



C H A N G E M A T T E R S

## Our Approach to Assessment & Development Centres

*“It is a multiple assessment process where a group of participants takes part in a variety of exercises observed by a team of trained assessors who evaluate each participant against a number of pre-determined, job related behaviours. This data is pooled from which selection decisions are made (Assessment Centre) or to provide insights to the individual for their future development (Development Centre)”*

*Based on a definition by Ballantyne & Povah (1995)*

Although the roots of Assessment and Development Centre techniques can be traced back to Samuel Pepys' times, they only started to be used in the commercial world in the late 70's. Over time their popularity has waxed and waned but they are now seen by many organisations as an essential tool in the assessment and development of individuals in order to:

- Select suitable candidates for a job
- Identify potential at an early stage
- Diagnose training and development needs
- Carry out an organisational skills audit for future planning
- Create and develop new teams
- Help them devise their future Personal Development and Career Plans

This technique, when carried out with systematic rigour, has a very high level of prediction (0.65) compared with any other assessment techniques (for example, 0.15 for a typical interview). It may be more costly than some but when compared with the costs of making wrong selection and development decisions, it is insignificant.

Our approach is to work with the client in setting up and running an Assessment or Development Centre. This involves a number of stages:

- **Clarification of the Purpose of the Centre:** We need to understand very clearly what the client wants to achieve and identify whether the Assessment or Development Centre process is the right approach for their needs.
- **Establishment of Assessment Criteria or a Competency Framework:** The tools and techniques selected for the Centre are only as good as the criteria used to make the assessment or developmental judgements. In some cases, organisations already have a Competency Framework developed for specific jobs but in many cases they either do not exist or are too general to differentiate effective from ineffective behaviour. In these circumstances, we will carry out a job analysis using a range of techniques to identify these criteria or competencies
- **Centre Design and Planning:** Using the criteria identified, we will select “of-the-shelf” or develop tailor-made exercises that will help to demonstrate these key behaviours required in the job. Once the exercises have been selected, a programme can be developed and the facilities organised.

- **Assessor Training:** Where practicable, we would seek to train individuals within the client organisation to act as assessors on the Centre. This has two key advantages; it increases the ownership of this process by key personnel and their commitment to the long-term aims of the Centre but it also increases their personal development in terms of their insight into the behaviour of others as well as a heightened self awareness.
- **Running the Assessment or Development Centre:** Typically, the Centre would be run well away from the workplace over a 1 - 3 day period. The efficient running of the Centre depends greatly upon the effectiveness of the advanced planning and the level of administrative support during the Centre. Generally, Development Centres take longer to run as they often involve continuous personal feedback.
- **Feedback Interviews:** This stage of the process, where each individual receives feedback from the outcomes of the Centre, would take place during a Development Centre as part of the process of helping the individual devise their own Development Plan. However, in the case of Assessment Centres, this process may take place at a later date after a selection decision has been taken. In either case, it is important that adequate follow-up support is given to these employees to ensure that it is a positive experience.

The running of Assessment and Development Centres requires a high level of commitment from the organisation and can be fraught with dangers. It is important, therefore, that organisations use a consultancy such as **Change Matters** to ensure that these pitfalls are avoided. We have a wide range of experience of running both Assessment and Development Centres but more importantly we believe that the process must be in alignment with the core principles of self development. It is only then that the organisation will reap the long-term benefits of this process.