# 17 Human Resources Policies and Practices



Source: Stephen Lam/Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*After studying this chapter, you should be able to:*

**17-1** Describe the value of recruitment methods.

**17-2** Specify initial selection methods.

**17-3** Identify the most useful substantive selection methods.

**17-4** Compare the main types of training.

**17-5** List the methods of performance evaluation.

**17-6** Describe the leadership role of human resources (HR) in organizations.

## Employability Skills Matrix (ESM)

| | Myth or Science? | Career OBjectives | An Ethical Choice | Point/ Counterpoint | Experiential Exercise | Ethical Dilemma | Case Incident 1 | Case Incident 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Critical Thinking | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Communication | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | |
| Collaboration | | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Knowledge Application and Analysis | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Social Responsibility | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

> ### MyLab Management Chapter Warm Up
> If your professor has assigned this activity, go to www.pearson.com/mylab/management to complete the chapter warm up.

## AN UNUSUAL PERK

What perk could help tech companies attract female employees? Paid maternity leave? Onsite day care? What about the ability to delay having children altogether?

One of the biggest challenges for tech companies is attracting and retaining female employees. In a field that requires creativity, many Silicon Valley companies are trying to take advantage of the innovative edge that comes from having a more gender-diverse workforce. Unfortunately, even with a competitive maternity leave policy, much of the female workforce may have trouble having kids in their late twenties and early thirties while juggling a career in such a competitive market. This can put career women in a difficult spot because the most crucial part of their careers may also be their most fertile years.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, pictured here, wants to give female employees more options. In 2014, Facebook had one of the most generous benefits packages for parents, even by Silicon Valley standards. New parents received four months of paid maternity leave as well as a $4,000 bonus. Expectant mothers could also use onsite care facilities for all their health care needs. Yet Zuckerberg thought he could do more. The Facebook founder expanded employees' health benefits by covering the cost of extracting and freezing eggs. By freezing their eggs, career-oriented Facebook employees

could postpone having children until their careers slowed down without risking infertility in their thirties.

Like many things related to Facebook, Zuckerberg's announcement started a trend. Facebook continues to pay for egg freezing for their female employees, as does Apple and many other tech companies in Silicon Valley. By 2017, egg freezing had spread across the pond. CARE Fertility, one of the largest fertility companies in the United Kingdom, announced that they had been contacted by several different British companies about offering their employees egg freezing.

Egg freezing is just one of many unusual perks that companies in Silicon Valley cover for their employees. Apple provides employees with free concerts, transportation, an online wellness center, and even an unlimited supply of their namesake fruit. The tech start-up Asana gives employees $10,000 to custom-furnish their offices. Dropbox employees get access to free laundry service and dinners with an open bar, costing the company up to $25,000 for each employee. Yet Google reigns supreme for employee perks, with nap pods, a concierge service for errands, a free cafeteria, and over 30 cafés.

Why would companies pay for benefits that cut into their profits? After all, egg freezing alone costs about $20,000 for each employee that takes advantage of the program. Many companies use unusual perks to attract talent. In areas with a labor shortage, such as Silicon Valley, offering such perks improves the chances that a top candidate will accept a job offer. On a broader level, these benefits can enhance an organization's culture. Free dinners can build camaraderie. Concierge services and nap pods can reduce employee stress. Some of these nonessential benefits (free meals, custom offices) can also improve satisfaction. And when employees are satisfied with their jobs, they're more likely to stay, saving the company turnover costs.

*Sources:* Based on B. Molina and E. Weise, "Apple, Facebook to Pay for Women to Freeze Eggs," *USA Today*, October 14, 2014, https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2014/10/14/apple-facebook-eggs/17240953/; C. Purtill, "Silicon Valley's Newest Trend Is Realizing Its Most Insane Perks Aren't Sustainable," *Quartz Media*, May 10, 2016, https://qz.com/679889/silicon-valleys-newest-trend-is-realizing-its-most-insane-perks-arent-sustainable/; A. Robinson, "Egg Freezing Offered as Perk to Female Employees," *Sky News*, April 24, 2017, http://news.sky.com/story/egg-freezing-offered-as-perk-to-female-employees-10848413; and L. Bradford, "13 Tech Companies That Offer Cool Work Perks," *Forbes*, July 27, 2016, https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurencebradford/2016/07/27/13-tech-companies-that-offer-insanely-cool-perks/#165aa9c679d1.

The message of this chapter is that human resources (HR) policies and practices—such as employee recruitment, selection, training, and performance management—influence an organization's effectiveness.[1] Studies show that managers—even HR managers—often don't know which HR practices work and which don't, so they constantly experiment with techniques ranging from free tuition to stress-based interviews. Let's discuss both new and tried-and-true methods, and their effect on Organizational Behavior (OB), beginning with the recruitment function.

# Recruitment Practices

**17-1** Describe the value of recruitment methods.

The first stage in any HR program is recruiting, closely followed by selection. A selection system can only be as good as the individuals who apply in the first place.[2] Strategic recruiting has become a cornerstone for many companies, in which recruiting practices are developed in alignment with long-term strategic goals. As for defining "success" in recruiting, most research suggests that the best system attracts candidates who are highly knowledgeable about the job and the organization.[3] Such candidates are likely to have a better fit between their skills and the job requirements, and to be more satisfied in the jobs they take. Consistent with these findings, some of the most effective recruiting techniques include internal referrals, internship programs, and other methods that give potential applicants enough information to adequately evaluate the roles they may be occupying.

Companies are increasingly turning away from outside recruiting agencies and relying on their own executives and HR professionals for talent searches.[4] The most effective recruiters—internal or external—are well informed about the job, are efficient in communicating with potential recruits, and treat recruits with consideration and respect.[5] In addition, it is very important that internal recruiters use fair and just practices while recruiting employees because fairness perceptions are related to job offer acceptance.[6] Recruiters also use a variety of online tools, including job boards and social media, to bring in applications. Online recruiting has yielded an exponentially increased number of applications, even as the means to identify the best online recruitment sources are still developing.[7] Social-networking services have facilitated many connections. Some organizations are pioneering unique methods, such as online programming contests that masquerade as games, to identify individuals with top skill sets who may be attracted to apply for positions. These contests have been successful for recruiting applicants from all over the globe.[8]

# Selection Practices

**17-2** Specify initial selection methods.

**human capital resources** The capacities of a work unit derived from the collective knowledge, skills, abilities, and other resources of the organization's workforce.
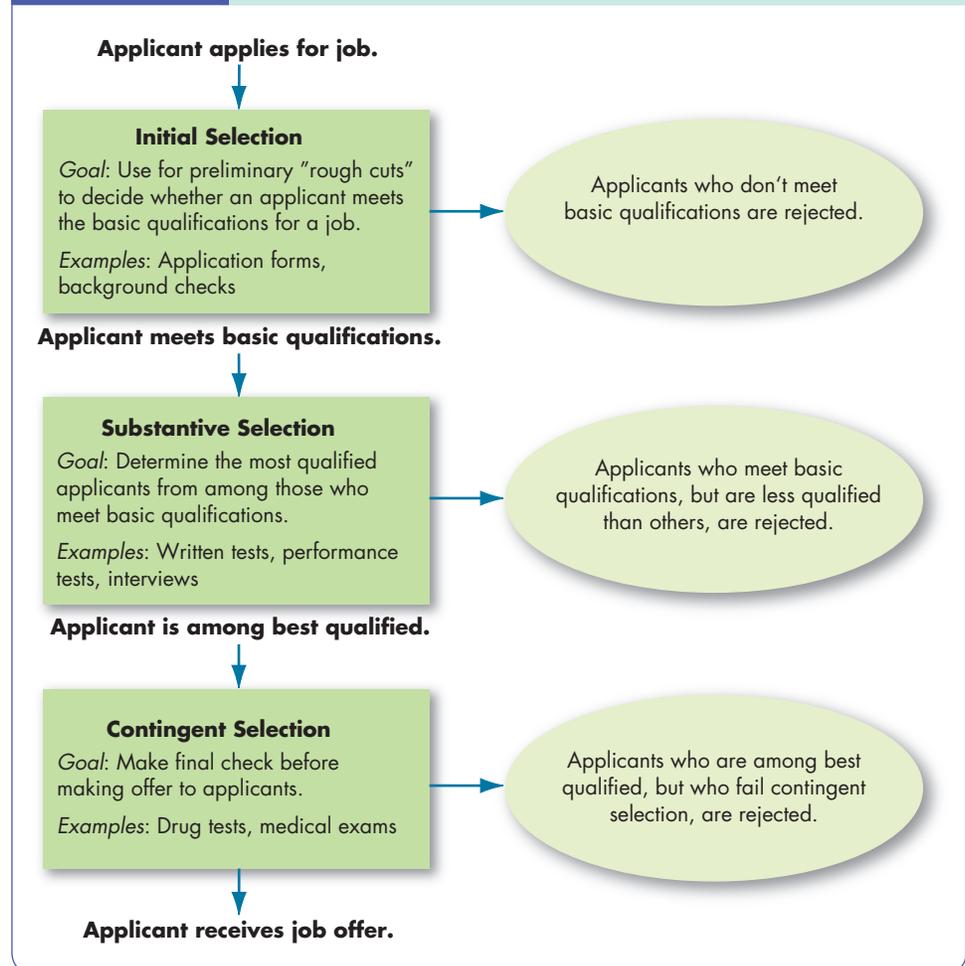
One of the most important HR functions is hiring the right people. When companies hire the right people, they increase their human capital resources. **Human capital resources** are the capacities available to an organization through its employees.[9] The resources include specialized skills, collective knowledge, abilities, and other resources available through an organization's workforce.

How do you figure out who the right people are from all the candidates? Identifying the top candidates is the objective of the selection process, which matches individual characteristics (ability, experience, and so on) with the requirements of the job.[10] When management fails to get a proper match, employee performance and satisfaction both suffer. With more applications than ever coming in, it is paramount to ensure that your organization has an effective method for identifying the most qualified applicants. Technology has come a long way in a short time, but its recruiting uses are not yet streamlined. Technology that sorts through applications to find the unique combinations of traits and experience needed for the job is not enough; you are looking for top performers. Even technology to inform applicants of their status in the hiring process is not universally operational.[11]

## How the Selection Process Works

Exhibit 17-1 shows how the selection process works in most organizations. Having decided to apply for a job, applicants go through several stages—three are shown in the exhibit—during which they can be rejected at any time.

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**Exhibit 17-1**    **Model of Selection Process in Organizations**

**Applicant applies for job.**

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**Initial Selection**

*Goal*: Use for preliminary "rough cuts" to decide whether an applicant meets the basic qualifications for a job.

*Examples*: Application forms, background checks

→ Applicants who don't meet basic qualifications are rejected.

