Surviving the Great Resignation: A Tale of One State's Journey.

Throughout our country employers have been severely impacted by the COVID crisis. Researchers have reported that on September 21, 2020 4.4 million people resigned from their jobs. Approximately 1.5 million individuals were projected to retire in 2020; however, the crisis led to 3.6 million workers retiring! This unprecedented loss of individuals in the work place primarily impacted education, transportation, leisure and hospitality industries. However, our prison system was not spared. Throughout the country there were staffing shortages of corrections officers due to many reasons such as illness of themselves or others, lack of day care, fear, and retirements.

How can a system protect themselves from these shortages? Unfortunately, there is no magic potion to fix these problems. We recommend hiring the best person for the job. What does this mean? The "best person" is someone who fits the model for a position. The model considers:

- ➢ background,
- ➢ training,
- ➢ knowledge,
- ➢ personality and
- ➢ fit with the culture.

The best hire may not be a fast hire. When the "fast, just fill the spot" process is implemented, more often than not, your hires end up being poor employees When things get tough, these "fast bodies you hired" do not show up, are poor performers, increase your overtime hours and lead to soaring labor costs.

What can you do to find the best fit person for your CO position? Over the past few years, we have been working with a midwestern state on improving the selection process for the corrections officer position. We have been successful in significantly reducing turnover. This process takes time to build the selection tools which assess characteristics of successful CO's who stay with the organization and perform at high levels. To summarize our process, we did the following:

- ➢ Conduct a thorough job analysis using focus groups, available data on the position, the ONET information, site visits, and a job analysis survey.
- ➢ A project team, which included representatives from all facilities, reviewed information and guided the process with the consultants and headquarters staff.
- ➢ The consultants reviewed all data and identified the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics (KSAO's) which best addressed the position demands for an entry level corrections officer.

➢ The chosen KSAO's were matrixed to the position demands and the custom testing battery was developed.
➢ A validation study was conducted using a predictive validation strategy to determine the final test scales, norms and recommendations. (This process is detailed in a validation study report.)
➢ All individuals involved in hiring were trained to use and interpret the new tests.
➢ Wardens, assistant wardens and other managers were briefed on the process and testing.

Outcomes:
   o Turnover averages were reduced to 9-10% for new hires. Previous turnover was averaging 27% before COVID.
   o Those using the suggested process found they saved days of time interviewing candidates. Interview are conducted only with candidates that do well on the assessments.
   o HR found that those who do better, tend to do better in the interviews. This saved countless hours of time.

After examining the impact of COVID and the need for many to hire anyone they could, turnover went up in institutions sometimes as high as 35%. Using our testing will bring this number down. The current shortages of candidates add another dimension to selection. It presents a dilemma; do you hire only those that fit the role or do you hire bodies? We suggest *hiring those that fit the role*, as reducing turnover can help you address the issues. Other outcomes we usually see are better morale among those on the job, less absenteeism and less overtime due to call offs.

What positions have Pre- Hire testing models?
➢ Correctional Officer
➢ Residential Officer
➢ Probation Parole Officer

Behavioral Characteristics chosen for the models have general and population norms. The data demonstrates testing scores are related to job performance and retention. The job-related profiles have not demonstrated adverse impact.

Your organization may use the Profiles as developed or customize a profile for your culture. Our experienced consultants quickly build the model and advise you on the best practices for establishing job relatedness in accordance with the *Federal Guidelines for Employee Selection*.

What does the Corrections Officer Profile measure?

After our research and extensive discussions with staff, two profiles were developed and validated for Correctional Officer.

Correctional Officer Work Habits Profile which measures:	
Organization	Rules compliance
Reliability	Safety.
Responsibility	
Correctional Officer People Skills Profile measures:	
Assertiveness	Self-confidence
Can do attitude	Self-control
Flexibility	Social awareness
Interpersonal skills	Stress management
Open-mindedness	Team care.

Both Profiles include a candidness check (validity) to determine the degree to which the individual may have exaggerated his/her responses in order to present themselves more favorably. Custom interview questions are also included in the report. The norms are those developed for the position during the validation study.

Our consultants are interested in working with other corrections environments to continue this work. The assessments are on-line, testing time is approximately 15 min. to complete, are scored immediately and provide an inexpensive customized solution to hiring Correctional Officers, Residential Officers and Probation Parole Officers.

Contact Diana for more information or to build your own custom model, take a sample test or review a report.

Initially, 24% of all new hires were termed voluntarily or involuntarily during their probationary period.   After not using the testing during COVID, turnover rose to 35%

We reduced these numbers with our custom testing system to 9% and saved countless hours of interviewing time.

We look forward to hearing from any interested organizations.
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