

In an increasingly complex workplace, recruitment automation and web 2.0 innovations are fundamental to the next generation of talent acquisition solutions

Automated Candidate Screening and Assessment



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Objective, Valid, Easy, and Reliable: The New Gold Standard in Automated Candidate Screening and Assessment

Executive Summary

While hiring managers have long embraced applicant tracking systems as a means of shortening the time to hire, finding an automated solution that is objective, valid, easy, and reliable—the “gold standard” in talent acquisition that, by definition, leads to consistently successful hires—has been elusive.

Prevailing methodologies and tools often fall short chiefly because they focus on various facets of the process—whether it's sourcing, tracking, assessing skills, or screening for basic qualifications; in so doing, they fail to provide a comprehensive and seamless “candidate experience” that gives hiring managers a full, integrated, 360-degree view of an individual's true potential. Historically, they are also prone to lengthy and complicated deployments that are disruptive to operations, difficult to administer, and a challenge to navigate. Moreover, many fail to apply standards to ensure that the process is uniform and success is repeatable. In sum, very few provide hiring managers with a process for

identifying the best candidates using a model that is based on objective, validated, and reliable measures...every time.

Conventional systems can be enhanced in four critical areas:

- Reduce the reliance on gathering information from resumes, which are subjective documents that, by their very nature, do not yield an *objective* view of a candidate's experience, skill set, or work style.
- Improve screening methodologies that focus on preferred qualifications, rather than minimum qualifications, via a *validated* job analysis of critical skills and qualifications for top performance.
- Deliver an *easy* to implement, learn, administer, and use solution. Some deployments can take months— from customization to implementation to the typically steep learning curves required to get the solution running effectively.

In addition, a lengthy deployment often disrupts ongoing business practices.

- Ensure *reliable* indicators of a candidate's projected performance by addressing what is arguably the most important determinant of success within a specific organization: culture fit.

This White Paper will present a holistic solution that ensures a hiring process that is objective, valid, easy, reliable—and repeatable. We will briefly address concerns with existing methodologies and tools, then present fundamental concepts for a next-generation talent acquisition solution that is tested, mature, and ready-for-prime time—one that gives Human Resources (HR) and hiring managers the ability to independently assess even highly specialized skills and ascertain a candidate's culture fit...all automatically.

Imagine having the ability to put in place a screening and assessment system that incorporates best practices (and assures Equal Employment Opportunity Commission compliance), balances the candidate experience with scientific rigor, gauges specialized skills in real-time based on a validated job analysis, and helps distill the salient characteristics of company culture that enable hiring managers to reliably ascertain a candidate's fit...all customized and within a completely automated framework. This solution not only makes you more effective, it elevates your strategic value within the organization.

Overcoming Resistance to Change

It was a long time coming, but HR has welcomed applicant tracking systems (ATSs) to their human capital management toolbox. However, HR is still slow to embrace more sophisticated technology that has ripened—technology that moves beyond automating processes to automating decision-making. The best analogy would be the evolution of word processing. First, it facilitated more efficient and less time consuming "document generation." Now, as companies are required to facilitate more efficient collaboration—among and between branch offices, mobile workers, etc.—simple document generation has evolved to make collaboration easier and more efficient via the internet.

Today, the impediments to adopting advanced solutions are largely cultural and to some extent, psychological. As far as the latter, many hiring managers simply are not aware of the possibility—let alone the documented fact—that such technology can be relied upon to make informed and intelligent decisions. Another impediment is the idea that such technology represents major upheaval and is more disruptive than it's worth. However, new technologies are the natural next step for improving systems currently in place and also can provide substantial return on investment (ROI). The ROI from human capital management (HCM) is especially critical when you consider that the cost of replacing a worker

runs as high as two to three times an employee's annual salary.

Conventional Solutions

In an ideal world, you could flip a switch and five highly qualified candidates would materialize—making the hiring decision a choice between the very good and the very best. However, in reality, finding the right candidate is a numbers game: the more candidates you bring in, the better your chances of finding the right one—of course, after spending inordinate amounts of time poring over resumes and conducting interviews.

Conventional solutions have certainly made it easier to sort through candidates by using "filtering" technology as a screening tool. However, filters have proven to be inefficient and ineffective since many qualified candidates are "screened out" when resume key word searches and parsing don't turn up any matches, or the wrong matches, to the job description.

