation, intellectual capacity and personality qualities that are relevant to the job.

### 5.9.7.3 Establish Rapport

The interviewer should establish a friendly relationship with the interviewee at the start of the interview via a pleasant greeting followed by non-controversial questions like the weather. If there is no rapport between both parties, it would be difficult to assess the candidate's capabilities and obtain information.



Figure 5.29 Establishing rapport with job applicant

5

### 5.9.7.4 Ask Questions

The interviewer should follow his lists of questions. Some of the rules in asking questions are as follows:

- a) Don't ask closed ended questions
- b) Do not interrupt while the candidate is answering and express your views and feelings into the mind of the candidate
- c) Don't monopolize the interview or let the applicant dominate the interview
- d) Ask open-ended questions
- e) Draw out the applicant's opinions and feelings by repeating their last comments as a question
- f) Ask for specific examples

### 5.9.7.5 Close the Interview

At the close of the interview, allow some time for the candidate to ask any questions pertaining to the job and organization. The interviewer should thank the interviewee for attending and inform him that the organization will notify him soon.



Figure 5.30 Closing the interview

### 5.9.7.6 Review the Interview

The interviewer must take down notes during the interview. Therefore, review the notes shortly after the interview as it would assist in minimizing quick judgments.

### 5.9.7.7 Evaluate the Interviewing Process

Compare the actual job performance of successful applicants to their interview scores to measure the effectiveness of the interviewing process periodically. The results of this evaluation would assist the organization in gauging the effectiveness of individual interviewers and the interviewing program.

Dessler & Tan 2006, p.164

Figure 5.31 Example of Interview Evaluation Form

## 5.10 MAKING THE FINAL DECISION

When an organization needs to select an applicant for the job, it would usually have a few applicants to choose from. The decision would be based on the test and interview scores and most importantly whether there is any person-organization fit. The responsibilities of making the final decision varies in organizations i.e. either the HR Manager or line managers. However, an alternative approach is to involve peers especially, for upper-level managers and professional employees.

## 5.11 CONDITIONAL JOB OFFERS

A successful applicant would receive a conditional job offer subject to passing the medical examination, a good feedback from the background investigation and reference check and the eligibility to work in Malaysia for foreign workers. Once, the conditions are fulfilled, the offer becomes permanent.

<b>Executive Job Offer Letter Sample</b>	
Date	
Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Dear _____:	
It is my pleasure to extend the following offer of employment to you on behalf of (your company name). This offer is contingent upon your passing our mandatory drug screen, our receipt of your college transcripts, and (any other contingencies you may wish to state).	
<b>Title:</b>	_____
<b>Reporting Relationship:</b>	
The position will report to (Name and Title):	_____
<b>Job Description and Goals or Objectives</b> are attached.	

**Base Salary:**

Will be paid a monthly salary of RM \_\_\_\_\_, which is equivalent to RM \_\_\_\_\_ on an annual basis, and subject to deductions for taxes and other withholdings as required by law or the policies of the company.

**Benefits:**

The current, standard company health, life, disability and dental insurance coverage are generally supplied per company policy. Eligibility for other benefits, and tuition reimbursement, will generally take place per company policy. Employee contribution to payment for benefit plans is determined annually.

**Car Allowance**

RM500.00 per month car allowance will generally be provided.

**Severance Pay**

If the executive is let go by the company for any reason other than cause (ie. violence, theft, fraudulent activities, harassment, etc.), the company will pay the executive one month salary. Payment is due in a lump sum upon termination.

**Annual leave and Personal Emergency Time Off:** Annual leave is accrued at 14 days on an annual basis. Personal emergency days are generally accrued per company policy.

**Phone/Travel Allowance:**

Normal and reasonable expenses will be reimbursed on a monthly basis per company policy and upon completion of the appropriate expense request form.

**Start Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your employment with (Company Name) is at-will and either party can terminate the relationship at any time with or without cause and with or without notice.

If you are in agreement with the above outline, please sign below. This offer is in effect for (generally, five business days).

**Signatures:**

\_\_\_\_\_

(For the Company: Name)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

(Candidate's Name)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Figure 5.32 Example of conditional job offers

### 5.11.1 Background Investigation and Reference Check

A background investigation, personal reference check or professional reference check is conducted on potential employees to verify the information on the accuracy of the information in the application form. Data can be obtained from various sources such as previous employers, business associates, academic institutions and credit bureau. The main reason for conducting these investigations is to hire better employees. Applicants should also sign a certified statement stating that they allow the employers to conduct checks on them.

