



Research Article

Faults Made by Leaders and HR Managers in the Selection of Employees and Opportunities to Prevent Them

Martin MOSER

MA MSc, University of Sopron, Alexandre Lamfalussy Faculty of Sopron, Hungary
martin.arnold.moser@phd.uni-sopron.hu

Received date: 27 February 2020 ; Accepted date: 20 July 2020 ; Published date: 31 August 2020

Academic Editor: Ioana Julieta Josan

Copyright © 2020. Martin MOSER. Distributed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International CC-BY 4.0

Abstract

Executives and HR managers face many challenges today, such as demographic change, shortage of skilled workers, development of the diversity of the staff, pressure to expect service quality, increase in mental stress, etc. Personnel selection is one of the most critical issues for a company because it is an investment in human capital, which can be a decisive competitive advantage for an organization. For many companies and industries, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable staff, since applicants tend to be interested in large corporations or attractive brands. Furthermore, tasks in our society are becoming increasingly complex and demanding, which means that the requirement profiles are becoming more and more specific. This makes the search and selection of suitable employees more important. Few companies can afford to make wrong decisions in the personnel selection process despite their good economic success. This scientific paper describes and discusses, based on the methodology of a qualitative research via problem-centered interviews as well as a literature review, on the one hand, the mistakes that executives and/or HR managers can make during the personnel selection interviews, on the other hand, what the consequences are and what options exist to avoid these mistakes.

Keywords: competitive advantages, Human Resource management, organizational management

Introduction

Personnel selection is one of the most critical issues for a company, because it is an investment in human capital, which can be a decisive competitive advantage. For many companies and industries, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable staff,

since applicants tend to be interested in large corporations or attractive brands. Furthermore, tasks in our society are becoming increasingly complex and demanding, which means that the requirement profiles are becoming more and more specific (Krings, 2017, p. 1). The current demographic development also

confirms that in many industries it is very difficult to get skilled workers. This makes the search and selection of suitable employees more important. Few companies can afford to make wrong decisions in the personnel selection process despite economically good success (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 1). Due to the increasing size and complexity of many companies, personnel policy measures are no longer used only for personnel administration, but also take on an important coordination function. In order to coordinate the actions of the individual employees in a company accordingly and to ensure a consistent company policy, binding criteria for personnel selection, group-oriented forms of personnel deployment and personnel management based on target values are used (Holtbrügge, 2015, p. 4).

The aim of this scientific article is, on the one hand, to describe the mistakes that executives and/or HR managers can make during the personnel selection interviews, on the other hand, what the consequences are and what options exist to avoid these mistakes. The chosen methodology is the qualitative approach of the problem-centered interviews as well as a literature review, including the current knowledge on the respective subject. Through the openness and flexibility of this method, the discovery of unknown facts is made possible, higher information content is generated and the viewpoint of the interviewees is centered. The data collection will be conducted by guided and problem-centered interviews. The basis for the preparation of the interview guide and the related questions are the information and current knowledge base from the literature on this subject. The interview guide consists of an introduction and a main part. The introduction serves to briefly outline the meaningfulness and usefulness of the survey. In the main section, questions are asked about possible mistakes made by executives and HR managers in personnel selection interviews and options for avoiding them. When conducting the interviews, it has been tried to ask open questions where possible and appropriate in order to gain as much information as possible from the interviewee and not lead

him or her in a specific direction (Mayring, 2016, pp. 67-68). The problem-centered interview selects a linguistic approach to determine his or her position on the basis of subjective meanings. It's tried to establish a situation of trust between the individual parties. Although the interview partners are directed by the guideline through certain questions, they react openly and without any specific answer possibilities. This approach has the advantages of being able to check the general understanding of the interviewees, as well as the disclosure of subjective opinions and the discussion of concrete terms of the interview situation (Mayring 2016, pp. 68-69). The areas of application for the problem-centered interview are mainly within theory-based research, since it integrates the aspects of the primary problem analysis into the interview. It is particularly suitable if in principle a lot is already known about the research field. The standardization through the interview guide facilitates the comparability of the conducted interviews and thus also the subsequent evaluation (Mayring, 2016, pp. 70-71).

