

Is an “NFL Combine” Part of Your Human Resource Processes?



Tennessee defensive end Derek Barnett performs the broad jump during the 2017 NFL Scouting Combine at Lucas Oil Stadium on Sunday, March 5, 2017 in Indianapolis. (Perry Knotts/NFL)

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It's again that time of year when NFL teams are putting athletes through a rigorous series of evaluations to determine who could best fill the needs they have on their teams. The results become part of a comprehensive data set for each athlete so that teams have objective measures with which to compare their potential draft choices. Teams are looking for the right fit to fill the holes in their team's talent. While a player's collegiate performance (their resume) may determine who gets invited to the combine, it's the objective data collected from on field tests that identify the top candidates at each position. This process is the NFL's way of providing visibility to the attributes of athletes in order for teams to be able to make the right decisions needed to build a successful football enterprise. Similarly, in his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins' research found that the great organizations... "know this much: If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we'll figure out how to take it someplace great." In his follow-up book, *How the Mighty Fall*, Collins' research found that organizations that were able to avoid a decline from greatness understood this principle. For those that organizations that did decline he said:

"If I were to pick one marker above all others to use as a warning sign, it would be a declining portion of key seats filled with the right people. Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, you should be able to answer the following questions: What are the key seats in your organization? What percentage of those seats can you say with confidence are filled with the right people? What are your plans for increasing that percentage? What are your backup plans in the event that a right person leaves a key seat?"

The NFL is a massive business and its combine is a complex and expensive undertaking that small and medium sized organizations could not afford. On the other hand, bad hiring or promotional decisions are something that organizations of any size cannot afford.

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So the questions for a business organization become:

1. How can we obtain the objective data that we need about candidates to supplement our traditional decision resources including resumes, job applications, prior experience and interviews?
2. How can we do this in a way that is both effective and efficient?

In my prior life in industry, I was part of developing and implementing the equivalent of an NFL combine as part of our hiring process for team members. Using a combination of skills tests and group problem solving tasks, our Assessment Center was very effective in identifying candidates that both fit our High Performance Team culture and had the right skills to meet our needs. Unfortunately it was a very costly and inefficient process because of the time and resources required.

For nearly the past 20 years I’ve been an independent consultant working with organizations helping them to unleash the potential of their people. In this time, I’ve found that there is a solution. *Whole Person Assessments* provide objective information on candidates in a way that is both effective and efficient. Whole person assessments answer three questions about a person:

1. Can he or she do the job?

Does a candidate have the right level of *cognitive abilities* to learn and execute the demands of the job? Will she be stressed by changes and adaptations required or bored and complacent because the job doesn’t challenge her?

2. How will she or he do the job?

Will his approach be consistent with the organization’s culture and perhaps more importantly, with the approach of his manager? Will she operate in a collaborative way or be self-centered and overly self-confident leaving damage in her wake? Is he inclined to stick to the rules or test the boundaries? Is she a fast paced multi-tasker or does she prefer a steady and methodical approach?

3. Will he or she do the job long term?

Does the content of the job match what the candidate enjoys doing? Will she have the right amount of involvement with people to remain motivated and engaged? Does the job require selling his ideas and thinking like an entrepreneur? Would she like the level of technical content that the job requires? Would he enjoy the creative requirements contained in the job?

Whole person assessments can be your organization’s version of the NFL combine because they provide objective measures of an individual’s critical attributes of cognitive abilities, behavioral traits and motivational interests. Of course, knowing whether someone is the right person for the key seat you are trying fill depends upon the requirements of that seat. In short – understanding the requirements of a job and then matching the person with the job. Research has shown that this practice of job matching is the key to increasing the probability of successful selection as reflected in the Figure 1.

The U.S. Department of Labor supports the need to supplement traditional selection methods in their publication *Testing and Assessment: An Employer’s Guide to Good Practices*. It states,

“The practice of using a variety of tests and procedures to more fully assess people is referred to as the whole-person approach to personnel assessment. This will help reduce the number of selection errors made and will boost the effectiveness of your decision making.”

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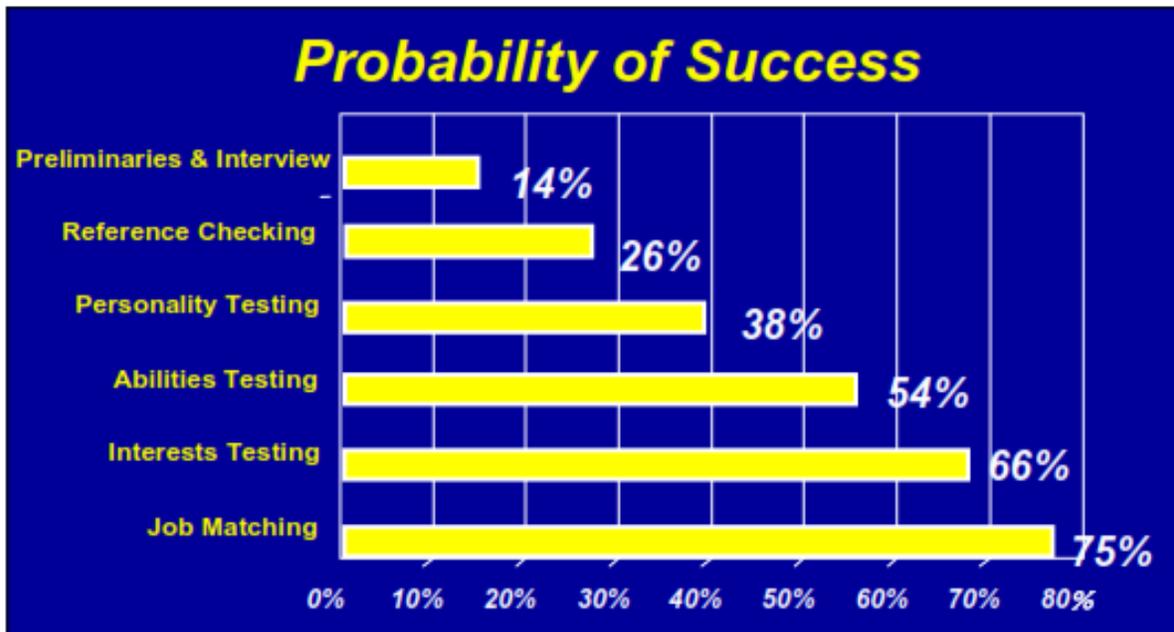


Fig. 1 – Psychological Bulletin Vol. 96, No. 1, August 1994 Professor Mike Smith, University of Manchester

You'll find that the best whole person assessments will provide you with the variety of reports needed to not only fill your key openings but will also provide the information needed to enhance critical Human Resource processes including:

- Onboarding
- Coaching & mentoring
- Leadership development
- Career Exploration and Development
- Succession Planning
- Team formation and development

Using whole person assessments is an effective and efficient solution for organizations of any size because they are easily scalable to an organization's needs. And - their cost pales in comparison to the cost of a bad hiring or promotional decision which SHRM studies indicate can be 90 – 200% of their annual salary.

Whether or not you're a football fan you can learn from the rigors that the NFL puts their best candidates through in the combine. Use assessments to enhance your decision making with objective information that supplements what is provided by resumes, references, applications and interviews. Get the right people in your key seats now and use this information to drive your career development, leadership development and succession planning efforts to ensure a solid future.

PRIORITY PERFORMANCE GROUP is an Authorized Partner for the PXT Select™, the best whole person assessment available today. If you would like to learn how to implement your version of an NFL Combine in your organization from help with a single hire to full integration into your critical HR processes, please get in touch. I can be reached at:

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