Conceptual matching and intelligent searching, has taken resume parsing to another level—however, this methodology also has some significant drawbacks and inherent problems. In short, intelligent searching matches conceptual and contextual information from a candidate's source document (i.e., a resume or application) to another document (i.e., a requisition or job description). The result is a list indicating which candidates present the closest match by percentage. The first drawback is that the results are based on the accuracy of the candidate's source

document—i.e., resumes, which are subjective and prone to misrepresentation. Second, a hiring manager will still need to review the results to determine whether there really are any matches. Third, users of intelligent searching tools need to be trained, much like voice recognition software, to pick up on the nuances of conceptual and contextual matching—which can improve accuracy, albeit, over time.

Conventional screening solutions are also used as a method to assess candidate skills and experience. However, when it comes to assessing work styles, character, and dependability, hiring managers are more likely to rely on human interaction (i.e., a face-to-face meeting) and intuition. Many would argue that technology could never replace personal interviews in the hiring process. In truth, however, face-to-face interviews are not only time-consuming, but they don't always yield the most reliable results. Interviews can be prone to interviewer bias (i.e., subjectivity and halo and horn effects) and risk running afoul of employment laws. The recently issued Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidance for "best practices" for employers to follow when using employment tests and other screening solutions also highlights the need for objective processes—whether manual or automated. The new focus by EEOC and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) on systemic causes of discrimination is a wake-up call for hiring processes that are not structured and systematic.

In addition, conventional screening processes are largely ineffective because they simply weed out unqualified candidates who do not meet basic criteria, such as education or experience, most often based on information obtained from resumes.

Finally, most conventional assessment models are too narrowly focused on the required skills for *minimal* performance on the job. This may attract people who, on the surface, would appear to be good candidates and well-suited to the position. But how many "hires" who appear well-suited don't pan out owing to a variety of "cultural" and work style issues—perhaps they're temperamentally ill-equipped to handle a more "entrepreneurial" environment or they find a more formal corporate structure constraining. Assessments that include elements of a company's culture—and, more specifically, the nature and makeup of the "team" he/she'll be working with, coupled with an ability to distinguish between mediocre performance and top performance—yields a candidate pool more in line with an employer's hiring objectives, which is to say, more reliable results that yield higher retention rates among hires.

The New Gold Standard: A Best-of-Breed Solution

To compete successfully in today's business climate, organizations need to look beyond resumes and simplified skill assessments to identify the specific competencies and

behaviors that will indicate how well a candidate will succeed. The quality of new hires yielded from an easy-to-use model that provides objectivity, validity, and reliability while focusing on top performance rather than marginal performance is far greater than a system based on conventional processes that are subjective and inconsistent, and rely on an imperfect source document.

An Objective View

In this new model, *objectivity* is achieved by deriving information from a direct, real-time interaction with the candidate—in contrast to conventional processes that begin by gleaning information from a resume, which by definition is subjective and carefully self-managed to present the candidate in the best light. The assessments (i.e., questioning process) guide a "screening in" process that gleans applicant personality, ratings of applicant skill proficiency, and other relevant applicant data via an interactive process that is natural and inviting.

The result for the employer is a complete and objective applicant profile—one that assimilates an applicant's experience, skill set, and behavioral characteristics, and provides a solid indicator of potential performance and success within the organization matched against objectively determined indicators of top performance.

A Valid Process

Selection assessments have been shown to be *valid* predictors of job performance, job satisfaction, commitment, turnover, career

satisfaction, and career success across a wide variety of positions, organizations, industries, and countries. Such embedded assessment tools address attitudes, competencies, and skills, revealing both whether a candidate can do the job *and* how well that person will perform within a particular environment or organizational culture.

The system offers a natural fit for each hiring manager to select and integrate the most suitable assessments—i.e., WorkStyle 5, culture fit, simulation, or any third-party combination thereof—to augment and maximize the screening system. These assessments round out the 360-degree view of each candidate and complete each individual profile. Coupled with prior screening data, and the resume, these assessments then allow HR or the hiring manager to easily identify the top candidates for the position and schedule *final* face-to-face interviews with select individuals.

Easy to Implement and Use

A system that is objective and valid is, as outlined, critical; however, a solution that is difficult to implement and administer, as well as cumbersome to use (from both the HR administrator’s and candidate’s standpoint), is a non-starter.

From an administrator’s perspective, this new model offers a number of advantages—from configuration to administration. First, a hosted or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution (one that is

available over the web via a secure sign-in) is easier to deploy and less intrusive—i.e., business processes can continue unimpeded and uninterrupted.

