

# SELECTION INNOVATIONS: 'HIRING FOR FIT'

BY ED HURST, MANAGING DIRECTOR AUSTRALASIA, KENEXA<sup>®</sup>

Over the last 10 years, assessment and selection techniques have become increasingly high-tech, transferring much of the work online and automating the sifting/testing components. This has increased the success rate in identifying talented individuals and has enabled scarce resources to be focused on the high-touch, latter stages of assessment.

However, selection still tends to address only one challenge—identifying candidates who fit the job requirements as closely as possible. In most instances, this focuses on some combination of skills, personality, aptitude, knowledge and motivation.

For all its capacity to deliver more effective outcomes at a vastly reduced cost, such an approach still risks overlooking two key issues—the extent to which candidates will thrive in a specific work environment/culture and the concept of selection being a 'two-way sell,' in which candidates are assisted to make the right selection decision just as much as the employer.

How often have you hired someone who clearly has what it takes to be successful in a job—all the right qualifications, an impressive track record, an energetic personality and the talent to deliver the outcomes you need—only to see them under-perform, fail to 'click,' or disappointingly drift out of the organization?

How employees relate to your actual environment explains much of this phenomenon. If your culture gels with the individual, meets his/her needs and values, and enables him/her to feel fulfilled, the person is more likely to thrive.

So we need an effective way of assessing a candidate's 'culture fit,' based on an understanding of what the culture is truly like once experienced 'on the ground' (and not necessarily the sort of aspirational statement that we tend to put up on the wall) and simultaneously enabling candidates to evaluate their own fit. Happily, these two goals work neatly together. All we need to do is ensure that the assessment experience is shaped by a clear understanding of the working environment (not just the job itself).

If we can do this, not only will we make better decisions, we will also save money (because we don't need to proceed any further with people who just won't fit) and achieve competitive advantage (because we are attracting and selecting people more effectively than our competitors). There is also evidence that great candidates are likely to be attracted to an employer taking this approach, not only because the experience will feel more impressive, but also because candidates feel good when they are treated as though the decision is as much theirs as the employer's.

So how do we identify cultural characteristics so that we can build them into the assessment process? One obvious source is employee surveys. Many Kenexa<sup>®</sup> clients are working with us on culture surveys or employee engagement surveys—both of which are rich sources of insight into the work environment. Focus groups and stakeholder interviews can also be great methods. With the right information, it can be surprisingly easy to establish what the work environment asks of your people.

Once that is done, the key link for an assessment process to make is between organizational culture and individual sources of motivation. Each of us is motivated differently—and psychometric questionnaires allow us to pinpoint individual drivers. But that is only the beginning.

We are working with some of our clients to produce online ‘realistic job previews’ that provide candidates with a clear insight to what life in a particular organization would be like—ranging from simple passages of text or video clips, all the way up to interactive simulations and totally immersive virtual worlds. Clearly the latter approach suits high-tech organizations (and more ‘tech savvy’ candidates), but the more basic simulations are widely applicable.

This is an exciting area that is at the forefront of assessment and selection methods. It is enabling us to have a much better idea of who will thrive and allowing candidates to self-select much more effectively. It is also providing the employers who seize these opportunities with genuine competitive advantage—and promoting their brands at the same time. ■

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

##### Ed Hurst

As the leader of Kenexa’s Australasia business and consulting lead for the Asia Pacific, Ed Hurst has a particular focus on delivering clients’ strategic goals through world-class people solutions. His background is in business psychology—with extensive experience in large, global organizations. He worked for many years in the assessment and development field, frequently at the highest levels of organizations, including leading the Assessment and Development Centres Practice of a large consulting firm. His expertise is founded on extensive front-line consulting work, in which he contributed extensively to job analysis, assessment centers, leadership development, executive assessments, coaching and a range of development techniques. He has also established himself as a key player in the employee engagement and survey arena—linking such initiatives to business results and wider people strategy. During his time at Kenexa, Mr. Hurst has focused heavily on unifying solutions within employee surveys, assessment and talent management to deliver much more powerful results than previously possible.

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