**Applicant meets basic qualifications.**

↓

**Substantive Selection**

*Goal*: Determine the most qualified applicants from among those who meet basic qualifications.

*Examples*: Written tests, performance tests, interviews

→ Applicants who meet basic qualifications, but are less qualified than others, are rejected.

**Applicant is among best qualified.**

↓

**Contingent Selection**

*Goal*: Make final check before making offer to applicants.

*Examples*: Drug tests, medical exams

→ Applicants who are among best qualified, but who fail contingent selection, are rejected.

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**Applicant receives job offer.**

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In practice, organizations often forego some of these steps in the interest of saving time. (For example, a meatpacking plant may hire anyone who walks in the door because there are not many people who want to "thread" a pig's intestines for a living.) But most organizations follow a process that looks something like this exhibit. Let's go into a bit more detail about each stage.

## Initial Selection

Initial selection devices are used for preliminary rough cuts to decide whether the applicant meets the basic qualifications for a job. Application forms and résumés (including letters of recommendation) are initial selection devices. Background checks are either an initial selection device or a contingent selection device, depending on how the organization handles them. Some organizations prefer to look into an applicant's background right away. Others wait until the applicant is about to be hired, contingent on everything else checking out. Still others seem to barely check anything, instead hiring friends and family. This practice is controversial partly because it thwarts the workplace diversity that can increase organizational performance.[12]

**Application Forms**    You have no doubt submitted your fair share of applications. By itself, the information submitted on an application form is not a very useful predictor of performance. However, it can be a good initial screen.

For example, there's no sense spending time interviewing an applicant for a registered nurse position if he doesn't have the proper credentials (education, certification, experience). Managers must be careful about the questions they ask on applications, though. Obviously, questions about race, gender, and nationality are disallowed. However, other questions also put companies in legal jeopardy. For example, applications should not inquire about marital status, dependents, and family obligations.

Many organizations encourage applicants to apply online. It takes them only a few minutes, and the form can be forwarded easily to the people responsible for making the hiring decision. Most major corporations have a career page on their websites where prospective employees can search for available positions by location or job type and then apply online. These days, you are more likely to e-mail or upload your résumé than send anything by mail, and applicants sometimes create video résumés. Candidate preferences are constantly changing. Research in the Netherlands suggested that applicants from minority ethnic groups (in this case, Turkish and Moroccan) preferred the personal nature of the video résumé.[13]

Employers are asking for photos with applicant submissions more often, and some are then scanning the photo with facial-recognition software to match the face to the applicant's home address, Social Security number, criminal record, and affiliations. While this seems like a good business practice, experts recommend against it, unless the business operates in a high-security environment, because applicants can claim discrimination based on their facial characteristics.[14] In addition, many minority applicants may want to conceal their race to avoid discrimination in the selection process. In fact, unless an organization indicates that they value diversity, many minority applicants may "whiten" their résumés to reduce discrimination.[15]

When you are the candidate, be careful about what you put on your online applications. Many HR departments, faced with an overwhelming number of electronic submissions, are using software to preselect candidates based on keyword matches between applications and the qualifications needed for the job. Their software often seeks to screen out unacceptable candidates rather than select potentially good ones. While you will want to incorporate all the keywords that accurately describe your experience, including paid and volunteer work,[16] and use whatever prompts you are given to outline the personal characteristics that qualify you, be careful not to overstate.[17]

**Background Checks**    More than 80 percent of employers conduct both employment and personal reference checks on applicants at some point in the hiring process. The reason is obvious: They want to know how an applicant did in past jobs and whether former employers would recommend hiring the person. The problem is that former employers rarely provide useful information. In fact, nearly two-thirds refuse to give detailed references because they are afraid of being sued for saying something bad about a former employee. Although this concern is often unfounded (employers are safe as long as they stick to documented facts, and several states have passed laws protecting truthful information provided in reference checks), in our litigious society, most employers play it safe. The result is a paradox: Most employers want reference information, but few will give it out. Employers do call personal references for a more candid idea of the applicant; however, research found that 30 percent of hiring managers regularly discovered references that were false or misleading.[18] Some organizations have turned to reference-checking software that sends 10-minute surveys to references. Research indicates this new technology may result in better (more objective) information.[19]

Letters of recommendation are another form of background check. These aren't as useful as they may seem. Applicants select references who will write positive things about them, so almost all letters of recommendation are positive.

In the end, readers either ignore them or read "between the lines" to try to find hidden meaning.

Many employers search for candidates online through a general Internet search or through a targeted search of social-networking sites. The legality of this practice has come into question, but there is no doubt that many employers include an electronic search to see whether candidates have any history that might make them a dubious choice for employment. For some potential employees, an embarrassing or incriminating photo circulated through Facebook may make it hard to get a job. A study found that independent raters viewing candidate Facebook profiles were able to accurately determine candidate conscientiousness, agreeability, and intelligence that later translated into predictable job performance scores as rated by supervisors.[20] More recent research found that recruiters' ratings did not predict job performance and turnover beyond normal selection and screening measures (e.g., traditional personality measures). Ratings of social media also reflected bias toward white and female candidates.[21]

Some employers check credit histories. A bank hiring tellers, for example, would probably want to know about a candidate's credit history, but credit checks are increasingly being used for nonbanking jobs. There is some evidence in favor of this practice. Task performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and conscientiousness (which is a predictor of job performance, see Chapter 5) were found to be positively related to credit scores.[22] However, the consistency of the links is questioned—research also found that minority status was adversely related to credit scores, while age and educational attainment were positively related.[23] Because of discrimination concerns and the invasive nature of credit checks, employers must be sure there is a need for them.

Some employers conduct criminal background checks. Currently, 65 million U.S. adults (one in four) have criminal records, and for many it is difficult or impossible to find work.[24] The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) states that candidates cannot be denied employment based only on the findings of background checks, and experts point out that the checks are often inaccurate anyway. Also, because job candidates are seldom told why they are turned down, individuals can be hurt without having the opportunity for correction.[25] When given a chance to explain a conviction, many applicants are able to redeem themselves in the eyes of recruiters.[26] To complicate matters further, a criminal history can legally be used for rejection only if the violation relates to the job (an embezzler could be disqualified for jobs in finance, but not in, say, the medical field).[27] A civil rights movement has sought to ban employers from even asking applicants whether they have criminal convictions.

Background checks are usually but not always necessary, with interesting outcomes. Notably, some companies deliberately set out to hire applicants who wouldn't pass background checks, like those with criminal backgrounds. These organizations value second chances in their cultures and report that many of these workers become valuable contributors to their organizations and society. Such hires are not without risk, however, and they must be carefully managed.[28] Although it would seem best that employers refrain from conducting criminal background checks, *not* checking can carry a legal cost if an employee with a record commits a crime while on the job.

# Substantive and Contingent Selection

**17-3**  Identify the most useful substantive selection methods.

If an applicant passes the initial screens, next are substantive selection methods. These selection methods are at the heart of the selection process and include written tests, performance-simulation tests, and interviews. We will discuss these and contingent selection tests, which are usually issued to candidates who pass the substantive tests.

At this Sarku Japan fast-food restaurant, employees applying for management positions must take written tests as part of the company's substantive selection process. Written tests for intelligence, integrity, personality, and interests are popular selection devices that help predict which applicants will be successful on the job.
*Source:* Michael S. Williamson/The Washington Post/ Getty Images



## Written Tests

Long popular as selection devices, written employment tests—called paper-and-pencil tests, although most are now available online—declined in use between the late 1960s and mid-1980s, especially in the United States. They were frequently characterized as discriminatory, and many organizations had not validated them as job-related. Since then, however, there has been a resurgence, and today most organizations have at least considered using one or more tests.[29] Managers recognize that valid tests can help predict who will be successful on the job.[30] Applicants, however, tend to view written tests as less valid and fair than interviews or performance tests.[31] Typical tests include (1) intelligence or cognitive ability tests, (2) personality tests, and (3) integrity tests.

**Intelligence or Cognitive Ability Tests**    Tests of intellectual ability/cognitive ability/intelligence (the terms are sometimes used interchangeably), spatial and mechanical ability, perceptual accuracy, and motor ability have long proven valid predictors for the performance of many skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled operative jobs.[32] Overall, intelligence tests have proven to be particularly good predictors for jobs that include cognitively complex tasks (like learning the ever-more-complicated playbooks in the National Football League).[33] Many experts say intelligence tests are the *single best* selection measure across jobs and that they are at least as valid in the European Union (EU) as in the United States.[34] While cognitive ability tests have long been considered to measure a single, unified cognitive capacity, some recent work suggests that they may be useful tests for different specific abilities depending on the requirements of a job.[35] For example, differentiating mathematical, verbal, and technical abilities in hiring processes may lead to better predictions of job performance than relying on just one overall cognitive ability score.

**Personality Tests**    Personality tests are inexpensive and simple to administer, and their use has grown. However, concerns about applicants faking responses remain, partly because it's fairly easy to claim to be hard-working, motivated, and dependable when asked in a job application setting even if that's not accurate, and partly because applicants aren't always aware they are faking.[36] One study of

Croatian university students suggested that individuals can be partially successful in faking a desirable profile.[37] Another study in China indicated that including warning messages for potential faking behavior with the tests may help curb the behavior.[38] Two reviews comparing self-reported personality to observer-rated personality found that observer ratings are better predictors of job performance and other behaviors.[39] Thus, employers might want to consider adding messages about the need for truthfulness in personality tests and asking employment references about an applicant's personality as part of the screening process.

**Integrity Tests**    As ethical problems in organizations have increased, integrity tests have gained popularity. These paper-and-pencil tests measure factors such as dependability, carefulness, responsibility, and honesty. They have proven to be powerful predictors of job performance (as measured as objectively as possible by supervisors) and of the potential for theft, discipline problems, and excessive absenteeism.[40] However, the many available tests do not all predict job performance outcomes equally well. Managers must be careful to choose one that measures ethical criteria matched to the job responsibilities.[41]

## Performance-Simulation Tests

What better way to find out whether applicants can do a job successfully than by having them do it? That's precisely the logic of performance-simulation tests. Although they are more complicated to develop and administer than standardized tests, performance-simulation tests have higher *face validity* (the measurement of whether applicants perceive the measures to be accurate), and their popularity has increased. Predictive simulations are commonly available through work samples, assessment centers, situational judgment tests, and realistic job previews.

**work sample tests**    Hands-on simulations of part or all of the work that applicants for routine jobs must perform.

**Work Sample Tests**    **Work sample tests** are hands-on simulations of part or all the work that workers in the job routinely must perform. Each work sample element is matched with a job-performance element to measure applicants' knowledge, skills, and abilities with more specificity than written aptitude and personality tests.[42] Work samples are widely used in the hiring of skilled workers such as welders, machinists, carpenters, and electricians. Work sample tests are increasingly used for all levels of employment.