Second, developing automated recruitment workflows are easier to produce than one may think. This process needs to be, and can be, collapsed to several days. Varying degrees of configuration are essential to ensure that a solution fits a company’s needs—for example, a Web 2.0 approach that incorporates realistic job previews, integrated assessments, and real-time decisioning.

Third, this model provides an administrative “dashboard,” that is designed for intuitive and easy use. Modules, such as job analysis, application, technical skill verification questions, certifications and Onboarding, are optional and those that are selected are seamlessly integrated.

Finally, this new model also accounts for the candidate’s experience within the process. In most conventional solutions, the candidate experience is an afterthought. At the most basic level, traditional candidate screening involves a review of the candidate’s application or resume, a manual prescreen, a phone interview, and perhaps a skills, behavior, or personality assessment. While each stage is interrelated, they are typically conducted independently. This new model seamlessly integrates all these critical components in an automated process. Using a web-enabled or integrated telephone-based solution not only establishes a “standard of hire” and an efficient procedure across the company, it also ensures that each candidate

experiences a seamless and convenient single-session process.

Reliable Results

Perhaps the most important component of this new gold standard is having a *reliable* process that provides repeatable results. Consider that every organization has star performers—John in Sales, Mary who runs customer service—that hiring managers wish they could clone. Of course, they can't. However, by using a web-enabled job analysis module, employers can quickly identify the requisite technical skills and salient characteristics that are shared by top performers in an organization. Once integrated into the overall assessment/interview process, hiring managers can consistently and repeatedly identify and hire those candidates who are more apt to succeed.

The job analysis process is built on an approach that surveys a number of individuals in the company who hold the job, supervise others who do the job, and/or interact with those who do the job. The system identifies important and critical work behaviors, knowledge, and skills, but also technical proficiencies and other more “intangible” competencies such as communication skills, teamwork, and the ability to multi-task and meet deadlines. In short, the system identifies the skills and characteristics of a potential top performer based on information gathered from those who know the job and then uses this data to identify the perfect candidate. It also relieves HR from the responsibility of screening and assessing candidates for very

specific or highly technical positions with which they may not be familiar.

Your Search is OVER

A great deal of software and technology is built with adaptability—for instance, optical character recognition (OCR) and voice recognition technologies can, over time, adapt to individual handwriting and spoken word. Most business applications, including those intended for HR, can be customized and adapted—but only to a point. While conventional screening and assessment technology is adept at automating paper processes—from parsing for key words and gauging basic skills—higher-level decision-making remains in the hands of the HR administrator for reasons both cultural and technical. On a cultural level, HR has an understandable reluctance to defer even minor decision-making responsibilities to a machine. On a technical level, few applications have embedded the level of intelligence necessary to approximate human decision-making.

However, as this White Paper underscores, technology now exists that not only automates a range of candidate screening and assessment processes, but also tailors the solution to make decisions informed by your experiences, your particular needs, and your organizational culture. In short, organizations can now avail themselves of a new standard in candidate screening and assessment—one that offers a holistic approach ensuring that the hiring process is objective, valid, easy, reliable—and repeatable. Most important, this solution does not replace or diminish the primacy of

human decision-making; it simply gives HR or the hiring manager the luxury and freedom to intervene in the process—i.e., the final face-to-face interview—when their expertise is most needed.

This new gold standard in automated screening assessment combines consistency and reliability, ease-of-use and flexibility,

compliance safeguards, and the tools to attune hiring to your organization's culture, all offered within an intuitive web-based framework...effectively turning what was once a disjointed, protracted, and often overly subjective process into a seamless system that dramatically improves your ability to make great hires—again and again.

