

Technical Affairs

By Mike Aamodt, Associate Editor

Well I'm back from my semester-long sabbatical and this column is my first piece of work for 2004. This month's column contains an answer to an ACN reader's question about profile matching as well as another attempt at HR humor. If you have a technical question you want answered or a piece of HR humor you want published, please submit it via email (maamodt@radford.edu).

Another Strike Against Profile Matching

In a previous *Technical Affairs* column (www.ipmaac.org/acn/dec96/techaff.html), a reader submitted a question about the use of profile matching, and my response was a resounding, "Don't use it." In the past few months I received a question about profile matching from an ACN reader as well as one from a former student, so I thought it might be time to revisit the issue.

Profile matching is typically conducted by administering a personality test to a group of high performers and then creating a personality profile of the "ideal employee." The personality profiles of applicants are compared to this ideal profile and applicants whose profiles are closest to the ideal are then hired. The idea behind profile matching is that employees who were attracted to a job and an organization in the first place, survived the hiring process, liked the organization enough to have accepted the job and not quit, and who have received high performance ratings have a personality that is "ideal" for the job and the organization.

Though profile matching is most commonly used for selection purposes, a former student recently contacted me when his company was considering using profile matching to determine training needs for their supervisors. His company had been contacted by a consulting firm who would administer a personality test to supervisors and compare the profile of each supervisor to norms generated by thousands of supervisors at other locations. Supervisors whose profiles did not match the "normal profile" would be targeted either for training or for dismissal. I asked my former student if this personality test had been validated, and his response was, "No." I then asked what type of training they would conduct for supervisors with the wrong personality, and his response was, "We hadn't thought of that." Rather than using profile matching, I suggested that a better way to determine training needs might be to use performance appraisal data, surveys, and a battery of skill tests.

The December, 1996 *Technical Affairs* column concluded that profile matching is not a good idea. As stated in that column, the goal of a job analysis is to identify the tasks performed by incumbents, the conditions under which those tasks are performed, and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) needed to perform the tasks under the conditions identified. A "profile analysis" does none of these three things. Instead, such an analysis merely identifies the typical person who is either attracted to a particular job or is hired by a particular organization. In the December, 1996 column I used the police profile on the MMPI as an example of why profile matching doesn't make sense.

A meta-analysis I conducted on the validity of personality tests in law enforcement selection clearly shows that successful police officers have elevated scores on the K, Pd, and Ma scales of the MMPI (by the way, this profile does not occur with the MMPI-2). Taken by itself, this "profile analysis" would suggest that we should hire applicants who match this profile: that is, defensive, rebellious, and highly energetic. However, the meta-analysis indicates that unsuccessful police officers have this same profile, as do police applicants in general. Furthermore, as shown in Table 1 (next page), the meta-analysis indicates that there is no significant relationship between scores on these scales and supervisor ratings of police performance. In other words, there is a definite "police profile," but this profile is not at all related to performance.

My meta-analysis on the validity of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) in law enforcement selection provides another example of why profile matching is not a good approach. As you can see in Table 2 (next page), the CPI scales with the highest mean scores are not the scales with the highest validity coefficients. In fact, the scale with the highest validity (Tolerance) has one of the

(continued on next page)

Table 1

MMPI Scale	MMPI Means			MMPI Validity		
	K	N	Mean	K	N	Correlation
K	96	15,566	59.6	26	3,519	.04
Pd	105	16,464	55.9	24	3,273	-.08
Ma	103	15,688	55.0	24	3,204	-.09
Hy	101	15,529	53.2	24	3,222	.02
L	96	15,501	53.0	25	3,279	-.03
Mf	97	15,368	51.6	21	2,768	-.06
Sc	103	15,873	51.4	22	2,585	-.09
Pt	102	15,619	50.9	22	2,585	-.07
D	102	15,848	50.2	23	2,715	-.06
Pa	102	15,848	50.0	27	3,314	-.01
Hs	102	15,619	49.6	24	2,663	-.02
F	101	16,554	48.2	23	3,304	-.09
Si	100	15,268	44.9	23	2,861	-.01

Note: K= number of studies in the meta-analysis and N= the number of police officers in the studies.

lower mean scores and one of the scales with the lowest validity (Dominance) has the highest mean score.

What do we conclude from these two examples? A quick and dirty “profile analysis” will not substitute for a professional job analysis and validation study. Profiles can be useful in understanding the skills and personalities of a particular field or organization. Though this knowledge probably will not help in selecting future employees, it might prove useful in predicting the success and acceptance of certain organization development interventions. That is, if an organization’s profile indicates that its typical employee is low on flexibility, more effort may need to be spent when introducing change than an organization with a profile of high-flexibility employees.—ACN

Table 2

CPI Scale	CPI Means			CPI Validity (performance ratings)		
	K	N	Mean	K	N	r
Dominance	31	3,373	57.4	14	1,117	.05
Ach via conformity	33	3,397	57.3	15	1,261	.17
Psych mindedness	31	3,295	56.8	13	1,072	.12
Self-acceptance	30	3,285	56.2	15	1,166	.01
Social presence	30	3,285	55.9	13	1,072	.06
Ach via independence	31	3,295	55.9	15	1,261	.12
Good impression	33	3,397	55.4	13	1,072	.10
Communitality	33	3,397	55.2	16	1,186	.11
Self-confidence	33	3,397	54.8	15	1,187	.16
Sociability	28	3,101	54.4	14	1,117	.03
Well being	33	3,477	54.4	16	1,256	.15
Intellectual efficiency	31	3,295	53.4	13	1,072	.14
Socialization	30	3,285	53.3	14	1,121	.10
Tolerance	33	3,397	52.9	15	1,187	.20
Capacity for status	33	3,475	52.5	13	1,072	.06
Responsibility	33	3,477	50.6	17	1,400	.12
Flexibility	30	3,205	50.6	14	1,102	.05
Femininity	30	3,205	46.7	14	1,102	.09

HR Humor

Here are some mixed-metaphors and dumb sayings reportedly said by actual managers.

"I'll deal with that road when we cross it."

"We're cooking on all cylinders now."

"Don't act like the entire floor is falling out!"

"He found himself where he wasn't at."

"I'm in a roll right now."

"Number than a pounded hake."

"It's a pretty open and dry case."

"Right in the dead of Summer..."

"We need to have our ducks in a roll."

"I think it's time to nip it in the butt!"

"We need to go in there all Guns 'n' Roses!"

Once, while talking with a major client, the boss wanted to push the main issue to the fore, he said, "Let me lay my balls out here on the table."

"I don't want to blow my own drum."

"I made him write in down in black and blue."

"It was the cheapest thing since sliced bread."

"The days of getting a foot in the door have gone out the window."

"I'm just talking off the cuff of my head now."

"You're going off on a tandem."

"They've got two telephone numbers and they're both different."

"They could do this job with their eyes tied behind their backs."

"It's a jumble out there."

"He smokes like a fish."

"We need to get up the learning curb."

"I can't decide. It's twelve of one and a half-dozen of another."

"Once you've buttered your bread, you have to lie on it."

"He was breathing down my throat."

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