**assessment centers**    Off-site locations where candidates are given a set of performance-simulation tests designed to evaluate their managerial potential.

**Assessment Centers**    A more elaborate set of performance-simulation tests, specifically designed to evaluate a candidate's managerial potential, is administered in **assessment centers**. Line executives, supervisors, and/or trained psychologists evaluate candidates as they go through one to several days of exercises that simulate real problems they would confront on the job.[43] For example, a candidate might be required to play the role of a manager who must decide how to respond to 10 memos in an in-basket within a 2-hour period. Assessment centers are good predictors of performance; however, some debate their validity because ratings may be confounded by many factors. For example, the results of assessment center exercises may be affected by whether it is easy for applicants to guess the traits needed to perform well or by the disposition of role players.[44]

**situational judgment tests**    Substantive selection tests that ask applicants how they would perform in a variety of job situations; the answers are then compared to the answers of high-performing employees.

**Situational Judgment Tests**    To reduce the costs of job simulations, many organizations have started to use **situational judgment tests**, which ask applicants how they would perform in a variety of job situations and then compare their answers to the answers of high-performing employees.[45] Coaching can improve scores on these tests, though, which raises questions about whether they reflect true judgment or merely good test preparation.[46] One study comparing situational judgment tests to assessment centers found the assessment centers were a better predictor of job performance, although the difference was not large.[47] Ultimately, the lower cost of the situational judgment test may make it a better choice for some organizations than a more elaborate work sample or assessment center experience.

**realistic job previews**    Substantive selection tests that are job tryouts to assess talent versus experience.
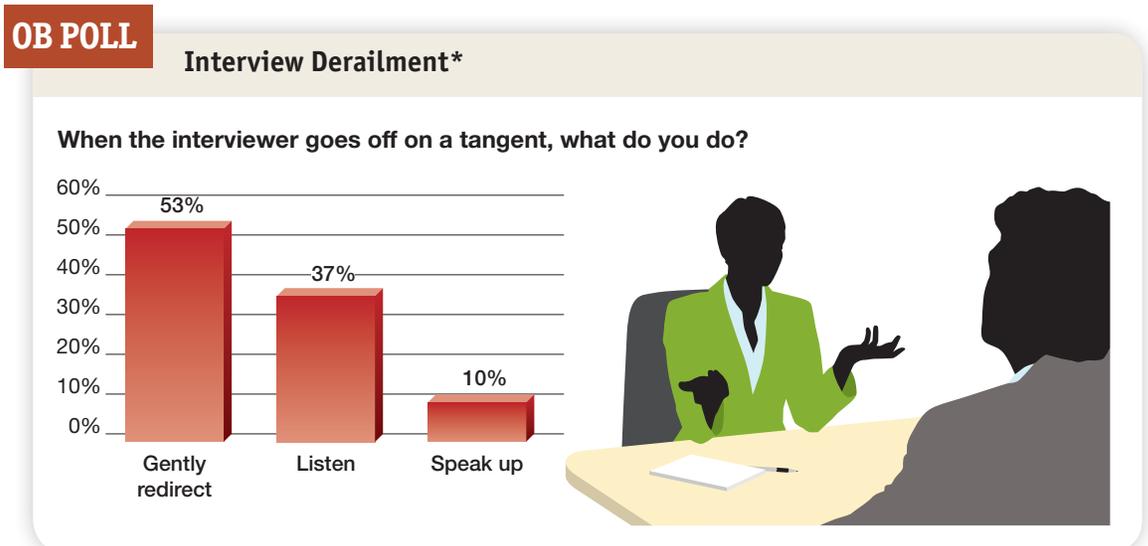
**Realistic Job Previews**    Employers are increasingly using work sample methods that go beyond assessment testing into the realm of actual work performed and evaluated. These are sometimes known as **realistic job previews** or job tryouts, and they are given as a way to assess talent versus experience. Experts are finding that they also decrease turnover because both employers and new hires know what they are getting into ahead of time.[48] When George McAfee applied for a vice president position in the tech industry, he was required to give presentations, conduct research, and hold talks with executives about their ongoing business concerns for over a week, all unpaid. He felt the employer was taking advantage of his free labor, but he said, "You just have to accept that and not be offended."[49] HR managers may risk losing qualified candidates who object to this extensive job test and withdraw from the process. Those who identify with an organization's mission, people, or products will be less likely to withdraw, suggesting that HR managers should seek to engage candidates with the organization early in the selection process.[50]

## Interviews

Of all the selection devices that organizations around the globe use to differentiate candidates, the interview has always been a standard practice. It also tends to have a disproportionate amount of influence. Overreliance on interviews is problematic because extensive evidence shows that impression management techniques (see Chapter 13) such as self-promotion have a strong effect on interviewer preferences even when the displayed traits are unrelated to the job.[51] Conversely, the candidate who performs poorly in the employment interview is likely to be cut from the applicant pool regardless of experience, test scores, or letters of recommendation. And unfortunately, candidates can be rated lower for something as trivial as a blemish on their faces, one study found.[52]

**unstructured interviews**    Short, casual interviews made up of random questions.

Interviews are either structured or unstructured. The popular **unstructured interview**—short, casual, and made up of random questions—is simply not a very effective selection device,[53] and it can easily derail into nonproductive conversation (see OB Poll). The data it gathers are typically biased and

**OB POLL**

**Interview Derailment***

**When the interviewer goes off on a tangent, what do you do?**

- Gently redirect: 53%
- Listen: 37%
- Speak up: 10%

*\* Note:* Based on a survey of 150 job candidates.
*Source:* Based on J. Yang and P. Trap, *USA Today*, November 13, 2012, 1B.

Arcadio Cruz (left) uses a structured interview approach in gathering information from job applicants for positions at Orchard Hardware Supply store in Los Angeles. Questions asked in structured interviews are objective and standardized for all applicants and encourage open-ended responses.
*Source:* Patrick Fallon/Bloomberg/Getty Images

**structured interviews**    Planned interviews designed to gather job-related information.

often only modestly related to future job performance. Still, managers are reluctant to use **structured interviews**—planned interviews designed to gather job-related information—in place of their favorite questions, such as "If you could be any animal, what would you be, and why?" Structured interviews limit subjectivity as much as possible and therefore can provide more reliable responses. Harry West, CEO of innovation design firm Continuum, asks all candidates the same basic questions: "What is it you want to do? What is it that you're good at? What is it that you're not good at? Tell me about what you've done." This is an excellent start in that the questions are objective in nature, prompt open-ended responses, and are standardized for all candidates.[54]

Without structure, interviewers tend to favor applicants who share their attitudes, give undue weight to negative information, and allow the order in which applicants are interviewed to influence their evaluations.[55] Structured interviews, on the other hand, reduce the extent to which interviewers are influenced by applicant appearance and impression management tactics, such as flattery and self-promotion.[56] To reduce bias and improve the validity of interviews, managers should adopt a standardized set of questions, a uniform method of recording information, and standardized ratings of applicants' qualifications. Training interviewers to focus on specific dimensions of job performance, practicing evaluation procedures of candidates, and giving *interviewers* feedback on how well they focused on job-relevant characteristics significantly improves the accuracy of their ratings,[57] although initial impressions from unstructured conversations at the beginning of an interview may still influence interviewer ratings.[58] Interview effectiveness also improves when employers use *behavioral structured interviews,* probably because these assessments are less influenced by interviewer biases.[59] These interviews require applicants to describe how they handled specific problems and situations in past jobs, based on the assumption that past behavior offers the best predictor of future behavior. **Panel interviews**—structured interviews conducted with a candidate and a number of panel members in a joint meeting—also minimize the influence of individual biases and have higher validity.

**panel interviews**    Structured interviews conducted with a candidate and a number of panel members in a joint meeting.

In practice, most organizations use interviews for a number of reasons. Companies as diverse as Southwest Airlines, Disney, Bank of America, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, and Harrah's Entertainment use interviews to assess applicant–organization fit. In addition to evaluating specific, job-related skills, managers look at personality characteristics and personal values to find individuals who fit the organization's culture and image. Some companies also use job interviews as a recruiting tool, trying to "sell" applicants on the value of the job and organization. This strategy may sometimes be necessary because of a tight labor market, but it may also be problematic. One study showed that interviewers who were trying to promote the organization during interviews were significantly worse at identifying applicant personality traits and selection than those who focused exclusively on assessing candidate qualifications.[60]

### Contingent Selection Tests

If applicants pass the substantive selection methods, they are ready to be hired, contingent on final checks. One common contingent check is a drug test. Publix grocery stores make tentative offers to applicants contingent on their passing such a test as drug-free, as do many other organizations.

Drug testing is controversial. Many applicants think testing without reasonable suspicion is invasive or unfair and say that they should be tested on job-performance factors, not lifestyle choices that may not be relevant. Employers might counter that drug use and abuse are extremely costly, not just in financial terms but also in terms of people's safety. In the United States, they have the law on their side. The Supreme Court has concluded that drug tests are "minimally invasive" selection procedures that, as a rule, do not violate individuals' rights.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), U.S. firms may not require employees to pass a medical exam before a job offer is made. However, they can conduct medical exams *after* making a contingent offer—but only to determine whether an applicant is physically or mentally able to do the job. Employers also sometimes use medical exams to find out whether and how they can accommodate employees with disabilities. For jobs requiring exposure to heavy physical or psychological demands, such as air traffic controllers or firefighters, medical exams are obviously an important indicator of the ability to perform.

## Training and Development Programs

**17-4** Compare the main types of training.

Competent employees don't remain competent forever. Skills deteriorate and can become obsolete, and new skills need to be learned. That's why corporations in the United States spend over $70 billion annually, and organizations worldwide spend over $130 billion annually, on training.[61]

### Types of Training

Training and development programs are usually in the purview of HR departments. Training can include everything from teaching employees basic reading skills, improving executive leadership, helping employees become more accepting of diversity, and increasing work-life balance (discussed later in the chapter).[62] Here, we discuss four general skill categories—basic skills, technical skills, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills—and civility and ethics training.

**Basic Skills**    One survey of more than 400 HR professionals found that 40 percent of employers believe high school graduates lack basic skills in reading comprehension, writing, and math.[63] As work has become more sophisticated, the need for these basic skills has grown significantly, leading to a gap between

employer demands for skills and the available skills in the workforce.[64] The challenge isn't unique to the United States; it's a worldwide problem, from the most developed countries to the least.[65] For many undeveloped countries, widespread illiteracy means there is almost no hope of competing in a global economy.

