

Interest, Values, and Preference Inventories

Interest, values, and preference inventories attempt to assess the activities individuals prefer to do both on and off the job. This is in comparison with predictors that measure whether the person can do the job. However, just because a person can do a job does not guarantee success on the job. If the person does not want to do the job, that individual will fail, regardless of ability. Although interests seem important, they have not been used very much in human resource (HR) selection.

Standardized tests of interests, values, and preferences are available. Many of these measure vocational interests (e.g., the type of career that would motivate and satisfy someone) rather than organizational interests (e.g., the type of job or organization that would motivate and satisfy someone). The two most widely used interest inventories are the *Strong Vocational Interest Blank* (SVIB) and the *Myers-Briggs Type Inventory* (MBTI). Rather than classify individuals along continuous dimensions (e.g., someone is more or less conscientious than another), both the SVIB and the MBTI classify individuals into distinct categories based on their responses to the survey. With the MBTI, individuals are classified into 16 types that have been found to be related to the Big Five personality characteristics discussed earlier.¹⁰² Example interest inventory items are provided in Exhibit 9.9. The SVIB classifies individuals into six categories (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) that match jobs that are characterized in a corresponding manner. Both of these inventories are used extensively in career counseling in high school, college, and trade schools.

Past research has suggested that interest inventories are not valid predictors of job performance. In this research, the average validity of interest inventories in predicting job performance was estimated to be roughly $\bar{r}_v = .10$. However, a more recent review of more than 400 studies suggested more positive conclusions.¹⁰³ Specifically, vocational interests organized by Holland's six occupational types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) predicted various criteria (investigative scores were positively related to task performance; artistic scores negatively so), though these validities were not strong (less than .20 in all cases).

Even if interest inventories are modest predictors of performance, this does not mean that they are invalid for all purposes. Research clearly suggests that when individuals' interests match those of their occupation, they are happier with their jobs and are more likely to remain in their chosen occupation.¹⁰⁴ Thus, although interest inventories fail to predict job performance, they do predict occupational choices and job satisfaction levels. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons why vocational interests are poorly related to job performance is because the interests are tied to the occupation rather than the organization or the job.

Research suggests that while interest inventories play an important role in vocational choice, their role in organizational selection decisions is limited. However, a more promising way of considering the role of interests and values in the staffing process is to focus on person/organization fit.¹⁰⁵ As was discussed in Chapter 1,

EXHIBIT

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