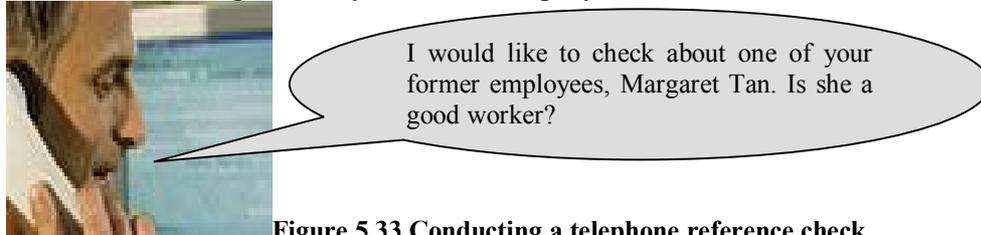


Figure 5.33 Conducting a telephone reference check

Background and reference checks can be conducted via the telephone, written references and background reports. Some organizations indicate the areas that they like feedback on skills and personal qualities. They might also supply a referee with documents or checklists of competencies and behaviors and a covering letter explaining their request. This shows their courtesy to referees and may contribute to receiving a useful response.

However, it should be noted that personal reference checks may not represent the true picture of the applicant as most references provided by the applicant will definitely give favourable statements. Therefore, professional reference checks and background investigations are better selection methods.

### 5.11.2 Medical Examination

The medical examination is usually required for the applicant who receives the job offer. The job offer becomes valid if the applicant passes the medical examination. The reasons of the medical examination are to find out:

- a) whether the applicant is fit for the job
- b) his eligibility for group life, health and disability insurance
- c) reduce absenteeism and accidents
- d) detect diseases that may be unknown to the applicant



Figure 5.34 Medical examination

### 5.11.3 Complying with Immigration Law

The employment of foreign workers is subjected to the compliance of the Immigration Laws in each country. These workers must have special work permits or employment passes before commencing their work. Workers who do not have the necessary documents may be

imprisoned and deported to their country of origin and the organization will incur a substantial amount of penalty.

## 5.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

1. Selection is the process of choosing the best individual for a position in an organization from a group of applicants.
2. Environmental factors that influence the selection process are other HR functions, legal considerations, types of organization, speed of decision making, probation period, organization hierarchy and applicant pool.
3. The selection processes comprises completing the application form, conducting preliminary interview, employment testing, the employment interview, making the final decision, issuing the conditional job offer, conducting background investigation and reference check, medical examination and permanent job offer.
4. The HR personnel will determine whether the applicant's experiences, abilities and skills match the requirements for the position when reviewing application letters and resumes.
5. The preliminary interview is conducted to eliminate applicants who are unqualified and uninterested. Interviews can be conducted via face-to-face, computer, telephone or video-taped.
6. An organization needs to ensure that all its employment tests must possess an acceptable level of reliability and validity. Reliability means consistency of the test. Validity tells us whether the test is measuring what it is supposed to measure. There are two types of validity i.e. criterion validity and content validity.
7. For a selection test to be useful, scores should be predictably related to performance on the job; you must validate the test.  
This requires five steps:
  - i. analyze the job
  - ii. choose your tests
  - iii. administer the test
  - iv. relate test scores and criteria
  - v. cross-validate and re-validate the test.
8. There are many types of employment tests in use such as tests of mental abilities, tests of physical abilities, job knowledge tests, personality tests, interest tests, achievement tests, polygraph tests, pencil-and-paper honesty tests and work sampling.
9. The purpose of the employment interview is to select the most suitable candidate. There are several types of interviews – situational, structured, unstructured, sequential, panel, stress, appraisal and exit interviews. We can classify interviews according to its content, structure and method of administration.
10. The common mistakes made during interviews are making premature decisions, letting unfavorable information predominate, not knowing the requirements of the job, being pressured to hire, the candidate-order effect and sending visual cues to telegraph enthusiasm.
11. The five steps in the interview are: plan, establish rapport, question the candidates, close the interview and review the data.
12. Interviewers need to use a structured guide, know the requirements of the job, focus on traits you can more accurately evaluate, let the interviewee do most of the talking and delay your decision until after the interview.

13. Once final decisions have been made, employers will issue a conditional job offer to the applicant subject to a favorable result from the medical examination and background investigation and reference check.

### 5.13 CASE STUDY – MURRAY CLEANING CENTRE

Emily and her father, Murray have an easy and yet difficult job when it comes to screening job applicants. It is easy because for two important jobs – the people who actually do the pressing and those who do the cleaning spotting – the applicants are easily screened with about 20 minutes of on-the-job testing. As Jen puts it, “applicants either know how to press clothes fast enough or how to use cleaning chemicals and machines, or they don’t. We find out very quickly by just trying them out on the job.”

The more difficult problem is employee turnover. Emily and her father need to implement practices that will reduce the rate of employee turnover. If there is a way to do this through the use of employee testing and screening techniques, Emily would like to know about it.

Upon further research, it was noted that the company has no organized approach to interviewing job candidates. Managers who do most of the hiring ask their favourite questions all the time and admitted that there is room for improvement in their interview performance.

Emily is sure that the lack of formal interviewing practices, procedures and training has caused some of the employee turnover and theft problems. Therefore, she wants to do something to improve this important area. This is because much of the management time and money are now being wasted by the never-ending need to recruit and hire new employees.

#### Questions

1. What screening techniques can the company use to screen out turnover-prone applicant?
2. What can Emily do to improve her employee interviewing practices? Should she develop interview forms that list questions for management and non-management jobs? And if so, what form should these take and what questions to include? Should she introduce a computer-based interview approach? If the answer is yes, what and how can she do it?
3. If she implements a training program for her managers, what should be the content of the interview training program?
4. What kind of procedure should be set up to handle reference calls about employees when they apply for jobs in the company?

## 5.14 EXERCISES

### Answer the following questions

1. Hiring workers who have criminal backgrounds without proper safeguards is considered \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) improper hiring
  - b) negligent hiring
  - c) appropriate depending upon the job
  - d) negligent intent
  - e) unwise but not illegal
2. Which of the following is an example of a reliable test?
  - a) one that yields consistent scores when a person takes two alternate forms of the test
  - b) one that yields one score on a test and a different, but better score on the same test taken on a different occasion
  - c) one that yields the same score from two different people taking the test on the same occasion
  - d) one that yields different scores from two different people taking the test on different occasions
  - e) one that includes questions that are not repetitive in any way
3. Which of the following tasks is not part of demonstrating content validity?
  - a) demonstrating that the tasks a person performs on the test are representative of the tasks performed on the job
  - b) demonstrating that the tasks on the test are a random sample of tasks performed on the job
  - c) demonstrating the conditions under which the person takes the test resemble the work situation
  - d) demonstrating that the scores on the test are a good predictor of criterion like job performance
  - e) all of the above are part of demonstrating content validity
4. All of the following are considered “pink collar” jobs except
  - a) waitress
  - b) secretary
  - c) nursing
  - d) teaching
  - e) psychologist
5. Jack is being tested on static strength, dynamic strength, body coordination and stamina during the selection period at UPS. UPS is using \_\_\_\_\_ tests.
  - a) aptitude
  - b) personality
  - c) motor and physical abilities
  - d) achievement
  - e) comprehensive

6. The Big Five personality dimensions include all of the following except
  - a) neuroticism
  - b) optimism
  - c) extraversion
  - d) conscientiousness
  - e) agreeableness
  
7. Mike Simmons has recently applied for a position in pharmaceutical sales. Which personality characteristic is most predictive of Mike's likelihood of success in a sales position?
  - a) neuroticism
  - b) extraversion
  - c) conscientiousness
  - d) agreeableness
  - e) openness to experience
  
8. Which personality characteristic refers to the tendency for one to be trusting, compliant, caring and gentle?
  - a) neuroticism
  - b) extraversion
  - c) conscientiousness
  - d) agreeableness
  - e) openness to experience
  
9. Which of the following is an advantage of using management assessment centres in the selection process?
  - a) cost of development
  - b) time required to administer and assess results
  - c) use of managers as assessors
  - d) peer evaluations of candidates
  - e) use psychologists as performance assessors
  