Organizations increasingly have to teach employees basic reading and math skills. These interventions can yield worthwhile improvements for the organization. In a classic example, a literacy audit showed that employees at gun manufacturer Smith & Wesson needed at least an eighth-grade reading level to do typical workplace tasks.[66] Yet 30 percent of the company's 676 workers with no degree scored below eighth-grade levels in either reading or math. After the first round of basic-skills classes, company-paid and on company time, 70 percent of attendees brought their skills up to the target level, allowing them to do a better job. They displayed increased abilities to use fractions and decimals; better overall communication; greater ease in writing and reading charts, graphs, and bulletin boards; and a significant increase in confidence.

**Technical Skills**  Most training is directed at upgrading and improving an employee's technical skills, which is increasingly important for two reasons: new technology and new structural designs in the organization.

As organizations flatten their structures, expand their use of teams, and break down traditional departmental barriers, employees need mastery of a wider variety of tasks and increased knowledge of how their organization operates. Indian companies and others have faced a dramatic increase in demand for skilled workers in areas like engineering for emerging technologies, but many recent engineering graduates lack up-to-date knowledge required to perform these technical tasks.[67] Many organizations offer technical training to bridge the gap. Companies like Tata and Wipro provide new hires with up to 3 months of training to ensure that they have the knowledge to perform the technical work demanded. In addition, these organizations are attempting to form partnerships with engineering schools to ensure that academic curricula meet the needs of contemporary employers.

**Problem-Solving Skills**  Problem-solving training for managers and other employees can include activities to sharpen their logic, reasoning, and problem-defining skills as well as their ability to assess causation, develop and analyze alternatives, and select solutions. Problem-solving training has become part of almost every organizational effort to introduce self-managed teams or implement quality-management programs.

**Interpersonal Skills**  Most employees belong to a work unit, and their work performance depends on their ability to interact effectively with their coworkers and bosses. Some employees have excellent interpersonal abilities, but others require training to improve listening, communicating, and team-building skills. Although many professionals are greatly interested in interpersonal skills training, most evidence suggests that skills learned in such training do not readily transfer to the workplace;[68] this may depend, however, on the type of skills taught in training. For example, a recent review of training specifically designed for improving interpersonal interactions among team members in hospitals suggests that team training improved patient outcomes.[69]

**Civility Training**  As HR managers have become increasingly aware of the effects of social behavior in the workplace, they have paid more attention to the problems of incivility, bullying, and abusive supervision in organizations. Examples of incivility include being ignored, being blamed for others' mistakes and receiving no credit for achievements, having one's reputation undermined in front of others, and experiencing other situations meant to demean

After receiving many complaints from patients about rude and insulting behavior from its nursing staff, hospital officials at a clinic in southern China hired flight attendants to give the nurses civility training. During a training intervention, nurses learned how to greet patients politely and care for them with grace, kindness, and patience.

*Source:* Europics/Newscom



or disparage an employee or others.[70] Researchers have shown that these forms of negative behavior can decrease satisfaction, reduce job performance, increase perceptions of unfair treatment, increase depression, and lead to psychological withdrawal from the workplace.[71] Therefore, organizations are getting involved in reducing the incidence rate to improve their workplaces and limit their liability.

Is there anything HR departments can do to minimize incivility, bullying, and abusive supervision? One possibility is training specifically targeted to building civility by holding directed conversations about it and supporting the reduction of incivility on an ongoing basis. Following one training intervention, civility, respect, job satisfaction, and trust increased, while incivility, cynicism, and absences decreased.[72] Thus, the evidence suggests that deliberate interventions to improve the workplace climate and foster positive behavior can indeed minimize the problems of incivility.

**Ethics Training**    It is common for employees to receive ethics and values guidance incorporated in new-employee orientations, in ongoing developmental programs, or as periodic reinforcements of ethical principles.[73] But the jury is still out on whether you can actually teach ethics.[74] Critics argue that ethics are based on values, and value systems are learned by example at an early age. They say that by the time employees are hired, ethical values are fixed. In support, some research suggests ethics training does not have a significant long-term effect on participants' values and even that exposure to business and law school programs *decreases* students' level of prosocial ethical values.[75]

Supporters of ethics training say values *can* be learned and changed after early childhood. And even if an individual's values can't be changed, ethics training helps employees recognize ethical dilemmas and become more aware of the ethical issues underlying their actions. It also reaffirms an organization's expectations that members will act ethically. Research has found that individuals who have greater exposure to organizational ethics codes and ethics training tend to be more satisfied and perceive their organizations as more socially responsible, so ethics training does have some positive effects.[76]

## Training Methods

Historically, *training* meant "formal training," planned in advance and following a structured format. HR departments play a big role in this training. Formal training and development programs are in use, but much of the workplace learning takes place in *informal training*—unstructured, unplanned, and easily adapted for situations and individuals. In reality, most informal training is nothing other than employees helping each other, sharing information, and solving work-related problems together. Thus, many managers are now supportive of what used to be considered "idle chatter."

**Job Training**    *On-the-job training* methods include job rotation, apprenticeships, understudy assignments, and formal mentoring programs. U.S. companies have been increasingly using longer-term job rotations to train managers for higher positions and to foster collaboration.[77] But because on-the-job training methods often disrupt the workplace, organizations also invest in *off-the-job training*. The $130 billion figure we cited earlier for training was largely spent on the formal off-the-job variety, the most popular method being live classroom lectures. But it also encompasses public seminars, self-study programs, Internet courses, webinars, podcasts, and group activities that use role play and case studies. Larger organizations are increasingly building corporate universities to house formal training programs. The formal instruction given in the corporate university classes is often supplemented with informal online training.[78]

**Computer-Based Training**    The fastest-growing training medium is computer-based training, or e-training or e-learning.[79] E-learning systems emphasize learner control over the pace and content of instruction, allow e-learners to interact through online communities, and incorporate other techniques such as simulations and group discussions. Computer-based training that lets learners actively participate in exercises and quizzes can be more effective than traditional classroom instruction.[80] Employers can improve computer-based training by providing learners with regular prompts to set goals for learning, effective study

Off-the-job training at Chrysler's World Class Manufacturing Academy includes hands-on and classroom learning for engineers and plant employees that teaches them how to reduce waste and increase productivity and quality. Shown here is an employee using a human motion capture system to learn how to analyze the movements of assembly-line workers.
*Source:* Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

strategies, and progress measurements toward the learning goals.[81] Organizations are even exploring delivering e-training through microlessons, on-the-spot tips, and learning games sent to mobile devices.[82]

## Evaluating Effectiveness

The *effectiveness* of a training program can refer to the level of student satisfaction, the amount students learn, the extent to which they transfer the learned material to their jobs, and/or the company's financial return on investments in training.[83] These results are not always related. Some people who have a positive experience in an upbeat, fun class learn very little; some who learn a great deal have difficulty figuring out how to use their knowledge at work; and changes in employee behavior are sometimes not large enough to justify the expense of training. This means rigorous measurement of multiple training outcomes should be part of every training effort.

The success of training also depends on the individual. If individuals are unmotivated or not engaged, they will learn very little. What creates training motivation? Personality is important: Those with an internal locus of control, high conscientiousness, high cognitive ability, and high self-efficacy learn more. Other personal factors, such as stereotype threat, may play a role in training performance, like when a minority is doing a training task for the first time and performs poorly because he or she is aware of the stereotype that members of his or her ethnic group perform poorly at this type of task. The climate also is important: People need to see how the training they're receiving is directly applicable to their jobs. Finally, after-training support from supervisors and coworkers has a strong influence on whether employees transfer their learning into new behavior.[84] For a training program to be effective, it must not just teach the skills but also change the work environment to support the trainees.

Is there general evidence related to training, development practices, and organizational performance? A variety of studies show that investments in on-the-job training lead to increases in productivity of significantly greater value than the cost of providing the training.[85] Similarly, research indicated that cross-cultural training was effective in raising performance when the training was done after the person was working in a new country but not when the training was conducted before departure to a new country.[86] The climate for employee development has also been related to business unit performance.[87] For example, one study of 260 companies in Korea found that training expenditures were positively related to corporate innovation.[88] Overall, most studies have shown that investments in training can indeed have positive effects at the aggregate level.

# Performance Evaluation

**17-5** List the methods of performance evaluation.

Would you study differently or exert a different level of effort for a college course graded on a pass–fail basis than for one that awarded letter grades A to F? Students typically tell us they study harder when letter grades are at stake. When they take a course on a pass–fail basis, they tend to do just enough to ensure a passing grade.

What applies in the college context also applies to employees at work. In this section, we show how the choice of a performance evaluation system and the way it's administered can influence employee behavior.

## What Is Performance?

In the past, most organizations assessed only how well employees performed the tasks listed on a job description, but today's less hierarchical and more

service-oriented organizations require more. Researchers now recognize three major types of behavior that constitute performance at work:

**task performance**   The combination of effectiveness and efficiency at doing core job tasks.

1. **Task performance.**   Performance of the duties and responsibilities that contribute to the production of a good or service, or to administrative tasks. These include most of the tasks in a conventional job description.

**citizenship**   Actions that contribute to the psychological environment of the organization, such as helping others when not required.

2. **Citizenship.**   Performance of actions that contribute to the psychological environment of the organization, such as helping others when not required, supporting organizational objectives, treating coworkers with respect, making constructive suggestions, and saying positive things about the workplace.

**counterproductivity**   Actions that actively damage the organization, including stealing, behaving aggressively toward coworkers, or being late or absent.

3. **Counterproductivity.**   Behavior that actively damages the organization, including stealing, damaging company property, acting aggressively toward coworkers, and taking avoidable absences.

Most managers believe that good performance means doing well on the first two dimensions and avoiding the third.[89] A person who does core job tasks very well but is rude and aggressive toward coworkers is not going to be considered a good employee in most organizations, and the most pleasant and upbeat worker who can't do the main job tasks well is not going to be a good employee either.

## Purposes of Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation serves a number of purposes.[90] One is to help management make general *human resources decisions* about promotions, transfers, and terminations. Evaluations also *identify training and development needs*. They *pinpoint employee skills and competencies* for which remedial programs can be developed. Finally, they *provide feedback to employees* on how the organization views their performance and are often the *basis for reward allocations*, including merit pay increases.

Because our interest here is in OB, we emphasize the performance evaluation as a mechanism for providing feedback and determining reward allocations.

## What Do We Evaluate?

The criteria that management chooses to evaluate has a major influence on what employees do. The three most popular sets of criteria are individual task outcomes, behaviors, and traits.

**Individual Task Outcomes**   If ends count rather than means, management should evaluate on outcomes such as quantity produced, scrap generated, and cost per unit of production for a plant manager, or on overall sales volume in the territory, dollar increase in sales, and number of new accounts established for a salesperson.

**Behaviors**   It is difficult to attribute specific outcomes to the actions of employees in advisory or support positions whose work assignments are part of a group effort. We may readily evaluate the group's performance, but if it is hard to identify the contribution of each group member, management will often evaluate the employee's behavior. A plant manager might be evaluated on promptness in submitting monthly reports or leadership style, and a salesperson on average number of contact calls made per day or helpfulness toward other sales representatives.

