

Best Practices in Developing an Assessment Center

The International Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines represents the gold standard in regard to Assessment Centers. Their guidelines indicate that there are ten essential elements all assessment centers must contain. They are as follows:

1. **job relevant behavioral dimensions:** All assessment centers should focus on assessing behavioral dimensions, meaning dimensions that are defined behaviorally in a specific, observable and verifiable manner. Furthermore, the development of focal behavioral dimensions should be based on rigorous and systematic processes, typically job analysis, competency modeling or past research.
2. **Behavioral classification:** All behaviors in an assessment center should be grouped or clustered according to the behavioral dimensions discussed in the first essential element.
3. **Multiple assessment components:** All assessment centers must contain multiple assessment components. These components can be multiple exercises within an assessment center, and can also include other psychometric tests such as personality tests.
4. **Linkage between behavioral constructs and assessment center components:** A matrix should exist that clearly documents how behavioral dimensions are assessed in the various exercises within an assessment center.
5. **Simulation exercises:** Assessment centers must contain simulation exercises that both elicit the behavioral dimensions of interest and also closely mimic the context of the focal job. Likewise, participants in assessment centers must be required to demonstrate a unique response in the exercises, rather than selecting pre-determined responses (e.g. multiple choice questionnaires)
6. **Assessors:** Multiple assessors should be used to observe and rate participants behaviors in the simulation exercises
7. **Assessor Training:** The assessors must be thoroughly trained and their performance must be evaluated prior to rating any participants. Assessors should be trained to fully understand the behavioral dimensions of focus, as well as the materials used in the simulation exercises. Additionally, assessors ratings should be evaluated to determine the level of agreement and consistency amongst assessors (e.g. calibration training)

8. Recording and scoring of behaviors: There should be a systematic process for recording participants' behaviors so that assessors can fully observe and take notes on key behaviors. There should also be systematic processes for rating behaviors, such as behavioral checklists or behavioral observation scales.
9. Data integration across exercises and behavioral dimensions: There must be a way to integrate the ratings across exercises. This can be accomplished in a number of different ways but the integration method selected must be reliable and consider participants performance across diverse exercises/situations.
10. Standardization: All participants must have the same opportunity to demonstrate behaviors of interest. This includes having the same instructions, time limits, materials available, questions asked by role players and sequence of events to name a few. In summary, the assessment center must strive to have every component standardized so that all participants are offered the same opportunity.

The process of developing an assessment center requires extensive and meticulous planning to ensure it meets all the essential elements defined by the International Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines.