

MASTERING S.M.A.R.T. TALENT MANAGEMENT

# THE RIGHT

SOURCING · MARKETING · ASSESSING · RECRUITING

# HIRE

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  22

Chapter 6 | Using Work Simulations  
for Pre-employment Assessment

## Using Work Simulations for Pre-employment Assessment

Pre-employment assessments are often used for entry-level job positions. In spite of this more common usage, they can also be used quite effectively for positions at any level. This tool could easily let you add another assessment to ensure that you are going to hire the right person for your team.

One field that uses pre-employment assessments regularly that is well-known is sports. Both professional and amateur teams use tryouts to determine which candidates really have what it takes. Tryouts are used before interviews to test more than just skills. They also want to learn about a player's work ethic, their leadership abilities, and even their ego to find out if they are a team player and can get along with those in authority over the team.

Work environments certainly are not the same in two different companies. It is possible that candidates may have gotten into such a routine that they may not be able to work well in a different one. A simulation will help you determine much about a candidate's willingness to perform under a new set of rules and practices. It also may let you see a little under the masks that are often worn in a more controlled interview environment.



*Tryouts Reveal Many Things About Candidates*

Simulations should only be used on those who are considered to be your final candidates. The exercises need to be designed to imitate specific tasks in the workplace, as well as behaviors and skills that are expected. Several types of simulation exercises include:

- Group Exercises/Case Studies
- Presentations
- Fact-Finding Exercises
- Role Plays
- In-Baskets
- Job Tryouts.

Whichever type of simulation is selected, it needs to be focused on a specific skill that you are going to assess. Design the exercises to assess such skills as:

### **Structured thought**

- Develop an approach or a plan around a framework.
- Summarize findings and test hypotheses.
- Draw conclusions and relate them back to the initial problem.

### **Reasoning and logic**

- Identify and prioritize issues.
- Use original thought processes, logic, and pragmatism.
- Identify whether the solution makes sense.

### **Strong analytical and problem solving skills**

- Make reasoned and intelligent assumptions.
- Sort and interpret data, present findings, and evaluate consequences.



### **Professionalism and engagement**

- Exhibit maturity of thought.
- Show enthusiastic and confident approach.
- Reflect an understanding of the organization and its purpose.

### **Communication**

- Listen actively and be able to understand and clarify what is required.
- Communicate articulately, concisely, and effectively.

### **Creativity**

- Demonstrate an innovative and unique approach.
- Demonstrate lateral thought processes.

Now that you have seen the skills that you want to assess, there are some tools you need to enable the strength of those skills to be seen. Here are some situations and tools you can employ that will bring out those skills, enabling you to make that assessment.

## **Group Exercises/Case Studies**

A group exercise is usually a timed discussion where participants work together to provide a solution to a work-related problem or case study. A candidate might be asked to take on a particular role within a team, such as a team leader or a nurse manager's assistant.

As the group is working to solve the problem, they are watched by observers with excellent listening skills. Their purpose is not to judge the correctness of a solution, but to see how the candidate demonstrated the above listed skills, and to learn how they interact with other members of the team.

An example of this might be to use a role play situation to determine how a member of a nursing team might act in a cancer treatment ward. The requirements for the role play would be to discuss the patient's treatment, and how the patient and his family interact with the required treatment with such issues as the pain medicine, the diet, bed sores, and how often the doctor visits. In this case, experienced nurses would play the part of the patient and that of the family members.

## **Presentations**

Using a presentation for a way to assess a candidate will reveal a lot about the thinking processes involved. You can have candidates make a 10- to 15-minute presentation to the whole hiring team (or just the HR Manager with the hiring manager) after reading and analyzing selected information. They could prepare a PowerPoint presentation or do an outline on a whiteboard on a relevant topic, and allow for questions when it is finished.

One example of this would be to ask candidates to present brief background information with techniques that they have used to keep an operating room clean. Their presentation will include their experiences, recommendations for improvements with reasons for each, and budgeting requirements. Afterwards, they will answer questions about their proposals.



*Presentations Reveal the Ability to Condense and Apply Information*

## Fact-Finding Exercises

A fact-finding exercise is used to determine the ability of the candidate to make a decision. A topic is chosen in which the candidate has little or even no knowledge. The goal is for them to decide what other information is needed for the solution.

This might work well, for example, for a supervisor working in a blood lab who is dealing with a doctor who has trouble meeting delivery timetables. The candidate is then asked what information they would need to come up with a reasonable explanation and workable solution. They are given a time limit to ask questions of the selection team, and then they must present the explanation or solution.

## Role Plays

In a role play situation, candidates are assigned a particular role they must assume for a specific scenario. They will interact with other role players, and there will be an observer taking notes.

As an example of a role play, a candidate may be given the task of being an Emergency Room intake clerk. They will then be required to take in a candidate whose insurance card has expired, and who does not appear to have a real emergency. The candidate is told to get the insurance information and the health complaint. They will then refer the candidate to a doctor, but must also explain that the Emergency Room is backed up for hours. Candidates also must explain to the client why they are making this recommendation and how it will benefit the customer.