The evaluation method is based on the summary approach of the qualitative content analysis according to Mayring. The entire material is screened without any specific preliminary considerations and the respective recordings of the interviews are transcribed. In a further step, all utterances, which do not change the content, are removed, since the main interest is aimed only at the content-based information (Mayring, 2016, pp. 115-116). A comprehensive content analysis is used for the data evaluation. The aim is to reduce the material to its essential contents and to create a manageable basic form. Written statements will be structured in order to subsequently draw conclusions for the research. For this purpose, the obtained information will be divided into categories. The category system should not be very detailed. Afterwards the results will be discussed and put into context with the relevant literature. The category system can be reworked and adapted after carrying out the pre-study (Mayring, 2016, pp. 115-116).

Personnel selection

In the age of a shortage of skilled workers, recruitment and personnel selection are the pillars of an active personnel strategy that aims to increase the inflow of human capital. The job market does not allow waiting and experiments, but requires systematic actions to increase the base rate and hit rate. Personnel selection is a key success factor in the value chain in order to minimize wrong decisions in personnel deployment. Mismanagement is associated with considerable follow-up costs in connection with fluctuation, new advertisements, personnel development, low motivation for work and performance deficits (Treier, 2019, p. 122). Personnel selection refers to the assignment of applicants to positions in an organization through recruitment and the use of selection techniques, which are based on a requirement analysis and serve to find the most suitable applicant for the respective position (Kauffeld, 2014, p. 100). The basis of personnel selection and personnel development is the identification and promotion of job-specific suitability of the employees (Holtbrügge, 2015, p. 10). The so-called suitability diagnosis is an essential part of the selection of personnel, with the help of which it can be checked whether and to what extent an applicant is suitable for a specific job. It is more likely to be suitable for a specific position, the better it is able to cope with the respective requirements due to its requirements. Accordingly, the correspondence between the desired professional position and the requirements of the applicant is analyzed (Schuler & Höft, 2007).

The design of the personnel selection process plays an essential role for the efficient procurement of employees. The prerequisite for this is an exact recording and creation of the requirement profile or job description. In general, different ways of procurement, different evaluation principles of the application documents as well as several selection procedures are available. From these, the respective company can design the best recruitment process for its purposes (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, pp. 5-6).

Personnel marketing has become more professional in recent years in terms of channel breadth (e.g. use of social media) and the use of IT, but with the risk of falling prey to the maximization principle in order to counteract the impending scarce need for personnel. At this point, an increase in candidates is often no added value if this is accompanied by a decrease in the fit and the administration costs skyrocket. The progress in the selection of personnel is sobering, because personnel managers use comparatively few psychological tests and continue to rely on their intuition based on non-standardized interviews and application documents in decision-making processes (Treier, 2019, p. 123).

At the initiative of the professional association of German psychologists, for example, DIN 33430 ("Requirements for procedures and their use in job-related suitability assessments") was adopted in 2002, which describes requirements for personnel selection. The background to this decision was the low forecast validity of many personnel selection procedures. The standard specifies that only those processes are used that can be demonstrated to be related to the requirements. Furthermore, all aspects of the implementation and evaluation of the procedures as well as the interpretation of the results should be defined and documented in advance. The process of personnel suitability assessment must be documented in such a way that the result can be understood. The aim is to increase the quality of the selection of applicants and to provide verifiable proof of their legality (Hornke & Winterfeld, 2004; Kersting & Püttner, 2006). DIN 33430 unlocks the standards that are already common in Great Britain and the Netherlands. However, it is not mandatory, but only serves as a recommendation (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 4). A targeted selection of personnel starts with an open and honest self-assessment of the company, the environment and the task. Success can only be achieved by fitting the person and position (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 5).

