

Low Cost AC at NH Elite

Summer Internship Project Synopsis

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Executive Summary:

NH Elite is a JV between Sriram Group and New Horizons Global and is an emerging player in the education industry. The project required the identification of managerial competencies at NHElite and design and execution of an Assessment Centre(AC) at no significant cost. The Vice Chairman agreed to the execution of the same and this led to the execution of the three day AC at the company which was carried out on 13, 14 and 15 June. The study presents the findings of the AC and analyses the reliability and validity of the same. See table 2 and table 3 for the same. All tools and test were designed by the author including two experimental tests which were not a part of AC and yet experimentally administered in order to establish their feasibility in competency based assessment. A total of 17 managers participated in the AC of which 7 were Junior level, 6 were middle level while 4 were senior level managers. Four assessors participated, two of which were professors with doctorates in HR and Marketing, one was an internal assessor who was AVP, HR at the parent company of NH Elite and one was the author himself. Each assessor received four hours of training on the assessment procedure. The AC was a success with healthy feedbacks from the participants, assessor and high coefficients of reliability and validity. The AC was highly consistent internally with Cronbach's alpha of 0.931 and with concurrent validity of $r = 0.943$ at $p < 0.001$. The success of the AC presents a case for the feasibility and accuracy of low cost Assessment Centres with not very high skilled assessors.

Problem Definition:

Designing and executing a low cost and yet, validated Assessment Centre in order to analyse the competency levels of managers (7 Junior, 6 Middle and 4 Senior managers).

Methodology:

Manager Specific Competency Model: The Manager Specific Competency model was drafted based on judgement and Behavioural Event Interviews at the company. A total of eight managers were interviewed. The most evident competencies were drafted out to create a model which became the basis of competency based assessment centre.

Competency Based Assessment Tool: Critical evidences from Critical Incident Analysis were used along with competency dictionaries to create a competency based assessment tool which was in form of BARS with each BARS score coupled with a specific behaviour or indicator of the competency. The BARS ranged from 0.1 to 1.0. The tool had no classification of indicators on the basis of levels in order to keep the tool simple and easily understandable and so also quantifiable. Rigorous brain storming was carried out in order to arrive at the indicators.

Assessment Centre Design: The AC was designed keeping in mind the limitations of time and the skill available in terms of assessing the candidates. A total of six tests were incorporated (see Table 1) and distributed over the competencies such that each competency was assessed twice in two different tests by two different assessors.

Table 1: Assessment Centre Design

S.no.	Competency	SAQ	GCP	ICP	BEI	IBT	FAT	CT	P
1	Communication Skills	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
2	Task Management	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
3	Awareness	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
4	Decision making and Risk	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
5	People Focus	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
6	Strategic Business Acumen	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
7	Result Oriented	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Customer Focus	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
9	Brand Quality Association	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
10	Perceptive to change	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

SAQ= Self Assessment Questionnaire
GCP= Group Case Problem
ICP= Individual Case Problem
BEI= Behavioural Event Interview
IBT= In Basket Test
FAT= Focussed Apperception Test
CT= Compromise Test

Findings and Conclusions:

Reliability measures: Cronbach's alpha was calculated in order to ascertain the internal reliability of all the tests and the process as a whole. Test retest reliability is difficult to be calculated due to restrictions and constraints in resources available esp. time. Inter-rater reliability has been calculated for tests for which it was possible i.e. FAT, IBT and ICP. The assessment centre in all is a high to moderately (due to a small sample) reliable.

Table 2: Reliability Coefficients

Reliability Measure	SAQ	GCP	ICP	BEI	IBT	FAT	CT(mean)	AC Overall
Cronbach's Alpha	0.870	0.874	0.773	0.583	0.810	0.779	0.383	0.931
Inter-Rater Reliability (Correlation Coefficients)	NA	NA	0.822	NA	0.873	0.701	NA	NA

Validity Measures: Each test was qualitatively tested for Content validity. In addition to this, a pilot test on eight management students was carried out and all were asked to relate the items of tests to competencies that were to be assessed by them on Likert scale of 1 to 5 measuring the relatedness of the test items and competency. In order to measure the Concurrent Validity of all the tests, scores of the participating candidates

were collected by the means by a peer feedback system and the official records of the company. Correlations were obtained to see if the real performance is also contingent upon the performance in AC.

Table 3: Validity Measures

Validity Measure	SAQ	GCP	ICP	BEI	IBT	FAT	CT(mean)	AC Overall
Mean Relatedness Response Score (1 to 5) n=8	4.99	NA	4.67	NA	4.78	5.0	4.55	4.798
Concurrent Validity	0.314	0.749	0.623	NA	0.526	0.682	0.512	0.943

Individual tests were analysed by correlation with scores given by peers and supervisors. The peer and supervisor feedback scores did not have an impressive correlation due to the very obvious fact that individual biases were playing and can be easily expected. Other researches also have found low correlation between 360 degree feedbacks and AC scores.

Limitations: The overall AC score was also correlated with the ranks given by the company's HR department. The mean rank correlation (for junior, middle and senior managers) was found to be very high and significant at **0.943** ($r=0.943$, $p<0.01$). Since the sample is small (each 4 to 7) and only ranks were considered rather than score due to the limitation in the informational resources of the company, such a correlation has little meaning in support of the validity. This happens to be the greatest limitation of the study. However, predictive validity can be used as a definitive means of checking the validity of the whole AC. However, the predictive validity would require performance appraisals after a year.