Measured behaviors needn't be limited to those directly related to individual productivity. As we pointed out in discussing OCB (see Chapters 1 and 3), helping others, making suggestions for improvements, and volunteering for extra

Behaviors such as helping children, assisting coworkers, and building trusting relationships with parents are important elements in evaluating the performance of employees working at this child day care center in Leipzig, Germany. These subjective factors add to the center's reputation as a high-quality, safe, and respectful organization.
*Source:* Waltraud Grubitzsch/dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo



duties make work groups and organizations more effective and often are incorporated into evaluations of employee performance.

**Traits**    Having a good attitude, showing confidence, being dependable, staying busy, or possessing a wealth of experience can be desirable in the workplace, but it's important to remember that these traits may not be highly correlated with positive task outcomes. However, we cannot ignore the reality that organizations still use such traits to assess job performance.

## Who Should Do the Evaluating?

Who should evaluate an employee's performance? By tradition, the task has fallen to managers because they are held responsible for their employees' performance. But others may do the job better, particularly with the help of HR departments.

With many of today's organizations using self-managed teams, telecommuting, and other formats that distance bosses from employees, the immediate superior may not be the most reliable judge of an employee's performance. Peers and even subordinates are being asked to take part in the process, and employees are participating in their own evaluations. As you might expect, self-evaluations often suffer from overinflated assessment and self-serving bias, and they seldom agree with superiors' ratings.[91] They are probably better suited to developmental than evaluative purposes.

In most situations, it is highly advisable to use multiple sources of ratings; any individual performance rating may say as much about the rater as about the person being evaluated. By averaging across raters, we can obtain a more reliable, unbiased, and accurate performance evaluation.

Another popular approach to performance evaluation is the use of 360-degree evaluations.[92] These provide performance feedback from the employee's full circle of daily contacts, from subordinates to customers, to bosses, to peers (see Exhibit 17-2). The number of appraisals can be as few as 3 or 4 or as many as 25; most organizations collect 5 to 10 per employee.

| Exhibit 17-2 | 360-Degree Evaluation |



What's the appeal of the 360-degree appraisal? By relying on feedback from people who know the employee well in a variety of contexts, organizations hope to give everyone a sense of participation in the review process, increase employee accountability, and obtain more accurate readings on employee performance.

Evidence on its effectiveness is mixed.[93] The 360-degree evaluation provides employees with a wider perspective on their performance, but many organizations don't spend the time to train evaluators in giving constructive criticism. Some organizations allow employees to choose the peers and subordinates who evaluate them, which can artificially inflate positive feedback. There is a risk of giving too much weight to people who don't know much about the employee's actual performance. It's also difficult to reconcile disagreements between rater groups. There is clear evidence that peers tend to give much more lenient ratings than supervisors or subordinates and also to make more errors in appraising performance. These evaluations may thus supplement an understanding of the consistency of an employee but should not supplant objective evaluations of performance. It is possible that 360-degree feedback systems increase negative behaviors. For example, in a study of North American and Chinese employees, ostracized employees were more likely to have lowered self-esteem in companies that used 360-degree feedback. In these companies, ostracized employees were also more likely to direct more deviant behaviors and fewer helping behaviors toward coworkers.[94]

## Methods of Performance Evaluation

We've discussed *what* we evaluate and *who* should do the evaluating. Now we ask: "*How* do we evaluate an employee's performance? What are the specific techniques for evaluation?"

**Written Essays**    Probably the simplest method is to write a narrative describing an employee's strengths, weaknesses, past performance, potential, and suggestions for improvement. The written essay requires no complex forms or extensive training to complete. But a written appraisal may be determined as much by the evaluator's writing skill as by the employee's actual level of performance. It's also difficult to compare essays for different employees (or for the same employees written by different managers) because there is no standardized scoring key.

**critical incidents**    A way of evaluating an employee's behaviors that are key in making the difference between executing a job effectively and executing it ineffectively.

**Critical Incidents**    **Critical incidents** focus the evaluator's attention on the difference between executing a job effectively and executing it ineffectively. The appraiser describes what the employee did that was especially effective or ineffective in a situation, citing only specific behaviors. A list of such critical incidents provides a rich set of examples to show the employee desirable behaviors that call for improvement.

**graphic rating scale**    An evaluation method in which the evaluator rates performance factors on an incremental scale.

**Graphic Rating Scales**    One of the oldest and most popular methods of evaluation is the **graphic rating scale.** The evaluator goes through a set of performance factors—such as quantity and quality of work, depth of knowledge, cooperation, attendance, and initiative—and rates each on incremental scales. The scales may specify, say, five points, where *job knowledge* might be rated 1 ("is poorly informed about work duties") to 5 ("has complete mastery of all phases of the job"). Although they don't provide the depth of information that essays or critical incidents do, graphic rating scales are less time consuming to develop and administer, and they allow for quantitative analysis and comparison.

**behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS)**    Scales that combine major elements from the critical incident and graphic rating scale approaches. The appraiser rates employees based on items along a continuum, but the points are examples of actual behavior on the given job rather than general descriptions or traits.

**Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales**    **Behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS)** combine major elements from the critical incident and graphic rating scale approaches. The appraiser rates employees on items along a continuum, but the items are examples of actual behavior on the job rather than general descriptions or traits. To develop the BARS, participants first contribute specific illustrations of effective and ineffective behavior, which are translated into a set of performance dimensions with varying levels of quality.

**forced comparison**    Method of performance evaluation where an employee's performance is made in explicit comparison to others (e.g., an employee may rank third out of 10 employees in her work unit).

**group order ranking**    An evaluation method that places employees into a particular classification, such as quartiles.

**individual ranking**    An evaluation method that rank-orders employees from best to worst.

**Forced Comparisons**    **Forced comparisons** evaluate one individual's performance against the performance of another or others. It is a relative rather than an absolute measuring device. The two most popular comparisons are group order ranking and individual ranking.

**Group order ranking** requires the evaluator to place employees into a particular classification, such as the top one-fifth or the second one-fifth. If a rater has 20 employees, only 4 can be in the top fifth, so, of course, 4 must also be relegated to the bottom fifth. This method is often used in recommending students to graduate schools.

The **individual ranking** approach rank-orders employees from best to worst. If the manager is required to appraise 30 employees, the difference between the first and second employee is assumed to be the same as that between the twenty-first and twenty-second. Some employees may be closely grouped, but no ties are permitted. The result is a clear ordering from the highest performer to the lowest.

One parallel to forced ranking is forced distribution of college grades. As shown in Exhibit 17-3, average grade point averages (GPAs) have risen.[95] Although it is not clear exactly why, many attribute the rise to the popularity of student evaluations as a means of assessing professor performance (generous grades might produce higher student evaluations). It's also the case that higher grades can help students become more competitive candidates for graduate school and jobs.

In response to grade inflation, some colleges have instituted forced grade distributions, whereby professors must give a certain percentage of A's, B's, and C's. This is exactly what Princeton did; each department can give A's to no more than 35 percent of its students.

## Improving Performance Evaluations

The performance evaluation process is a potential minefield. Evaluators can unconsciously inflate evaluations (positive leniency), understate performance (negative leniency), or allow the assessment of one characteristic to unduly

| Exhibit 17-3 | Median Grade Point Average (GPA) by Academic Year and Degree Level* |
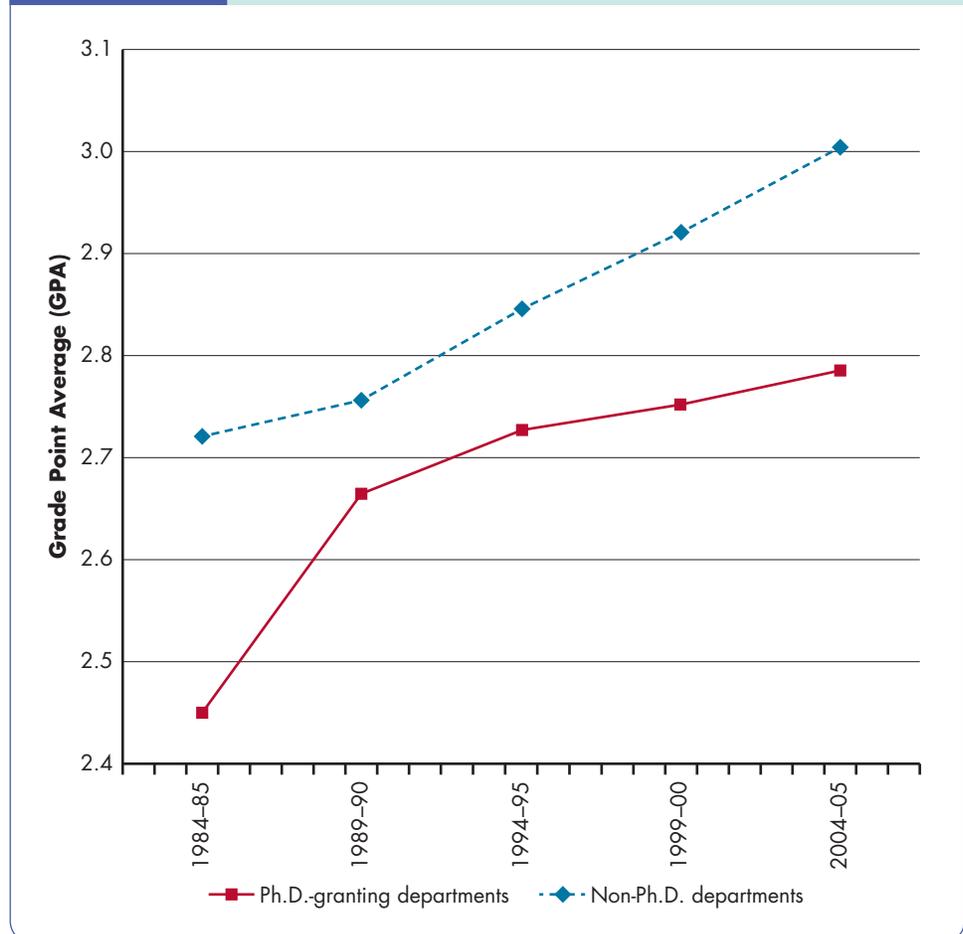


* *Note:* Study of GPA from 1,683 courses, 28 departments, and 3,176 instructors at a large public university.
*Source:* Based on R. Todd Jewell, M. A. McPherson, and M. A. Tieslau, "Whose Fault Is It? Assigning Blame for Grade Inflation in Higher Education," *Applied Economics* 45 (2013): 1185–200.

influence the assessment of others (the halo error). Some appraisers bias their evaluations by unconsciously favoring people who have qualities and traits similar to their own (the similarity error). For example, introverts may rate extraverts lower on performance. And some evaluators see the evaluation process as a political opportunity to overtly reward or punish employees they like or dislike. One review on performance appraisals demonstrates that many managers deliberately distort performance ratings in order to maintain a positive relationship with their subordinates or to achieve a positive image of themselves by showing that all their employees are performing well.[96] Although no protections *guarantee* accurate performance evaluations, the following suggestions can make the process more objective and fair.

