

Why assessments centres are important when recruiting staff

by [Agata Klimaszewska](#) Head of Talent Acquisition

For senior roles and specialist large-intake programmes, such as graduate schemes, assessment centres are a popular recruitment tool. Assessment centres or days take different formats according to the role in question and the nature of the company, but they will generally bring together a set of pre-screened and pre-interviewed candidates, ready to whittle them down to the final stage of the selection process. But why are assessment centres so highly valued by recruiters?

Accuracy

An assessment centre offers the core benefit of accuracy, particularly when compared to the methods used in standard recruitment processes. With a basic interview there is a real danger of applying different measures to candidate assessment - interviewer bias, the 'halo' effect, the clone effect, and the differing subjective opinions of different interviewers for different days! However, an assessment centre allows a far greater degree of objectivity to be applied to the process, thanks to a broad and rigorous array of assessment opportunities and exercises.

Watching performance in action

At an assessment centre recruiters can see how a candidate performs in a real life situation (such as a simulated business exercise), rather than simply relying on their own self-assessment during interview. They also make it easier to assess and compare candidates who might seem to be of equal quality on paper, but fare very differently in a 'real world' situation.

These centres also allow employers to simulate different scenarios typical to the role and see how the applicants fare. For example, the group might be required to work together on a posed business problem to see which roles they take within a team, how they interact, influence, communicate, negotiate, problem solve and work effectively with others.

There are usually tests involved as well to assess numeracy and literacy as well as technical skills for a role. An IT role might focus on specific technical skills, but it might also include a creativity exercise to throw participants a bit of a curveball and see how they perform under pressure.

Employer branding

Assessment centres also have the benefit of promoting the employer brand. Those candidates who turn up to an assessment centre and find that it truly reflects both the role and the organisation are typically impressed by the hiring company and maintain that positive impression, even if they aren't successful in getting the job. This gives the employer a real opportunity to create a positive impression in all the high quality candidates that attend, and potentially build up an engaged group of possible future hires.

Cost advantages

Despite the perceived higher cost of an assessment centre, such as accommodation hire, food, equipment and staff assessor time, this approach is often more cost effective when compared to a

disparate and drawn out recruitment process, and perhaps more importantly, the high business costs of poor recruitment decisions and errors.

Fairness

Finally, an assessment centre is important because it is fair. It complements the employer's equality and diversity agenda and helps to ensure that the right candidate - or candidates - are selected on the grounds of true merit. With an assessment centre, measurement evidence and evaluation is thorough, normalised against a broad curve of candidates, and recorded. This is more robust than with a single interview, where notes may be more subjective. If indeed, they are fully recorded. This strengthens the position of the employer company, particularly if they have delivered the assessment centre with the help of a specialist recruitment agency.

Reciprocal experience

The assessment centre experience is thorough, transparent and it also gives the candidates a true insight into the values and culture of the employer company. This is vital, as it is often hard to give a sense of the brand in interview alone. During the more extended process of the assessment centre, candidates can meet key managers and other staff from the company and have a chance to talk to them informally and get a sense of what it is really like to work for the employer. This helps to improve attrition within the company.

Diverse suitability

Assessment centres are diverse in their application and important for different situations, from senior executive hire through to specialist and technical staff hire for a large new project or other situations where bulk, seasonal or contract requirements require a sudden influx of high quality staff. Every assessment centre can be tailored to suit the role in question and the group of candidates.

<https://www.recruitment-international.co.uk/blog/2014/09/why-assessments-centres-are-important-when-recruiting-staff>