10. Employers may conduct background investigations and reference checks to verify a candidates' \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) age
  - b) marital status
  - c) identification
  - d) ethnic background
  - e) all of the above
  
11. Which selection tool is considered the least useful by HR managers?
  - a) interview
  - b) reference letters
  - c) application form
  - d) academic record
  - e) psychological tests

12. What type of screening device is designed to measure attitudes regarding tolerance of others who steal and acceptance of rationalizations for theft?
- personality tests
  - interest inventories
  - paper-and-pencil honesty tests
  - graphology
  - handwriting analysis
13. The \_\_\_\_\_ is considered by many to be the most important screening tool.
- telephone reference
  - reference letter
  - selection interview
  - management assessment centre
  - work sampling techniques
14. Which of the following statements is representative of what might be asked in a behavioral interview?
- “Tell me about a time you showed leadership in a difficult situation.”
  - “We are concerned with employee pilferage. As a manager here, how would you go about discouraging this behavior?”
  - “Suppose you were confronted with an angry customer who threatened to sue the company. What would you do?”
  - “Employees in this division are frequently under a great deal of stress. How do you think you would handle the stress of the position?”
  - “In this position, you would have the responsibility of hiring and firing subordinates. Imagine that you have to fire an employee who is consistently absent because he cares for an elderly parent. Tell me how you would handle this situation.”
15. What type of interview might include the following statement? “Imagine that you have just been assigned the task of winning the business of our competition’s biggest client. How would you proceed?”
- situational
  - behavioral
  - stress
  - puzzle
  - directive
16. A job-related interview is, by definition, as type \_\_\_\_\_ interview.
- structured
  - behavioral
  - situational
  - unstructured
  - stress

17. Which of the following statements might be made by an interviewer in a stress interview?
- “ I see you’ve changed jobs four times in the last two years. I’ve always felt that frequent job changes reflect irresponsible and immature behaviour.”
  - “Which courses did you like best in business school?”
  - “Mike and Todd have \$21 between them. Mike has \$20 more than Todd has. How much does Mike have and how much does Todd have?”
  - “Why are you leaving your current position?”
  - “Can you tell me about a time in the past when you used leadership skills to handle a difficult situation?”
18. Which of the following is an example of a puzzle question?
- “I see you’ve changed jobs four times in the last two years. I’ve always felt that frequent job changes reflect irresponsible and immature behavior.”
  - “Which courses did you like best in business school?”
  - “Mike and Todd have \$21 between them. Mike has \$20 more than Todd has. How much does Mike have and how much does Todd have?”
  - “Why are you leaving your current position?”
  - “Can you tell me about a time in the past when you used leadership skills to handle a difficult situation?”
19. Kevin is interviewing for a position as a public relations specialist in a communication firm. He first meets with the HR manager. Afterwards, he meets with the person would be his direct supervisor. Finally, he meets with the company president. Kevin is experiencing a \_\_\_\_\_ interview.
- board
  - panel
  - sequential
  - structured
  - nondirective
20. Jill is interviewing six candidates for a position as an entry-level management trainee. The first two candidates were judged unfavorable. The third candidate was just average, but Jill was so pleased to find an acceptable candidate after the first two interviews that she assigned a better rating to candidate 3. This is an example of a \_\_\_\_\_ .
- context error
  - contrast error
  - order effect
  - recency error
  - primary effect
21. Which question below is an example of a background question?
- “Suppose you were giving a sales presentation and a difficult technical question arose that you could not answer. What would you do?”
  - “Based on your past experience, what is the most significant action you have ever taken to help a co-worker?”
  - “What steps would you follow to conduct a brainstorming session with a group of employees on safety?”
  - “What factors should one consider when developing a television advertising campaign?”
  - “What experience have you had with direct point-of-purchase sales?”

22. Interview questions designed to assess such things as complexity of tasks the person has performed seek to probe the candidate's \_\_\_\_\_ factor.
- a) motivation
  - b) intellectual
  - c) personality
  - d) knowledge
  - e) experience
23. There are several methods for measuring job performance directly. List and explain three such methods.
24. How do nonverbal behaviors and impression management affect interviewer ratings of candidates?
25. There are four specific factors that should be probed in an interview. List the four factors and explain each.