

# Chapter 5

## Selection: The Crux of IT HR Management

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### ABSTRACT

*When studying job analysis, recruitment, training, and even retention in IT HR management, an oft-overlooked element of the picture is selection. This chapter acknowledges and models the interplay among these components and then focuses on selection. The general steps in designing an effective selection process are reviewed, and a particularly interesting and useful selection technique is examined: critical incidents (or CI). Data from a CI analysis of the job of IT project manager are used to illustrate how a CI study is conducted and how the output from CI can be used to improve a selection process, as well as inform job analysis and training. The chapter concludes by identifying ways that the examination of selection can extend IT HR research and, ultimately, improve the effectiveness of IT HR management.*

### INTRODUCTION

You have conducted a thorough job analysis that resulted in an accurate statement of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) needed for a particular IT position. You designed and implemented a stellar recruitment strategy, so that you have a quality pool of applicants possessing the vital KSAOs. You have effective, targeted

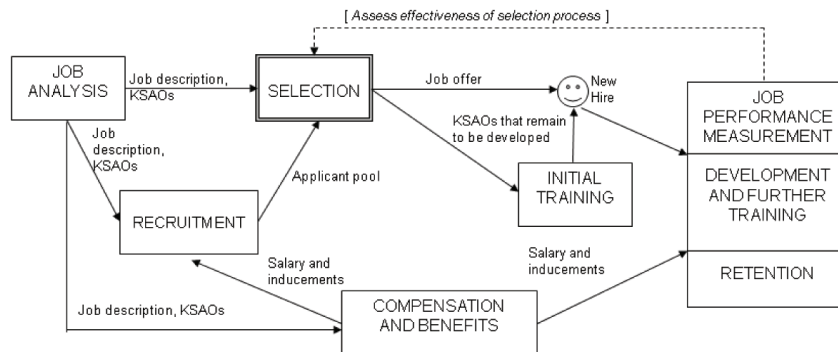
initial training ready to be deployed. *But if you are unable to identify the best person for the job from the applicant pool, all is for naught.* If selection methods are inadequate or flawed, you are unlikely to identify the individual best qualified on the key KSAOs and, when that happens, you are likely to spend more time on training and coaching the newly placed individual, and on managing job performance issues.

In the research and discussion of job analysis, recruitment, training, retention and other aspects

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## Selection

Figure 1. Selection in HR management



of IT HR management, limited attention has been given to a key element that connects them all: selection. By definition, selection is the process of collecting and evaluating information about individuals for the purpose of extending a job offer. This can be an initial job offer to join an organization in a specific position or an internal offer for promotion or lateral move. Regardless, the resulting selection decision is a pivotal point for the hiring organization. It is a “crossroads” decision, in that a road is chosen and other roads are left behind. In Jim Collins’ terminology, you have placed an individual in a seat on your company bus (Collins, 2001).

An understanding of the relationships among components of HR management is necessary for researchers to formulate studies that acknowledge the role and, perhaps most of all, effects of selection. This same understanding can help practitioners optimize the outcomes of IT HR management efforts. Given its importance and the scant IT HR literature on the topic to date, selection is the focus of this chapter.

First, the interplay among selection and other components of HR management is acknowledged and modeled. The general steps in developing a selection process are reviewed, followed by an examination of common assessment devices. This is accompanied by a demonstration of how assessment devices can be applied to a selection process for an IT job.

To ensure a grounded and practical understanding of selection, one particularly useful HR technique is discussed in detail: the critical incident (CI) technique. Data from a CI analysis of the job of IT project manager are examined to illustrate how a CI study is conducted and how the output from CI can be used to improve a selection process, as well as inform other components of IT HR. Finally, suggestions are presented for how to extend IT HR research by considering selection methods, and important recommendations to IT practitioners are provided.

## THE ROLE OF SELECTION IN IT HR MANAGEMENT

Practitioners and researchers, particularly those not schooled in HR, may have forgotten or may not be aware of the pivotal role of selection in HR management. Figure 1 models the relationship of selection to other key elements of HR management.

Job analysis is the gathering of information about a job in an organization (Fine & Cronshaw, 1999), typically culminating in a formal job description with identification of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics necessary to perform the job.

This information contributes to recruitment, compensation, and selection. Job analysis outputs

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