## In-Baskets

In-Basket (also called In-Boxes or In-Trays) simulations involve a candidate working from the contents of an In-Basket, which usually involve documents such as letters, memos, "To Do" tasks, and also big projects to plan. The candidate is asked to deal with the contents of the In-Basket, making decisions as needed, and still successfully handling the volume of material within a tight schedule.

An example of this could be a candidate who is asked to play the role of a hospital public relations manager who is designing a booth which is going to be used at an upcoming community event. The candidate's tasks involve creating the layout for the

booth, with a list of materials needed to make it. They also need to outline the marketing materials that are to be used in it, and select the personnel who will be manning the booth. A budget will also need to be made, along with a list of pre-event marketing ideas, and prospective follow-up plans for patients.

## Other Work Simulations

Apart from the above situations, here are some additional ones that you may want to use to learn more about your candidates.

- **For software users** - If your company requires the use of specific software, and you want to determine just how well a candidate is familiar with it, have them complete a task using it. If you can, design the simulation to evaluate their level of expertise, going from having a basic understanding up to power-user level.
- **Take them on a tour of your facilities.** - Show them around your buildings, and ask them questions related to what they saw. Then give them opportunity to ask questions, provide comments, and even make recommendations.
- **Let candidates sit in on a roundtable discussion.** - While there, have them listen and take notes on what they observe. Afterwards, get the candidates to provide an overview of what they saw, give recommendations on the material covered in the meeting, and anything else they care to share.
- **Give the candidates some homework.** - Depending on your open position, you might ask them to do something related like create a sample ad campaign, an architectural model, give an outline of a businessplan, write a review document on a set of design specs, or on a process they will use in their job, etc.

Whenever you create a simulation, you always need to have a timeline and a deadline for completion. The tasks need to be difficult, but achievable – which will let the best candidates shine. When designing the simulation, be sure to ask your current employees to help you come up with realistic challenges that someone in that role could face. The reason for this is that they are the best ones to know what will determine success or failure for someone in that position. They can also help you to determine a grading system of A, B, or C and what competence level will fit under each grade.

## Job Tryouts

Hospital job openings (and most other ones, too) provide many opportunities to use job tryouts. One way to do this, once you have reached the final stages of the job search process, is to ask a nurse candidate to spend a couple of hours on a job evaluation.

In the nurse tryout, have the candidate follow the lead nurse around for a couple of hours as the rounds are made. During the rounds, the lead nurse can ask questions of the candidate as to how certain problems might be solved, or how patients should be served in particular situations. After this period, reverse the situation, and have the lead nurse watch as the candidate performs – perhaps in simulated situations. The lead nurse then follows the nurse candidate and takes notes and assesses the performance.



When you create the job tryout, you should ask several of your top performers to select some scenarios— perhaps a half dozen or so – typical issues that occur on the job. These issues should be chosen as being those that will separate the best candidates from the rest of the candidates. Then use the best three or four of those situations that will bring out the traits of the best candidates— enabling you to screen out the low performing ones.

The advantage of using job tryouts is that they enable you to separate the best from the rest. In addition, you have the opportunity to see the masks of candidates get set aside during the tryout situations. Here are a few other factors that you can benefit from, because they often get uncovered during the tests:

- The people who think for themselves versus those who ask way too many questions before making a decision.
- The go-getters who make extra efforts versus the plodders who give up at the first sign of adversity.
- Those who take risk through trying new things versus those who require lots of handholding and won't try anything without getting permission first.
- The problem seekers, then solvers versus the problem creators, then ignorers.
- The ambassadors who love to give compliments versus the complainers who love controversy.
- The facilitators who love to survey others and then provide direction versus the followers who run from roles in leadership.
- People who listen and quickly learn versus those who are so distracted they can't listen and therefore take twice as long to learn.



# THE RIGHT HIRE

“The most important decisions that business people make are not *what* decisions, but *who* decisions.”

- Jim Collins, Author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... And Others Don't*



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## What you will learn from this book

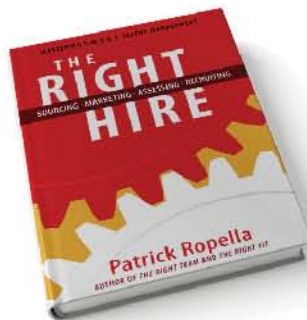
- How to successfully execute the all-important preparation stage of talent sourcing
- What to do to bring into alignment the whole interview-selection team
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**Patrick B. Ropella** is Chairman & CEO of the Ropella Group, a 25-year-old international Executive Search, Leadership Transformation, and Corporate Consulting firm in Florida with clients among the world's most prestigious corporations. The Ropella Group focuses on working with mid-level management and executive-level leaders regarding their search, leadership, and/or consulting needs across most roles and functions. Patrick authored the book and web based training program, *The Right Hire – Mastering the Art of SMART Talent Management*. The SMART Talent Management System covers Sourcing, Marketing, Assessing, Recruiting, Retention, Training and Transforming top talent. Patrick's status as a thought expert, and writer on talent management & leadership has been promoted, featured and published in a wide variety of trade magazines and business publications, and leadership and executive search industry blogs and journals. Patrick regularly speaks at webinars, career fairs, conferences, trades shows and more. For more information about Growing Your Great Company through Ropella services, visit [www.ropella.com](http://www.ropella.com), or call Patrick Ropella at (850) 983 - 4777.