



Looking for Better EMS Leadership? Consider a Behavioral Science Approach 2

Turns Out, Some Folks Are Not "Wired" To Be A Supervisor

In her book, *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the Work Environment of Nurses*, Ann Page suggests, "Poor supervision drives as much as 30 percent of employee work dissatisfaction and turnover among nursing staff". This draws a parallel to the EMS industry. It builds a case for eliminating subjectivity and intuition from the leadership selection process. Behavioral science tells us that effective leaders possess certain measurable competencies and experiences. Industrial / Organizational Psychologists provide us tools that can be used to better assess supervisor candidates. For example:

Leadership Competency Assessments

Criterion-based (linked to actual job performance data) competency assessments are normally administered as a screening tool. This assessment can evaluate key personality constructs such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability (the Five Factor Model). Research indicates candidates whose interests and work-style preferences are aligned with characteristics of the work environment are more likely to succeed. These tests help us understand "job fit" and have been shown to be valid predictors of supervisory success.

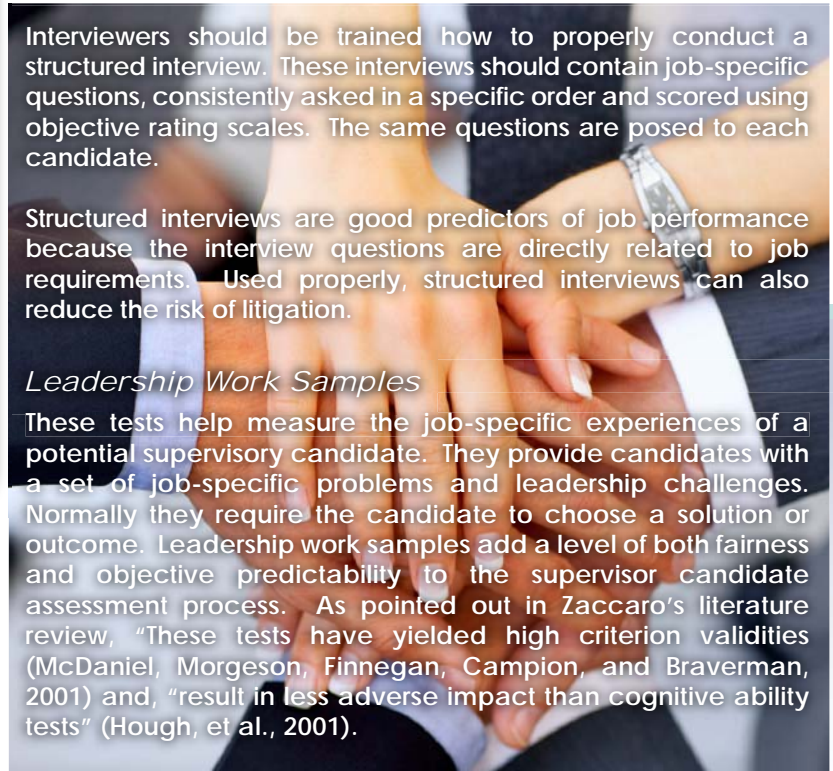
In his Literature Review regarding Talent Assessment and Selection, Stephen J. Zaccaro (George Mason University, 2008) cites a study completed by Hogan and Kaiser (2008) asserting "personality drives leadership style - who you are determines how you lead", Zaccaro noted, "Ignoring personality in the selection of organizational leaders would be foolhardy".

Structured Behavior-based Interviews

Behavioral science teaches us that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. A structured interview consisting of behaviorally-anchored interview questions, can help predict the future behavior of a supervisor candidate.

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Interviewers should be trained how to properly conduct a structured interview. These interviews should contain job-specific questions, consistently asked in a specific order and scored using objective rating scales. The same questions are posed to each candidate.

Structured interviews are good predictors of job performance because the interview questions are directly related to job requirements. Used properly, structured interviews can also reduce the risk of litigation.

Leadership Work Samples

These tests help measure the job-specific experiences of a potential supervisory candidate. They provide candidates with a set of job-specific problems and leadership challenges. Normally they require the candidate to choose a solution or outcome. Leadership work samples add a level of both fairness and objective predictability to the supervisor candidate assessment process. As pointed out in Zaccaro's literature review, "These tests have yielded high criterion validities (McDaniel, Morgeson, Finnegan, Campion, and Braverman, 2001) and, "result in less adverse impact than cognitive ability tests" (Hough, et al., 2001).

Great Leadership Generates Great Outcomes

When you look at the metrics of your EMS organization, nearly all of them are driven by human performance. Each supervisor or manager you employ has the power to influence performance. They help retain key employees even when there are negative factors driving the individual to leave. More importantly, your internal leaders directly impact overtime, documentation, customer service, safety, on-time reliability and more. Great organizational leadership drives great outcomes. Taking the right approach toward choosing your organizational leaders will have a significant impact on your organizational success.



About the Author

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