The process of personnel selection is divided into different stages. For reasons of

clarity and taking into account the question to be dealt with in this scientific article, only the phase of the selection process should be described in more detail.

To check the quality of the personnel selection process, an evaluation using a cost and benefit analysis should be carried out. This serves the specific determination of the financial income of a personnel selection process (Kauffeld, 2014, p. 100). After reviewing the documents or pre-selecting potential candidates by telephone, there is direct interaction between applicants and those responsible for the company. The company usually specifies the process with which it wants to check the suitability of the candidate. Interviews are usually conducted so that the company can get an idea of the applicant. If necessary, these can be supplemented with tests and self-assessment by applicants through questionnaires (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, p. 64).

Various procedures can be used to make the personnel selection decision. These include the assessment center or the structured assessment of the application documents. The leading decision-making instrument is usually the personal interview (Welk, 2015, p. 64). Personnel selection interviews are also referred to as job interviews. Depending on the company and the position to be filled, the respective framework conditions for a personnel selection interview can vary. As a rule, representatives of management, personnel management and the immediate supervisor (e.g. department head) take part in these discussions. Personnel selection interviews are used to fill new positions and/or management positions in the company (Welk, 2015, p. 63). The aim of personnel selection interviews is that on the one hand the respective company can get a general picture of the applicant, on the other hand it can check the written documents and find out the expectations of the applicant. In addition, the potential performance of the applicant should be estimated. In turn, the applicant can get a more precise picture of the company and the relevant area of work in a personnel selection interview and assess development opportunities.

Successful personnel selection interviews require detailed preparation from both sides (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, pp. 64-65). The next chapter deals with the common mistakes in personnel selection interviews and their causes more in detail.

Recruitment goes hand in hand with personnel selection to increase the hit rate. That is why more and more companies are not only investing in recruiting, but also in selection procedures that allow a candidate's future work performance to be validly assessed. The call for future work performance is determined by the job's requirement profile. Because only when it is known what requirements a particular workplace places on an employee, will you be able to identify and select a suitable employee (Treier, 2019, p. 130).

In aviation for example, professional selection of personnel has been practiced successfully for more than fifty years. From joining the company, i.e. the beginning of pilot training, to being promoted to captain after ten to fifteen years, 97% of the candidates are still on board at Lufthansa. This is no coincidence, because large airlines use procedures that meet the special requirements of this professional group when choosing their future pilots. By systematically ensuring a high degree of accuracy between future personnel on the one hand and job requirements and corporate culture on the other, the airlines have been able to minimize problems and risks for decades. People have different talents, which are very different for them. Such dispositions lead to people developing an affinity for certain activities. Everyone knows from his own experience that he prefers to take care of things and topics with a high affinity – this is where you are most likely to become a professional. Companies must therefore find out where the individual talents of their applicants lie in order to select a suitable candidate and use them according to their strengths. Personnel selection procedures and potential analyses serve to identify these personally strong investments, but also any weaknesses (Hinsch & Olthoff, 2019, p. 91).

Mistakes in personnel selection interviews

The consideration of mistakes and their causes in the course of personnel selection interviews is essential, since the selection of personnel or personnel search requires costs that vary with the type of position to be filled and the number of applications. Basically, all investments are sensible, through which a new competent employee can be won. Costs are not justifiable that arise from failure to achieve goals and new search activities over and over until the respective position is successfully filled (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, pp. 2-3). To find out whether someone fits into a company, a department or a team, it is necessary to find out what drives the applicant. Therefore, a company needs employees with knowledge of human nature and the ability to empathize an interview (List, 2013, pp. 26-27).

Research shows that judgments about other people are made in the first seconds of getting to know each other. So, after this short time, there is already a relatively firm opinion about another person. This poses certain dangers in the personnel selection interview, since the entire further perception is channeled. After a subjective opinion has been formed in the first seconds of an encounter, it is further confirmed unconsciously. If the first impression was positive, the subjective filters result in all positive subsequent impressions being perceived particularly clearly and evaluated as confirmation of the first impression. Negative follow-up impressions are accordingly assessed as low or not perceived correctly (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, pp. 109-110).

