

methods, more consideration should be given to the fact that valid selection methods pay off handsomely and will return many times their cost.

As can be seen in Exhibit 8.8, the least costly initial assessment methods include information that can be obtained from application blanks (level of education, grade point average, quality of school, major field of study, extracurricular activity, training and experience, and licensing and certification) and information provided by the applicant (letters of recommendation, résumés, and cover letters). Initial assessment methods of moderate cost include weighted application blanks, reference checks, and initial interviews. Biographical information and background checks are relatively expensive assessment methods.

Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency of measurement. As was noted in Chapter 7, reliability is a requirement for validity, so it would be very difficult for a predictor with low reliability to have high validity. Similarly, it is unlikely that a valid predictor would have low reliability. Unfortunately, the reliability information on many initial assessment methods is lacking in the literature. However, given the frequency with which individuals distort their résumés, it is probably reasonable to infer that applicant-supplied information in application blanks and résumés is of moderate reliability. The reliability of reference checks appears to be relatively low. In terms of training and experience evaluations, while distortion can occur if the applicant supplies training and experience information, interrater agreement in evaluating this information is quite high.⁵³ Biographical information also generally has high reliability. The initial interview, like most unstructured interviews, probably has a relatively low level of reliability.

Validity

Validity refers to the strength of the relationship between the predictor and job performance. Low validity ranges from about .00 to .15, moderate validity ranges from about .16 to .30, and high validity is .31 and above. As might be expected, most initial assessment methods have moderate to low validity because they are used only for making rough cuts among applicants rather than for final decisions. Perhaps the two most valid initial assessment methods are biodata and training and experience requirements; their validity can range from moderate to high.

Utility

Utility refers to the monetary return associated with using the predictor, relative to its cost. According to researchers and decision makers, when comparing the utility of selection methods, validity appears to be the most important consideration.⁵⁴ If, in short, it would be very unusual for a valid selection method to have low utility. Thus, as can be seen in Exhibit 8.8, high, moderate, and low validities tend to directly correspond to high, moderate, and low utility values, respectively. Question marks