Selection Methods

When it comes to selection methods, what works, what doesn't work?

When it comes to how we select (hire) people for positions in an organization we sometimes go about it haphazardly. Some managers rely almost exclusively on their gut: "I like this guy." Others are overly impressed by the educational credentials on the resume: "She graduated from Brown. Wow!" Research findings (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998) give us something to go on, something to sink our teeth into, something that we can rely on to a greater degree than we might intuitively be inclined to otherwise. Take a look at what research indicates as the most and least reliable predictors of success when it comes to selection for a position:

Most Reliable Methods:

- Cognitive ability tests (some form of intelligence testing). The Wonderlic is the most common.
- Work sample tests. Asking candidates for real examples or products of their work.
- Integrity tests. Tests designed to evaluate the truthfulness and honesty of a candidate. Valid tests like these are difficult for a candidate to be deceptive.
- Structured employment interviews. Ones in which there is a series of questions for candidates to answer and those answers are scored.
- Job knowledge tests. Tests designed to evaluate a candidate's current knowledge and ability to demonstrate it.
- Peer ratings. These may be more available when considering selection of a current member of the organization.

Moderately Reliable Methods:

- Reference checks. Research indicates that references are hesitant to comment negatively.
- Job experience. This may be surprising to some and is contrary to conventional wisdom. We often seek candidates who've had similar job experiences for a position we are seeking to fill.

Less Reliable Methods:

- Years of education
- Demographics
- Age

Most often, the most effective selection methodology is a combination of methods. Organizations would be wise to place a greater weight or value on most reliable methods and less value on those that are less reliable.