About the Author

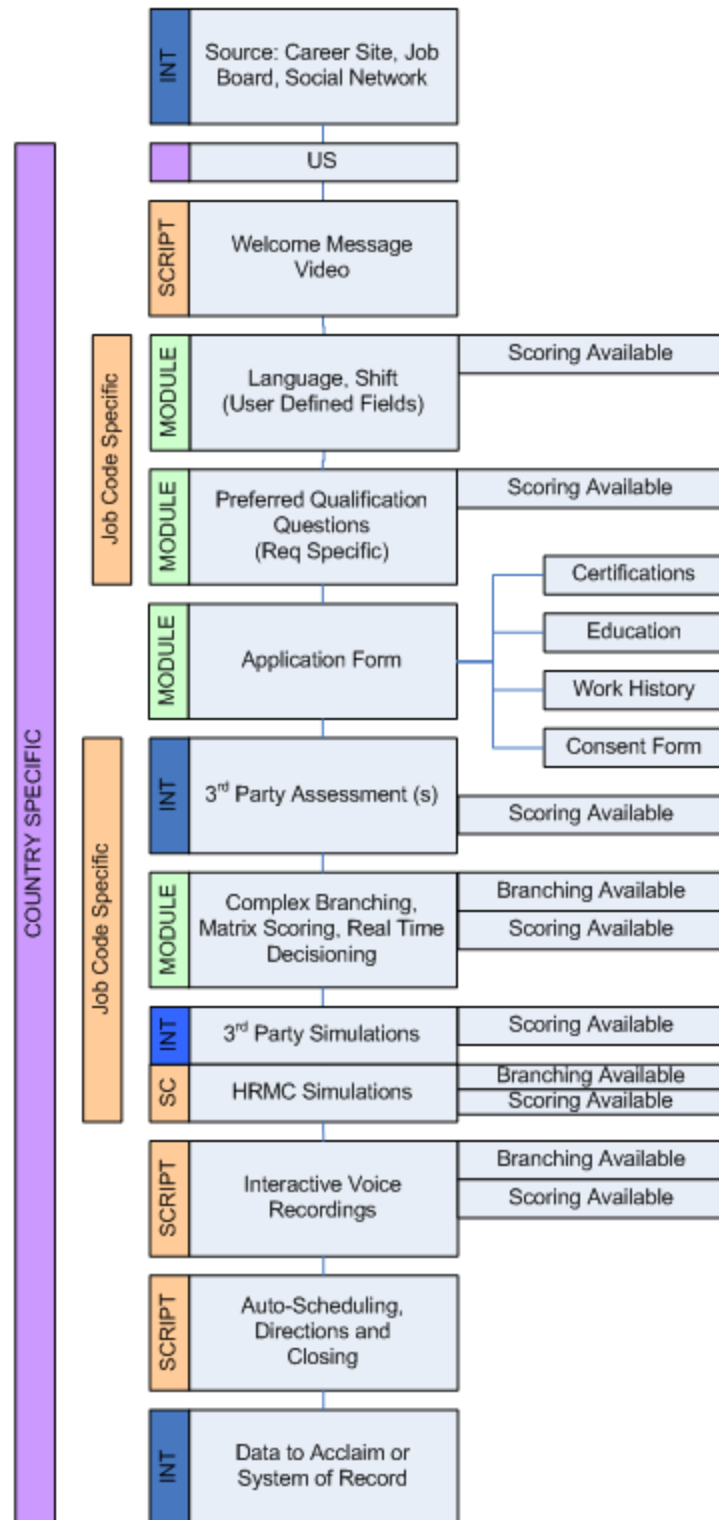
Ron Selewach is a graduate of Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations and has dedicated his professional career to the advancement of the Human Resource profession. After a concentrated career in corporate human resources, he founded Human Resource Management Center (HRMC) in 1984 as a full service consulting firm, offering outsourced HR solutions. Today, HRMC's flagship AcclaimSM platform—a fully Web-enabled and IVR solution—conducts applicant interviews, pre-qualifies and rank-orders candidates using advanced assessment tools based on validated job analyses, and then measures the success of the assimilation of new hires. Ron's community involvement includes active participation in Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Organizations; Technology Education Advisory Councils; U. S. Senator's Small Business Advisory Committee; and as past Chairman of the local Workforce Development Board.

About HRMC

Founded in 1984, Human Resource Management Center (HRMC) is a pioneer in applying cutting edge technology to solve business' most pressing human capital challenges. The company's flagship HRMC AcclaimSM solution simplifies the management of all phases of the recruitment lifecycle, and the identification of opportunities for improvement.

HRMC's technology automates a range of interrelated recruitment processes within a flexible, user-friendly framework, enabling organizations to streamline the acquisition and assessment of talent, evaluate new employees' readiness to contribute, and analyze the impact of a company's culture on retention and performance. Whether accessed over the Web or the phone, users—from job prospects to long-time employees—are led through an interactive experience that approximates true human dialogue, resulting in more effective interviews and employee surveys. HRMC Acclaim is easy to deploy and can be up and running within a few weeks. It can be integrated with and extend the functionality of existing applicant tracking and HRIS systems, or provide companies with a complete, end-to-end automated solution from the ground up.

Automated Recruitment Workflow





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