Intra-Personal Influences

Selective perception is the selection of information by the interviewer according to his personal situation. As a result, the applicant's objective assessment suffers. A shift in the personal structure of values can, for example, set the bar for the applicant's performance unattainably high (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, p. 65).

Interpersonal Influences

The effects of sympathy and antipathy must be analyzed just as critically as so-called primacy or recency effects. This means the comparatively high attribution of weights of first and last impressions, which may influence the other effects. The sequence effect is the phenomenon in which applicants are judged better or worse, depending on the quality of the representation of previous or subsequent applicants (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, p. 65). The effect of sympathy and antipathy means that applicants who appear likeable are rated better than those who convey a rather unappealing picture. This can quickly lead to the competencies of an applicant who immediately makes a sympathetic impression being completely overestimated or that of an applicant who seems rather unappealing to be devalued. This is one of the main sources of error in recruitment interviews. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that the feeling of sympathy is ultimately subjective (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 112).

Situational Influences

Situational influences include, for example, the room temperature or a possible unpunctuality of the applicant, which may have a lasting impact on the course of the conversation (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, p. 66). Other situational influences that make it difficult to make general statements about the personnel selection interview are e.g. the level of awareness between the two interviewees, the situation on the job market, the age or the age difference of the interview partners, the differences in level of education and social origin, as well as gender (Neuberger, 2015, p. 24).

Assessment Procedures

Due to inadequate training or familiarity of the interviewer with the conversation situation, the procedure as such can lead to distortions. In addition, the assessment criteria cannot be clear or at least inconsistent between the interviewers (Lindner & Lohmann, 2012, p. 66).

Other Sources of Mistakes

If the interview is conducted using closed questions, this reduces the information about the applicant and the presentation of complex content suffers. Too fast staffing can lead to incorrect staffing if it is not adequately checked whether the right employee has been found for the right job at the right time, which is also associated with additional avoidable costs (Welk, 2015, p. 64).

In many industrial companies, personnel selection primarily takes place via resumes and personal interviews. The assessment is based on past performance. In the foreground are also professional job requirements. Process and interpersonal skills of applicants are rarely systematically determined. Therefore, their evaluation is all too often done from the gut. It is therefore not surprising that, according to a study by Intersearch Executive Consultants, inadequate management skills, inadequate leadership skills, inadequate social skills and inadequate adaptability are the most common reasons for unplanned new appointments. For this reason, larger companies in particular rely on assessment centers when hiring new employees, with the help of which they systematically pay attention to the non-technical skills and abilities of their applicants (Hinsch & Olthoff, 2019, pp. 91-92).

Consequences and options to avoid mistakes

Mistakes in personnel selection interviews can mean that the qualifications required for certain tasks are not available with enough employees or that managers are only selected based on their professional qualifications and not on the basis of their leadership skills. A possible consequence would be that skills shortages of individual employees have to be compensated by other team members over a longer period of time. Hiring an unsuitable applicant may result in the applicant leaving the company after a relatively short time. The employer cannot continue the employment relationship during or after the probationary period, or

the employee ends the employment relationship himself due to excessive or insufficient demands. High fluctuation rates or early fluctuation can mean considerable costs for companies if the employee concerned has to be released and compensated and new transaction costs for advertising, search and selection of new candidates. As a rule, these costs increase with the economic importance of the position in the company (Weuster, 2004, pp. 5-6).