**Use Multiple Evaluators**    As the number of evaluators increases, the probability of attaining more accurate information increases, as does the likelihood that the employee will accept the feedback as valid.[97] We often see multiple evaluators in competitions in sports such as diving and gymnastics. A set of evaluators judges a performance, the highest and lowest scores are dropped, and the final evaluation is made up of those remaining. The logic of multiple

evaluators applies to organizations as well. If an employee has ten supervisors, of whom nine rated her excellent and one poor, we can safely discount the one poor evaluation. By moving employees within the organization to gain a number of evaluations, or by using multiple assessors (as in 360-degree appraisals), we increase the probability of achieving more valid and reliable evaluations.

**Evaluate Selectively**    To increase agreement among evaluations, appraisers should evaluate the areas of performance for which they have working knowledge.[98] Appraisers should thus be as close as possible, in organizational level, to the individual being evaluated. The more levels that separate the evaluator from the employee, the less opportunity the evaluator has to observe the individual's behavior and therefore the greater the possibility for inaccuracies.

**Train Evaluators**    If you can't *find* good evaluators, *make* them. Training can produce more accurate raters.[99] Most rater training courses emphasize changing the raters' frame of reference by teaching them what to look for, so everyone in the organization defines *good performance* in the same way. Another effective training technique is to encourage raters to describe the employee's behavior in as much detail as possible. Asking for more detail encourages raters to remember more about the employee's performance rather than just acting on their feelings about the employee at the moment.

**Provide Employees with Due Process**    The concept of *due process* can be applied to appraisals to increase the perception that employees are being treated fairly.[100] Three features characterize due process systems: (1) Individuals are provided with adequate notice of what is expected of them, (2) all evidence relevant to a proposed violation is aired in a fair hearing so the individuals affected can respond, and (3) the final decision is based on the evidence and is free of bias.

One technique that organizations might consider to enhance due process is posting appraisals online so employees can see their own performance scores exactly as the supervisor enters them. One company that did so found employees believed rater accountability and employee participation were higher when appraisal information was available online prior to appraisal interviews.[101] Maybe raters were more sensitive to providing accurate ratings when they knew employees would be able to see their own information directly.

## Providing Performance Feedback

Few activities are more unpleasant for many managers than providing performance feedback to employees. In fact, unless pressured by organizational policies and controls, managers are likely to ignore this responsibility. Why?

First, even though almost every employee could stand to improve in some areas, managers fear confrontation when presenting negative feedback. Second, many employees do tend to become defensive when their weaknesses are pointed out. Instead of accepting the feedback as constructive and a basis for improving performance, some criticize the manager or redirect blame to someone else. Finally, employees tend to have an inflated assessment of their own performance. Statistically speaking, half of all employees must be below-average performers. But the average employee's estimate of his or her own performance level generally falls much higher. So even when managers are providing good news, employees are likely to perceive it as not good enough.

## How do I fire someone?

**One of the people who reports to me really isn't living up to his job responsibilities, and I'm afraid that I have to let him go. I have no idea how to approach him so the meeting will turn out okay. What's the best way to terminate him?**

*— Ariana*

Dear Ariana:

Most supervisors agree that terminating a problem employee can be one of the hardest parts of management. In general, the number one way to reduce the stress of firing is to avoid giving surprises. A problem employee needs to be told as soon as possible that there are issues with performance. Be sure to document performance problems early, and let your employee know the consequences of failing to improve. It may even be the case that identifying problems can eliminate the need for firing through initiating development strategies and providing training that may improve his performance.

If you've decided the termination needs to proceed, then begin to plan the termination meeting. Good HR guidance can be one of your best resources in this process. It's natural to be worried about how your employee is going to react, but here are some strategies that may help you end the employment relationship in a way that minimizes conflicts:

- *Ask your HR representatives what alternatives and techniques they'd recommend.* Many companies have established policies and procedures that will help you conduct this meeting in a professional manner.
- *Practice.* A chance to practice the meeting with a neutral party (*not* someone with connections to the person or your organization) will help you reduce stress and anticipate how the meeting will go.
- *Be sure to respect your employee during the process.* When possible, conduct the termination behind closed doors. Send a clear message that his employment is at an end. The last thing you want is a situation where he doesn't get the message or feels you are so indecisive that he can argue his way out of the termination. Attempts to "soften the blow" by providing positive feedback or working your way up to the bad news are often confusing and can create an opening for an extended, unpleasant, and unproductive argument.
- *Avoid going over past mistakes in detail.* At the point of termination, there is no reason to rehash old problems you've previously discussed—it's better just to make a clean statement that things aren't working out, and your documentation should have the details for later reference if needed. Going over the reasons that the relationship is over will make your employee feel insulted or offended.
- *Have an after-meeting plan.* What are your organization's policies—does your employee need to be escorted immediately out of the building, for instance? What are the policies for returning business property? Demonstrate adherence to the plan to keep the termination process objective.

Of course, none of this advice can remove all the stress of terminations, but a combination of preparation, respect, and clarity can help make the situation better than it would be otherwise.

*Sources:* Based on S. R. McDonnell, "10 Steps Needed to Properly Fire Someone," *Entrepreneur*, May 26, 2015, http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/246573; E Frauenheim, "Employee Crisis Communications 101," *Workforce*, November 13, 2013, http://www.workforce.com/articles/20036-employee-crisis-communications-101; and R. A. Mueller-Hanson and E. D. Pulakos, "Putting the 'Performance' Back in Performance Management," *SHRM-SIOP Science of HR White Paper Series*, 2015, http://www.shrm.org/Research/Documents/SHRM-SIOP%20Performance%20Management.pdf.

The solution to the problem is not to ignore it but to train managers to conduct constructive feedback sessions. An effective review—in which the employee perceives the appraisal as fair, the manager as sincere, and the climate as constructive—can leave the employee feeling upbeat, informed about areas needing improvement, and determined to correct them.[102] This is a perfect outcome if the evaluation is fair and thorough, but unfortunately an

employee may feel this way in situations where the evaluator feels an interdependence with the employee and therefore is more lenient in the evaluation.[103]

It probably won't surprise you that employees in a bad mood are much less likely to take advice than employees in a good mood.[104] Appraisals should also be as specific as possible. People are most likely to overrate their own performance when asked about overall job performance, but they can be more objective when feedback is about a specific area.[105] It's also hard to figure out how to improve your performance globally—it's much easier to improve in specific areas. The performance review should be a counseling activity more than a judgment process, best accomplished by allowing it to evolve from the employee's self-evaluation.

## International Variations in Performance Appraisal

Let's examine performance evaluation globally in the context of cultural dimensions, particularly individualism versus collectivism.

Individual-oriented cultures such as the United States emphasize formal performance evaluation systems more than informal systems. They advocate written evaluations performed at regular intervals, the results of which managers share with employees and use in the determination of rewards. On the other hand, the collectivist cultures that dominate Asia and much of Latin America are characterized by more informal systems—downplaying formal feedback and disconnecting reward allocations from performance ratings. Some of these differences may be narrowing, however. In Korea, Singapore, and Japan, the use of performance evaluations has increased dramatically in the past decade, though not always smoothly or without controversy. One survey of Korean employees revealed that a majority questioned the validity of their performance evaluation results.[106]

One study focused on the banking industry and found significant differences across countries in performance appraisal practices.[107] Formal performance appraisals were used more frequently in countries that were high in assertiveness, high in uncertainty avoidance, and low in ingroup collectivism. In other words, assertive countries that see performance as an individual responsibility and that desire certainty about where people stand were more likely to use formal performance appraisals. On the other hand, in high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, performance appraisals were also used more frequently for communication and development purposes (as opposed to being used for rewards and promotion). Another study found that individuals who were high in power distance and high in collectivism tend to give more lenient performance appraisals.[108]

# The Leadership Role of Human Resources (HR)

**17-6**  Describe the leadership role of human resources (HR) in organizations.

We have discussed the important functions HR departments serve in recruiting, selection practices, training and development, and the performance evaluation process. Arguably, these are an organization's most important tasks in managing its most valuable asset—its people. However, HR also plays a key leadership role in nearly all facets of the workplace environment, from designing and administering benefits programs, to conducting attitude surveys, to drafting and enforcing employment policies. HR is on the frontlines in managing

adversarial employment conditions such as work–life conflicts, mediations, terminations, and layoffs. It is on the scene when an employee joins and leaves, and all along the way. HR departments uniquely represent both the employees' and the company's perspectives as needed, so we will discuss the importance of HR communication before each of the facets of HR leadership.

Companies have only recently begun to recognize the potential for HR to influence employee performance. Researchers have been examining the effects of a **high-performance work system (HPWS)**, a group of human resources practices that some organizations have been implementing. These practices work together and reinforce one another to improve organizational outcomes. These practices can include those that enhance motivation, such as profit sharing programs and other reward systems, as well as practices that improve skills, such as training and development programs. HPWS may increase employee engagement. In addition, a study of 163 Spanish companies suggests that an HPWS can especially increase performance when the organization has a learning culture.[109] More recent research has shown that having an HPWS may increase organizational performance, but higher organizational performance may also reinforce high-performance practices by providing more resources to an HPWS. HPWS may also have more of an effect on organizational performance when leadership is not oriented toward organizational goals (e.g, improving customer service).[110]

**high-performance work system (HPWS)**
A group of human resources practices that work together and reinforce one another to improve organizational outcomes.

## Communicating HR Practices

Leadership by HR begins with informing employees about HR practices and explaining the implications of decisions that might be made around these practices. It is not enough simply to have a practice in place; HR needs to let employees know about it. When a company successfully communicates how the whole system of HR practices has been developed and what function this system serves, employees feel they can control and manage what they get out of work.[111] We've noted in other chapters that knowing you can influence the outcomes of your work is highly motivational. Employees can come to see the HR philosophy and system as an employer's expression of concern, and the positive feelings that result have been shown to increase employee commitment, retention, and engagement.[112]

The evidence supporting the contribution of communication and perception to HR effectiveness is considerable. For example, one study of different business units within a large food-service organization found that employee perceptions of HR practices, rated at the work-group level, were significant predictors of OCB, commitment, and intention to remain with the company,[113] but the HR practices led to these positive outcomes only if employees were aware they were in place. Other studies have found that HR practices have different effects depending on how employees perceive the reason for them.[114] Employees who think HR practices are established to improve performance and benefit workers reciprocate with greater commitment and performance. Employees who think these same practices are established to exploit workers do not have the same positive reactions.

