



# Accurately Predicting Job Candidates' Counterproductive Traits

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# Different Forms of Counterproductive Behavior

- Employee Theft
- Absenteeism
- Tardiness
- Aggressive Behavior “Desk Rage”
- Shirking Duties
- Substance Abuse
- Sabotaging Others
- Bullying Others
- Sloppy Work-producing errors and accidents
- Gossip/rumor spreading



# The Costs of Counterproductive Behavior

- Employee theft accounts for more than 44% of all retail loss in the U.S. (vs. shoplifting approx. 32%).
- Employees waste on average 2.2 hours each workday (not including lunch). Over a month's time, employees spend one week not working, costing employers \$651 billion a year.
- On any given day, approximately 20% of employees are absent from an organization. (Direct and indirect costs of employee absences cost an organization about 36% of base payroll.)



# The Root of Counterproductive Behavior

- “Counterproductive behavior is not just work stress--it's caused by stress”, says Paul Spector, PhD, professor of industrial/organizational psychology at the University of South Florida.
- "Anything that leads to negative emotions like boredom or anxiety can be a trigger. Lack of control can also lead to counterproductive behavior.”
- “But what counterproductive workplace behavior comes down to, is individual differences in personality and coping styles. Stress is one of many potential triggers for aggressive responses in the workplace," states Susan Burroughs, Ph.D., Roosevelt University, Chicago.



# Prescreening for Counterproductive Behavior

- Careful prescreening of the job candidates
  - Interviewing
  - Integrity testing
  - Work samples, in-basket tasks
  - Assessment Center Screening
- Background checks
- Probationary work periods as a condition before hiring
- Detecting stress tolerance and coping mechanisms of job candidates

# The Merits of the Unstructured Interview for Detecting Counterproductive Behavior Tendencies

- Definition of the unstructured interview
  - Informal atmosphere (over coffee or while walking around the organization)
  - No standardization of interview questions (small talk can occur)
  - Follow-up and probe questions are encouraged
  - A standardized rating form is not necessarily used
  - The interviewer almost befriends the applicant

# The Merits of the Unstructured Interview for Detecting Counterproductive Behavior Tendencies

- The unstructured interview was found to produce significantly more accurate personality judgments than the structured interview format (when judge/self agreement and judge/peer agreement were used as the criteria).
- The unstructured interview was found to produce more accurate personality judgments on personality traits predictive of counterproductive behavior (e.g. “is hostile,” “tends to sabotage others”).

Blackman, M. C. (2002). Personality Judgment and the Utility of the Unstructured Employment Interview. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 24(3) 240-249.



# The Merits of the Unstructured Interview for Detecting Counterproductive Behavior Tendencies

- Job candidates in the unstructured interview condition spent a significantly larger percentage of the time talking in comparison to those job candidates in the structured interview condition, thus offering more information about themselves.
- Job candidates in the unstructured interview condition engaged in significantly more nonverbal gestures than those candidates in the structured interview format.
- The unstructured interviews were significantly longer in interview time than the structured interviews, thus more information about the candidate was obtained.



# The Unstructured Interview vs. the Integrity Test

- Dimensions of Measurement of the Reid Report Integrity Test
  - 15 minutes to complete
  - 50 questions
  - Employers are given a % of the likelihood that a job applicant will engage in counterproductive behavior
  - Scoring cost approx. \$20 per applicant
- – **Integrity Attitudes:** levels of personal rationalization towards dishonest acts and tolerance of others who engage in dishonest acts
- – **Social Behavior:** admission items of recent criminal behaviors, including theft and workplace violence
- – **Substance Use:** admissions of recent illegal substance use
- – **Work Background:** collection of employment background and past workplace tendencies



# Sample Items from the Reid Report

- “If you knew that you would not be caught sneaking into a movie theater for free, would you?”
- “How many shoving matches have you engaged in at work in the past month?”
- “How likely are you to use controlled substances while at work?”



# The Unstructured Interview vs. the Integrity Test

- The information gathered from an unstructured interview was found to be just as predictive of a job candidate's potential to engage in counterproductive behavior as the information offered from an integrity survey.
- Townsend, R. J., Bacigalupi, S. C., and Blackman, M. C. (2007). The Accuracy of Lay Integrity Assessments in Simulated Employment Interviews. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 540-557



# How Should We Apply These Findings?

- Ideally we should use multiple methods for assessing a job candidate's potential to engage in counterproductive behavior.
- The more avenues of the candidate's behavior (e.g. past, present and future) we explore, the more likely we will converge upon his or her true nature.
- Use the structured interview to assess the job candidate's skills set and potential success on the job. If the job candidate shows promise, follow up with an unstructured interview to ferret out his or her personality traits.



# Applying Our Knowledge

- Give the promising candidate an integrity test to serve as additional information.
- Have other colleagues interview the promising candidate in an informal atmosphere (e.g. over coffee or while touring the work site). Multiple opinions and sources of information will converge on the truth.
- Use your knowledge of nonverbal skills to detect red flag behaviors during the interview
  - ☐ Leakage
  - ☐ Manipulators
  - ☐ Eye contact/hand shake/posture
  - ☐ Emblems
  - ☐ Micro-expressions
  - ☐ Asymmetrical facial expressions
  - ☐ Reliable muscle use



# Remember the RAM Model

- The Realistic Accuracy Model (Funder, 1996).
- The Four Factors that effect the accuracy of personality judgment
  - The Good Target
  - The Good Judge
  - Good Information
  - The Good Trait



# Last Piece of Advice

- If your gut impression says that something is just not right about a particular candidate...Trust it!
- We spend every day of our lives, naturally assessing the behavior of others, so trust your skilled instincts.
- All the Best!