The most common mistakes of judgment arise from making intuitive judgments. The evaluation therefore takes place at the same time as the observation, which, however, has not yet been completed at this point in time. It is therefore advisable to divide the assessment process into three phases (observing, describing, evaluating). In the first phase, only what can be observed and described is included in the assessment (concrete behavior and no generalizations). In this phase, your own judgment is deliberately put at the back. In the second phase, what is observed is put into words and recorded in a neutral manner. This also includes the continuous documentation of the conversation. You should therefore take as many notes as possible throughout the interview. The evaluation takes place in the third phase. Here, the notes from the selection interview are systematically evaluated in advance. The quality of a decision increases when it takes place in a dialogical process. In this context, it makes sense to conduct several interviews with changing interview partners with the applicant. The evaluation is then carried out in a large group. The combination of different perspectives can significantly improve the quality of the decision-making process and reduce the fluctuation in this part of the company (Krings, 2017, p. 66).

The creation of an in-house guide for personnel selection interviews enables the different applicants to be compared objectively. The following content structures the process (Welk, 2015, pp. 64-65).

- 1.) Greeting: e.g. brief description of the course of the conversation and an introductory round
- 2.) Description of previous professional development
- 3.) Information about the current position and competencies/tasks
- 4.) Information about the future position and area of responsibility
- 5.) Questions about the company
- 6.) Questions from the applicant and from the company
- 7.) Clarification of the general conditions
- 8.) Conclusion of the conversation
- 9.) Farewell

An essential point for avoiding mistakes in personnel selection interviews is appropriate preparation by the interviewer. In some cases, the selection of personnel requires special content and time-based process management in order to best meet the needs of the applicant and the interests of the company. The first step is to clarify who should take part in the conversation (or conversations) on the part of the company. It is important to ensure that all decision-makers involved also take part in all discussions (typical combination: line manager and HR specialist). The positions of the company interview participants make it clear to an applicant how he perceives the importance of his person or the respective position. For this reason, the next superior manager should also take part in the personnel selection interview or at least briefly meet the applicant. Furthermore, a conversation with the current job holder and future colleagues, as well as a job visit can be taken into account and scheduled. The preparation of a personnel selection interview includes the development of a question guide as well as the preparation of information materials with which the job and the respective company are to be explained in more detail to the applicants. The documents can also be made available to applicants as a printout or information brochure (Weuster, 2004, pp. 179-180).

The best way to reduce perception distortions and assessment errors is to prepare personnel selection interviews in writing. The interview guide already mentioned secures your own conversation

behavior and ensures that all necessary information is requested. It also ensures that all applicants are faced with the same questions (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 113). By selecting the questions in the personnel selection interview, it can be determined and controlled how much information is obtained and how well it is suitable to arrive at an assessment of the applicant. The decisive success criterion is the "how" of a question. Closed questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" should be avoided as much as possible due to their low information value. Unanswered questions generate a higher information content and usually begin with a "W" (what, who, when, where, why, etc.). This form of question requires a comprehensive and complete answer and the taking of your own position. The necessary information about an applicant and his or her suitability for the position to be filled can only be learned through suitable questions. Before carrying out the personnel selection interview, the interviewer should consider which types of questions are used and which should be avoided for reasons of fairness. It must be checked whether, for example, provocative questions from the respective applicant are appropriate for the position in question. If the position requires a discussion of difficult conversation situations and conversation partners in everyday work, it can be useful to include such a short phase in the interview. At the beginning of the recruitment interview, you should work with open questions to gain as much information as possible. In the following course of the conversation, the type of questions can then vary or be changed as soon as comprehensive information about a certain aspect has already been obtained. In order to achieve effective results, some rules should be considered in the interviewer's conversational behavior. This includes, for example, giving the conversation partner time to think, listening carefully and asking questions in the event of ambiguities or identified contradictions (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, pp. 114-116). For the planning, implementation and evaluation of personnel selection interviews, essential legal bases must also be observed. The storage and use of data may only take place after prior notification

of the applicant and his given consent. The use must be purposeful. The purpose must have been made known to the person and consent must be given (Krause, 2017, pp. 92-93).