The effectiveness of HR practices also depends on employee attitudes. One review found that HR practices were more likely to lead to positive outcomes when employees felt motivated.[115] Other research indicated that employees who were more knowledgeable about the purpose of a performance management system used the system more effectively to improve their efficiency and thoroughness.[116] Taken together, these results suggest that it isn't enough for employers simply to set up practices—they need to show that the practices are actually attempts to make the company more successful and help employees achieve better outcomes. Leadership communication can help shape employee attitudes and perceptions about HR practices.

Practices tend to be perceived differently in various business cultures. For example, the use of educational qualifications in screening candidates seems to

be a universal practice, but aside from this, different countries emphasize different selection techniques. Structured interviews are popular in some countries and nonexistent in others. Research shows that across the Netherlands, the United States, France, Spain, Portugal, and Singapore, most applicants prefer interviews and work sample tests and dislike the use of personal contacts and integrity tests.[117] There was little variation in preferences across these countries. In other words, it appears that even if there are international differences in practices, there are not as many international differences in what employees consider fair. Communication is the bridge for HR to demonstrate that intentions are fair.

## Designing and Administering Benefits Programs

As we've seen throughout this text, employers are more willing than ever to consider an infinite range of benefits to offer employees in efforts to recruit and retain the best talent. For every issue facing workers—health, child care, aging parents, education, workplace conditions, and others—there exists a potential benefit that organizations may consider to meet the need. The responsibility for designing and administering an organization's benefits program falls to the HR department, with input from executive management.

Ideally, a benefits program should be uniquely suited to the organizational culture, reflect the values of the organization, demonstrate economic feasibility, and be sustainable in the long term. Such benefits will likely improve employees' psychological well-being and therefore increase organizational performance.[118]

Consider employees who are mothers of infants. Options that HR might consider could range from support to intolerance. Should the company give paid time off for working mothers to breast-feed their babies? Should it provide a break room for mothers to breast-feed their babies at work? Should it allow mothers to pump milk at work to give to babies at home? What about mothers who are bottle-feeding? Federal laws do not require companies to provide any accommodation for breast-feeding mothers beyond an undefined "reasonable break time," and a case in Texas originally ruled against a woman who was fired for asking to use the back room to pump milk for her child.[119] While that case was settled out of court after the Court of Appeals reversed the decision, stating it was a sex discrimination case and a medical condition, the issue is not definitive.[120] An HR manager in a company that produces lactation pumps, supports La Leche League International, and employs women of childbearing age may want to offer some benefits because the policies would agree with the company's principles. An HR manager in a company whose mission is unrelated to the issue may explore providing some benefits upon employee requests. Each manager may then perform an analysis of the costs associated with providing different levels of benefits, along with the positive organizational outcomes for each, to determine which benefit would be sustainable for the company in the long term. Of course, this is just one example of possible benefits to consider, and it applies only to a segmented group of workers. Other benefits may affect a larger population of your workforce, such as health care options and vacation benefits.

## Drafting and Enforcing Employment Policies

Along with benefits come responsibilities, and employees need to know what the organization expects from them. Employment policies that are informed by current laws but go beyond minimum requirements will help define a positive organizational culture. Policies differ from benefits in that they provide the guidelines for behavior, not just the working conditions. A company might provide the benefit of a special break room for mothers of young children, but a policy is needed to outline the expectation for conduct. May mothers elect to feed their babies in other places in the facility or only in the breakroom? What timing is acceptable? Where can collected breast milk be stored? Establishing

## HIV/AIDS and the Multinational Organization

It wasn't long ago that an AIDS diagnosis was a death sentence, and the ethical choices for HR departments were about offering palliative care and death benefits. Those days are gone, at least for most. Now the ethical choice is about the standards of care and support that organizations want to provide, for which employees worldwide, and for how long. "There has been an uptick with those employed that have HIV/AIDS" as the disease has become more chronic than fatal, said Randy Vogenberg of the Institute for Integrated Healthcare. However, whether someone can continue working still depends on drug therapy, workplace accommodations, and employee education. In most countries, standards are not specifically mandated, leaving employers to choose the level of support to offer. "It's not a question of whether a business is going to be confronted with this," labor law attorney Peter Petesch says. "It's a question of how soon."

By current estimates, more than 1.1 million people in the United States and 36.7 million people globally live with HIV. Over two-thirds of HIV infections are in sub-Saharan Africa, and 70 percent of new cases are in this region. Worldwide, there is little consistency in the approach to the problem. Few U.S. companies have specific HIV/AIDS policies, for example, and although benefit plans cover the illness, employees' out-of-pocket costs for the expensive drug therapy can range significantly. HIV/AIDS treatment is available in Europe through the national health care system. Some larger African companies run clinics where national health care or insurance is insufficient, but not all companies offer insurance. In India and China, insurers do not cover HIV/AIDS, so companies need to consider separate employee reimbursement to match their intentions for coverage.

When it comes to HIV/AIDS, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, or more literally, dramatic corporate savings. Research found that the investment companies made in preventing the disease from spreading and in treating infected employees saved money and lives. HR initiatives like providing peer educators to teach employees about prevention and accommodation, free counseling services, free voluntary testing, and well-being monitoring have been effective worldwide.

"Nobody needs to die of this disease anymore," said Jenni Gillies, head of business development for beer brewer SABMiller, which has 70,000 employees in 75 countries and is committed to helping eradicate HIV/AIDS through employee education and support. But there are costs and responsibilities associated with each decision about the level of care to support or supply, and the distance companies should go to meet this need over other employee needs will be a constant question. Some organizations may conclude that governments and other systems are responsible for the care of citizens. It's a tough call. Meanwhile, individual managers can assist in preventing discrimination and encouraging education.

*Sources:* Based on "HIV/AIDS Basic Statistics," Center for Disease Control, http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/basics.html, accessed July 21, 2015; "U. S. Statistics," HIV.gov, https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/statistics, accessed June 2017; J. Mooney, "People with HIV and AIDS: Living and Working Longer," *HR Magazine*, June 2012, 41–44; SABMiller corporate website, "Inside View" page, www.insideview.com/directory/sabmiller-plc, accessed June 18, 2013; and World Health Organization, "HIV/AIDS" fact page, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs360/en/, updated June 2017.

policies to address potential questions can help minimize confusion and awkwardness for all employees.

The lactation case is an example of a potential benefit and policy combination that will ensure employees recognize the benefit as an employer's aid to their well-being while understanding how and where to use it. However, any policy must have enforcement to be effective. HR managers are responsible for setting the organizational consequences of infractions and often for enforcing policies as well.

Sometimes, HR managers need to take action even when the employee's direct manager may not agree, especially if compliance with the law is at issue. For example, many companies in the entertainment, nonprofit, publishing, and marketing industries use unpaid postcollege interns, who are supposed to receive on-the-job experience as compensation. The Labor Department stipulates that interns who are unpaid must be provided a vocational education experience and that their work cannot profit the employer. Interns report getting stuck doing menial tasks an employer would need to pay someone else to do. If these companies want to continue using unpaid interns, HR managers need to

set policies that clarify the assignments the supervisors can give and then ensure that the policies are followed. Otherwise, their organizations will face lawsuits like the one from Eric Glatt, an intern on the movie *Black Swan*, who sued for minimum wage violations.[121] A judge in the U.S. District Court ruled that he was improperly cataloged as an intern.[122] The decision cited criteria from the Labor Department wherein an unpaid internship must provide work similar to training the person would receive in a school, benefit the intern not the employer, and not displace other employees.[123] This ruling sparked similar claims against NBC Universal, Fox, Viacom, and other large organizations, often ending in out-of-court settlements. The issue is far from conclusive, however, leaving the burden on interns to litigate if they are unfairly treated. See Case Incident 1 for discussion on the role of interns from a different perspective: Yours.

## Managing Work–Life Conflicts

We introduced work-life balance in Chapter 1 and discussed the blurring lines between work life and personal life. Here, we focus specifically on what organizations can do to help employees reduce conflicts.

Work–life conflicts grabbed management's attention in the 1980s, largely as a result of the increased entry into the workforce of women with dependent children. In response, most major organizations took actions to make their workplaces more family-friendly.[124] They introduced onsite child care, summer day camps, flextime, job sharing, leave for school functions, telecommuting, and part-time employment. But organizations quickly realized work–life

## Myth or Science?

### The 24-Hour Workplace Is Harmful

This statement appears to be true in many cases. Although technology makes it possible for employees to be plugged in all the time, in constant contact around the globe, research suggests that employers who push employees to check in at all hours and stay connected may well be doing themselves (and their employees) a disservice.

A growing body of research has uncovered serious health consequences of insufficient sleep, and work practices that encourage employees to be plugged in 24 hours a day may be making the situation worse. One study examined how late-night work influenced job outcomes by having employees complete diary surveys on their sleep and engagement at work over multiple days. Those who used smartphones at night for work were less engaged in their work tasks the next day, even after accounting for other technology use.

From another angle, researchers have looked at the personal consequences of workaholism, which is the tendency to think constantly about work off the job and to feel compelled to work excessive hours. This habit is associated with higher levels of burnout, stress, and family problems. While workaholism is partially driven by personality factors, surveys suggest that features of the workplace itself can enhance workaholic tendencies, including excessive workloads, conflicting work priorities, and time pressures. Workaholics may not immediately perceive these effects because they are often highly committed to their work and enjoy it in the short term, until burnout occurs.

The key to maintaining performance over time may lie in developing psychological detachment from work. Alongside studies showing the negative effects of overexposure to work demands we can place another body of

work showing that short regular breaks made up of total rest and avoidance of work responsibilities can recharge a person's energy. Unplugging from constant work demands for short periods actually makes us much more productive over the long haul. Therefore the evidence is clear: Unplug to recharge yourself. HR can support this effort by presenting the research findings to managers and helping to establish practices and boundaries that benefit everyone.

