



***Postmodern Trends Impacting
Testing for Hiring and
Promotion Decisions***

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Presented at the PTC-SC Luncheon, Feb. 27, 2013

Outline

- Complex realities and trends
- Premodern conditions and their impact on work
- Modern conditions and their impact on work, including testing for desirable KSAs
- Postmodern trends and their impact on work, including testing for desirable qualifications
- My questions for audience
- Q & A

Complex Realities and Trends

- We are witnessing epochal changes.
- The industrial age is being replaced by the high-tech age.
- How are these changes impacting HRM, especially the testing for hiring and promotion decisions?
- To understand the present transformational reality, appropriate to study a previous transformation – from the premodern to the modern age.

1.1 Premodern Economic Conditions

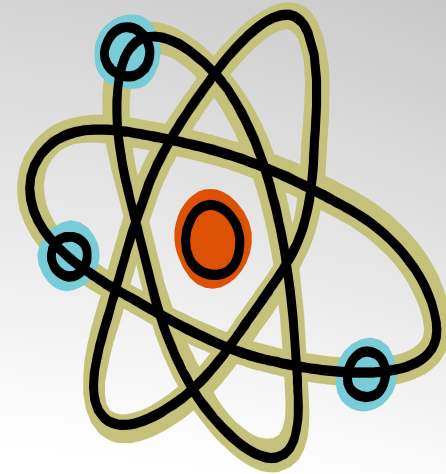
Agrarian economy:

- Prevailing economic activities tied to land use
- Core value:
Deference to God and to superiors
- Greatest **wealth in** land holdings
- Most **jobs** tied to land use
- Some crafts and some trade in support of agricultural activities

1.2 Premodern Work Organizations

Patriarchal and autocratic rule:

- Power of landowner determines organizational structure
- Model of atom appropriate do understand functioning



1.2 Premodern Work Organizations (cont'd)

- Relatively small production units
- Nepotism and patronage practiced
- Hiring and retention decisions based on patriarchal preferences
- Work decisions based on rule of thumb, including who should be hired or promoted



1.3 Expected Premodern Education & KSAs

- Education structured by class
- For upper class and talented middle class children, private education
- Most learning occurs through on-the-job training
- Scribes needed to record the delivery of in-kind taxes in the form of goods and services to ruling families
- Scribes needed to record the construction of large projects, such as the pyramids in Egypt or Great Wall in China

1.4 Underlying Assumptions

View of human nature:

- God-given inequalities based on demographic characteristics, such as
- Birth, born to aristocracy
- Gender
- Age
- Race, ethnicity

Core values:

- Adherence to natural order
- Upper class has the God-given right to own the land and to rule
- Commoners practice deference and obedience to upper class families, reinforced by religious teachings

Transition to the Modern Age

- 15th century Renaissance: Secularization of thought and action,
- 16th century Reformation: Opposition to Catholic church teachings and power
- 17th century: Enlightenment, secular humanism
- 18th century: In American colonies, revolt against aristocratic rule, introduction of republican rule, based on a fundamental shift in view of human nature – all men born equal

2.1 Modern Economic Conditions

Industrial revolution

- Agriculture, crafts, and trades fundamentally changed by industrial activities
- Colonialism
- Migration from the South and from abroad encouraged to fill the new industrial jobs
- Prevailing core value: efficiency, not piety
- Greatest **wealth** accumulated in heavy industries – steel, oil, railroad, cars – by Carnegie, Rockefeller, Getty, Ford, etc.
- Loss of jobs in agriculture due to mechanization replaced with **jobs** in factories

2.2 Modern Work Organizations

In the Private Sector:

- Creation of large factories
- Assembly line production
- Division of labor between managerial/professional work and skilled/unskilled jobs
- For white-color workers, much more complex work
- Overriding value: Efficiency

2.2 Modern Work Organizations (cont'd)

In the Public Sector:

- Creation of large bureaucracies
- Hierarchical organizations resembling the shape of the pyramid
- Ideally, hiring based on merit
- Testing to assess applicants' qualifications
- Building the industrial city from the (under)ground up required competence, but corruption in hiring and promotion decisions flourished anyway

Modern Work Organizations (cont'd)