Conclusions & summary

Personnel selection is one of the most critical issues for a company and represents a decisive competitive advantage (Krings, 2017, p. 1). The current demographic development confirms that it is very difficult to find skilled workers in many industries, which makes the search and selection of suitable employees more important. Very few companies can afford to make wrong decisions in the personnel selection process (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 1).

Aptitude diagnostics form an essential part of personnel selection, with the help of which it can be checked whether and to what extent an applicant is suitable for a specific job (Schuler & Höft, 2007). Targeted personnel selection starts with an open and honest self-assessment of the company, the environment and the task (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, p. 5). The leading decision-making instrument for personnel selection decisions is usually personal interview (Welk, 2015, p. 64).

The consideration of mistakes and their causes in the course of personnel selection interviews is essential, since the selection of personnel or the search for personnel requires costs that vary with the type of position to be filled and the number of applications (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, pp. 2- 3). The most common errors of judgment arise from making intuitive judgments. It is therefore advisable to divide the assessment process into three phases (observing, describing, evaluating) (Krings, 2017, p. 66). The creation of guidelines for personnel selection interviews enables the different applicants to be compared objectively (Welk, 2015, pp. 64-65). An essential point for avoiding mistakes in personnel selection interviews is appropriate preparation by the interviewer. In some cases, the selection of personnel requires special content and

time-based process management in order to best meet the needs of the applicant and the interests of the company (Weuster, 2004, pp. 179-180). By selecting the questions in the personnel selection interview, it can be determined and controlled how much information is obtained and how well it is suitable to arrive at an assessment of the applicant (Lorenz & Rohrschneider, 2015, pp. 114-116). For the planning, implementation and evaluation of personnel selection interviews, essential legal principles must also be observed (Krause, 2017, pp. 92-93).

References

- Bröckermann, R. (2012), Personalwirtschaft: Lehr- und Übungsbuch für Human Resource Management, Schaeffer-Poeschel, Stuttgart.
- Hinsch, M.; Olthoff, J. (2019), Human Factors in der Industrie - Ein Praxisratgeber, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Holtbrügge, D. (2015), Personalmanagement, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Hornke, L.; Winterfeld, U. (2004), Eignungsbeurteilungen auf dem Pruefstand: DIN 33430 zur Qualitaetssicherung, Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Kauffeld, S. (2014), Arbeits-, Organisations- und Personalpsychologie für Bachelor, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Kersting, M.; Püttner, I. (2006), Personalauswahl: Qualitätsstandards und rechtliche Aspekte, H. Schuler, Göttingen.
- Krause, D. E. (2017), Personalauswahl: Die wichtigsten diagnostischen Verfahren für das Human Resources Management, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.

- Krings, T. (2017), Erfolgsfaktoren effektiver Personalauswahl, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Lindner, D.; Lohmann, F. (2012), Personalmanagement, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- List, K.-H. (2013), Personalauswahl in der Pflege: Ausschreibung – Interviews – Entscheidung, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Lorenz, M.; Rohrschneider, U. (2015), Erfolgreiche Personalauswahl: sicher, schnell und durchdacht, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Mayring, P. (2016), Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung: Eine Anleitung zu qualitativem Denken, Beltz, Weinheim.
- Neuberger, O. (2015), Das Mitarbeitergespräch: Praktische Grundlagen für erfolgreiche Führungsarbeit, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Schuler, H.; Höft, S. (2007), Diagnose beruflicher Eignung und Leistung, Huber, Bern.
- Treier, M. (2019), Wirtschaftspsychologische Grundlagen für Personalmanagement, Fach- und Lehrbuch zur modernen Personalarbeit, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Verhoeven, T. (2020), Digitalisierung im Recruiting – Wie sich Recruiting durch künstliche Intelligenz, Algorithmen und Bots verändert, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Welk, I. (2015), Mitarbeitergespräche und Gesprächssituationen, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.
- Weuster, A. (2004), Personalauswahl: Anforderungsprofil, Bewerbersuche, Vorauswahl und Vorstellungsgespräch, Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg-Berlin.