PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS
IN EXECUTIVE SELECTION**


Describes the development and validation of a test battery by the National Institute for Personnel Research in South Africa designed for use in predicting ability to succeed at high-level administrative work.

Cornell University, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Identification and assessment of management potential; 11th annual Conference of Training Directors. Ithaca. 1958. 77 pp. $1.00.

A selection of conference material which includes reports on commercially prepared tests, areas needing further research, clinical methods, and the identification of executive ability.


Part Two in Volume I contains a comprehensive treatment of executive selection by Milton M. Mandell which includes evaluation of tests of interest, personality, intelligence, and judgment. In Part Three, discussions of tests in management selection by Herbert H. Meyer and J. M. Bertotti and of the use of projective techniques at management levels by Erwin K. Taylor and Edwin C. Nevis are of special interest. Volume II includes descriptions of seven company selection programs and a useful bibliography.


The authors caution management to keep psychologists on their mettle to test their wares. They illustrate the validation of tests by reporting

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** Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.
on three studies, including one made among branch office sales managers.


This report brings to the reader's attention the problem of validating selection techniques—a problem that must be considered in any practical or research effort in the area of managerial selection and development. Pages 35-40 deal specifically with psychological tests for management.


A study based upon psychological evaluations of 150 men. Among the conclusions are the following: except for intelligence tests, individual tests are of little predictive value when considered alone; there is an extremely small amount of real evidence regarding the validity of most of the instruments now used in management selection or evaluation.


The author contends that tests should be used only to obtain data that are directly relevant to the probable work performance of the testee. Aberrant personality tendencies which might affect an individual's reliability should be "interpreted to management," but in general penetration into deeper levels of personality is needlessly inquisitive. He suggests the advisability of a formal code of ethics covering the administration of personality tests.


A survey of the literature showed that personality inventories have "proved to be effective for some occupations in which personality factors would appear to be of minimal importance" and ineffective for others (e.g., supervisors and foremen) in which these factors are of paramount importance.

The tentative conclusion was that although tests suffer from many limitations, mainly because it is not clear what they are testing for, testing procedures do contribute to a systematic and objective promotion system.


Weighing the imperfections of tests against their benefits, the author discusses what direct and indirect costs should be charged to tests and what common operating costs they can possibly prevent. He also evaluates different types of tests, including several which have been found useful with high-level personnel.


A cooperative project carried on by the Educational Testing Service and a number of companies with the objects of doing basic research on executive jobs as a prerequisite to improving selection practices, of analyzing the personal requirements of these jobs, and of constructing tests or devising other methods of assessment to measure executive ability. The first phase of the research is concerned with criteria of executive performance, and a brief description of projects under way is given.¹


An example of one kind of research required to improve selection procedures, this article reports on the first phase of a research program designed to estimate the validity of personnel audits made by a psychological consulting firm.


Describes a method for psychological appraisal of key personnel which includes the administration of tests designed to measure general intelligence, personality and temperament characteristics, vocational interests, and specific aptitudes and skills.

¹ For some early results of part of this research, see "Matching manager to jobs" in *Nation's Business*, July, 1958. pp. 72-74.

In this discussion of the identification and development of executive ability, the author contends that tests have a "relatively minor" contribution to make. The appraisal of personality, he contends, "demands a clinical rather than a metric technique, skilled observation rather than formal tests."


Discusses the highlights of a very extensive series of interviews and tests given to 3,000 executives. Distinguishing characteristics by management level and by function are given, the object being to identify those traits associated with promotability.


This article takes issue with the desiring of executive personality tests by William H. Whyte, Jr. (see reference below). The main conclusion is that despite "undeniable immaturity and limitations, personality testing by professional psychologists... compares favorably by scientific and ethical standards with many of the informal selection procedures that have long been practiced."


A good summary of the experimentation which has been under way in a number of large companies with personality testing of supervisors and executives. The authors consider that this development "could do more for business efficiency" than any other type of employee testing.


In this recent best-seller, Whyte expands his attack (first made in Fortune, September, 1954, pp. 117-121 et seq.) upon professional psychological tests which purportedly measure a man for any personality trait. He states flatly that the tests are both unscientific and unethical.