2.3 Modern Education and Expected KSAs

- Compulsory public education
- Top down rote teaching approach
- Punitive
- Learning to restrain impulsive behavior
- Preparing lower class families and children to live by the clock and do monotonous, manual factory work
- College for middle class
- To learn the accumulated knowledge in their field, but also to learn how to obtain new knowledge to get ahead of the competition
- Vast expansion of university education, especially in the sciences
- Curiosity
- Willingness to compete

2.4 Underlying Assumptions

View of human nature and core values:

- God-given equality leading to claims of equal opportunities in education
employment
politics
- People are free to choose

Interpretations of reality:

- Observed inequalities due to laziness i.e. not making proper use of opportunities, as well as due to
- personal choices people make

3.1 Postmodern Economic Trends

High-tech revolution

- Creation of information and eye-ball economy
- Globalization
- World-spanning migrations of people
- World-spanning production of goods and services
- Fundamental changes in the production of goods and services
- Greatest **wealth** accumulated in high-tech industries –
Bill Gates
Steve Jobs
Mark Zuckerberg
- Best paying **jobs** in high-tech industries
- Better opportunities for minorities and women because of the anonymity of the internet?

3.2 Trends in Postmodern Work Organizations

- **In the Private Sector:**
- Re-engineering corporations to make optimal use of high-tech capabilities
- Acceptance of a more diverse workforce
- To cope with increased complexity, use of brain power of all employees, i.e. bottom-up management
- Managers as mentors rather than as authority figures
- Image of inverted pyramid, flattened hierarchies, more circular arrangements
- Core values: Competition and efficiency; more balance between work and family activities

3.2 Trends in Postmodern Work Organizations (cont'd)

In the Public Sector:

- Reinventing government
- More market-driven, more competition in the delivery of services
- Also adoption of private-sector management techniques, such as empowering employees
- To save money and improve service, use of brain-power of citizens encouraged in so-called government-citizen partnerships

The Postmodern Workplace



3.3 Trends in Postmodern Education and Expected KSAs

- Due to increased economic and social complexities, employees need to be better educated - high school education not enough any more
- Increased mix of media to learn, some of it self-paced
- Subject matter competence still required, but important for students to gain proficiency in research and the creation of new knowledge
- Since knowledge acquired in college is quickly obsolete, willingness to engage in life-long learning important

3.3 Trends in Postmodern Education and Expected KSAs (cont'd)

- To encourage life-long learning, education should be experienced as fun, starting in pre-school
- To encourage life-long learning, education in high school and college should be experienced as meaningful and relevant
- To deal with cultural complexity, training in multicultural sensitivity encouraged
- To make work teams successful, students need to learn about emotional intelligence and team dynamics

3.4 Underlying Assumptions in Postmodern Trends

View of Human Nature

- People are by nature different, but these differences do not imply superiority or inferiority
- Reflecting the demographic composition of society, employees can be diverse in terms of appearance, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, etc.

Core Values

- Respecting diversity at the worksite is the norm – as long as the acceptance of differences does not lead to unreasonable inefficiencies and hinder the business or agency from accomplishing its mission and as long as the differences do not violate the core promise of equal opportunities

First Question for Audience

Considering the increasing complexity of work and rapid changes in required KSAs, life-long learning has been recommended.

Professional employees are used to life-long learning by attending conferences and meetings like the luncheon. But is it necessary to encourage life-long learning among rank and file employees too considering their work is getting more complex as well?

Second Question for Audience

Considering the need for life-long learning, do tests for new hires or for promotions have questions or other selection tools to test applicants for their willingness to engage in life-long learning?

If **yes**, how?

If **no**, should testing procedures include a component to test applicants for their willingness to engage in life-long learning?

The answer to this question probably varies by employer. Since public employees have job security, their need to stay current has to be encouraged by employers; whereas private-sector employers can simply terminate employees who fall behind in their KSAs.

Third Question for Audience

Also, because of the increased complexity, teamwork is encouraged.

Do current tests probe for applicants' willingness to become team leaders, as well as strong team members who will pull their weight?

Such tests are presently done for managerial jobs and certain other jobs, such as firefighting. But should this type of testing be done for all employees?

Q & A