*Sources:* Based on K. Lanaj, R. E. Johnson, and C. M. Barnes, "Beginning the Workday yet Already Deprived? Consequences of Late-Night Smartphone Use and Sleep," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 124 (May 2014): 11–23; M. A. Clark, J. S. Michel, L. Zhdanova, S. Y. Pui, and B. B. Baltes, "All Work and No Play? A Meta-Analytic Examination of the Correlates and Outcomes of Workaholism," *Journal of Management*, February 2014, doi:10.1177/0149206314522301; and S. Sonnentag and C. Fritz, "Recovery from Job Stress: The Stressor-Detachment Model as an Integrative Framework," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 36 (2015): S72–S103.

conflicts were not limited to female employees with children. Heavy workloads and increased travel demands, for instance, made it increasingly hard for male workers and women without children to meet both work and personal responsibilities. A Boston College survey of nearly 1,000 fathers with professional careers showed that participants put more importance on job security and flexible, family-friendly working schedules than on high income and advancement opportunities.[125]

Organizations are modifying their workplaces with scheduling options and benefits to accommodate the varied needs of a diverse workforce. Employees at NestléPurina can bring their dogs to the office; SAS Institute has onsite child care, a health care center, and a fitness center; and other firms offer perks ranging from onsite laundry, to food services, to free child care.[126] Colgate-Palmolive, number one in 2015 on *Forbes'* Best Companies for Work-Life Balance list, offers emergency in-home care for dependents and professional counseling services to help employees stay on the job.[127] Exhibit 17-4 lists some other initiatives to help employees reduce work–life conflicts.

Time pressures aren't the primary problem underlying work–life conflicts.[128] The psychological incursion of work into the family domain—and vice versa—leaves people worrying about personal problems at work and thinking about work problems at home, creating conflict. This suggests organizations should spend less effort helping employees with time management issues and more effort helping them clearly segment their lives. Keeping workloads reasonable, reducing work-related travel, and offering onsite high-quality child care are examples of practices that can help in this endeavor. Employees can also reduce interference between work and home by increasing the amount of planning they do.[129]

Not surprisingly, people differ in their preference for scheduling options and benefits.[130] Some prefer organizational initiatives that better segment work from their personal lives, as flextime, job sharing, and part-time hours do by allowing employees to schedule work hours less likely to conflict with personal responsibilities. Others prefer initiatives to integrate work and personal life, such as gym facilities and company-sponsored family picnics. On average, most people prefer an organization that provides support for work-life balance. A study found that potential employees, particularly women, are more attracted to organizations that have a reputation for supporting employee work-life balance.[131]

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**MyLab Management** Watch It

If your professor has assigned this activity, go to www.pearson.com/mylab/management to complete the video exercise.

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## Mediations, Terminations, and Layoffs

HR departments often take center stage when unpleasant events such as disputes, substandard performance, and downsizing occur. Employees need to be able to trust their HR professionals to maintain appropriate confidentiality and a balanced perspective. Managers need to be able to trust HR, too, to know the laws and represent the company's perspective. The HR professional should be well trained in mediation techniques and rely on company policies to seek positive resolutions. Sometimes, HR managers are integral to the termination process, when employees are not able to resolve issues with management. Termination processes are subject to union labor contracts and laws, which can

| Exhibit 17-4 | Work–Life Initiatives | |
|---|---|---|
| Time-based strategies | • Flextime<br>• Job sharing<br>• Leave for new parents<br>• Telecommuting<br>• Paid time off | Management consulting firm A. T. Kearney's Success with Flex program allows for schedule adjusments, telecommuting, and "hybird" positions.<br>At biopharmaceutical firm AbbVie, 98% of employees use a flextime schedule.<br>Cisco provides job-sharing and videoconferencing facilities to minimize needs for travel away from family.<br>Deloitte offers employees 3–6 months sabbatical at 40% salary, and they have 40 paid days off per year. |
| Information-based strategies | • Work–life support<br>• Relocation assistance<br>• Elder care resources<br>• Counseling services | Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina provides networking opportunities to remote workers.<br>Hallmark offers employees monthly meetings to talk about career management for women.<br>Johnson and Johnson promotes weekends free of e-mail.<br>Hewlett-Packard offers counselors, mentors, and $5,000 annual tuition aid. |
| Money-based strategies | • Insurance subsidies<br>• Flexible benefits<br>• Adoption assistance<br>• Discounts for child care tuition<br>• Direct financial assistance<br>• Domestic partner benefits<br>• Scholarships, tuition reimbursement | Accenture offers a $5,000 adoption assistance benefit.<br>Carlson offers employees scholarships of up to $20,000 to attend the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management.<br>Citi employees can save up to $5,000 per year in pretax dependent care accounts, with a match of up to 30% from the company.<br>Colgate-Palmolive provides up to $10,000 per year in annual tuition aid for job-related courses.<br>Prudential employees who are caregivers can use 100 hours of dependent backup care and six hours of geriatric care management services annually. |
| Direct services | • Onsite child care<br>• Fitness center<br>• Summer child care<br>• Onsite conveniences<br>• Concierge services<br>• Free or discounted company products | Abbott provides a child-care center that serves 800 and discounts for 2,800 day care facilities.<br>Companies like AOL and Verizon have onsite fitness centers and discounts at gyms nationwide.<br>Bristol-Myers Squibb offers full-time, part-time, and backup care for kids up to age 5, and summer camps for older children.<br>Turner Broadcasting offers a caregiver concierge to arrange babysitting, dog walking, and elder companions.<br>REI employees can participate in a program that offers large discounts on company products. |
| Culture-change strategies | • Establishing work–life balanced culture; training managers to help employees deal with work–life conflicts<br>• Tie manager pay to employee satisfaction<br>• Focus on employees' actual performance, not face time | At American Express, employee networks have been established to address issues directly.<br>Investment firm Robert W. Baird's CEO Paul Purcell has one rule: "There are no a\*\*holes here."<br>W. L. Gore & Associates company slogan reads, "We don't manage people, we expect people to manage themselves."<br>Pearson developed a Flexible Work Options Accountability Guide that trains managers in the use of flextime for their employees. |

*Sources:* Based on "2014 100 Best Companies," *Working Mother*, http://www.workingmother.com/best-company-list/156592, accessed July 21, 2015; "100 Best Companies to Work For," *CNNMoney*, www.money.cnn.com, accessed June 18, 2013.

confound the situation. In Spain, for instance, labor laws have traditionally protected older workers with near-guaranteed employment.[132]

For departing employees, the HR department is often the last stop on their way out. HR managers are thus in charge of leaving a favorable impression with the employee and collecting helpful input from the exit interview. This is never truer than when organizations terminate employees in layoffs. Employees who think the layoff process was handled fairly are more apt to recommend the company to others and to return to work if asked.[133] Employees who survive a layoff and stay employed with the company also evaluate the fairness of the downsizing process, according to another study, particularly in individualistic

countries. Downsizing organizations that are able to demonstrate fairness are therefore more likely to realize the financial gains they hoped for.[134]

In sum, the role of HR is increasing in organizations worldwide, and top management is realizing human resources leadership is needed to create the cultures and positive business outcomes that top corporations need to stay competitive.

## Summary

An organization's human resources (HR) policies and practices create important forces that greatly influence organizational behavior (OB) and important work outcomes. HR departments have become increasingly integral in shaping the composition of the organization's workforce. First, as more organizations have turned to internal recruitment methods, HR departments have taken the lead in creating online portals and other easy-access methods for candidates to learn about the organization and be attracted to apply. Second, HR departments are involved in all phases of selection: initial selection, substantive selection, and contingent selection. The greatest increase in the involvement of HR in selection may be in the initial selection phase, wherein HR professionals develop, monitor, and screen the great numbers of applications that are submitted. However, HR involvement has increased in all areas of selection, and HR professionals are responsible for understanding the applicable laws and guidelines to serve as an informed, up-to-date resource for managers.

In effective organizations, HR remains present throughout an employee's time with the organization. HR departments create and administer training and development programs, and they set policies and practices with top management that govern the performance evaluation system. HR serves in a leadership capacity with responsibilities that include the need to communicate practices to employees regularly; design and administer benefits programs; manage work–life conflicts; and conduct mediations, terminations, and layoffs. HR should bring an awareness of ethical issues to all stages of an individual's experience with the organization. Knowledgeable HR professionals are therefore a great resource to all levels of the organization, from top management, to managers, to employees.

## Implications for Managers

- An organization's selection practices can identify competent candidates and accurately match them to the job and the organization. Consider assessment methods that are most likely to evaluate the skills directly needed for jobs you are looking to fill.
- Use training programs for your employees to achieve direct improvement in the skills necessary to successfully complete the job successfully. Employees who are motivated will use those skills for their greater productivity.
- Training and development programs offer ways to achieve new skill levels and thus add value to your organization. Successful training and development programs include an ethical component.

- Use performance evaluations to assess an individual's performance accurately and as a basis for allocating rewards. Make sure the performance evaluations are as fair as possible. As discussed in Chapter 7 about equity theory, evaluations perceived as unfair can result in reduced effort, increased absenteeism, or a search for another job.
- Give your employees the opportunity to participate in their evaluations so they understand the performance criteria and engage with the improvement process.

## MyLab Management
### Personal Inventory Assessments

**P** **I** **A**   PERSONAL INVENTORY ASSESSMENT

Go to www.pearson.com/mylab/management to complete the Personal Inventory Assessment related to this chapter.

# Employers Should Check Applicants' Criminal Backgrounds

## POINT

Depending on where you live, you may have been asked about your criminal arrest record on a job application. Even if you weren't asked outright, the company may have investigated anyway by using a background check service. Surveys suggest that nearly 70 percent of companies do some sort of criminal background check on job applicants. When so many are using the same basic strategy, it's likely they have a good reason.

Companies check criminal records for many purposes. Most obviously, nothing predicts future criminal behavior like prior criminal behavior. Many employees have used the access and privileges of their jobs to commit crimes, ranging from theft to assault or even murder. A check of their criminal records may help screen out these individuals.

As Lucia Bone, founder of the nonprofit Sue Weaver Cause, says, "It is the employer's responsibility to protect … their business, their employees, and their customers." This is a deeply meaningful issue for Bone. The organization she founded is named after her sister, Sue Weaver, murdered by a man with a criminal record who had access to her home to clean air ducts. Many hiring managers check criminal backgrounds specifically because they do not want their own lack of diligence to lead to similarly tragic outcomes.

Besides signaling the direct risk of criminal activity on the job, criminal records may be good behavioral indicators of other deviant workplace behavior. People who are willing to violate social conventions in one area may well be likely to violate them in others. When employers screen for use of illegal drugs or shoplifting arrests, they are trying to identify people who might lie to supervisors or embezzle money. Information gathered from criminal records is likely to be more objective and accurate than a manager's gut feelings about who is going to pose a problem in the future.

## COUNTERPOINT

According to sociologist Devah Pager, the high U.S. incarceration rate means employers' hiring decisions have major labor market and social implications if based on criminal records. Koch Industries has stopped asking applicants about criminal records. CEO Charles Koch notes, "If ex-offenders can't get a job, education, or housing, how can we possibly expect them to have a productive life?" Koch's concern is valid. One study linked a young-adult arrest record to lower incomes and education levels later in life, and a conviction record to even lower levels.

There are also substantial racial and ethnic group differences in arrest rates, and men are much more likely to have arrest and conviction records than women. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) concludes that excluding individuals with criminal records from jobs effectively discriminates against African American men in particular.

Criminal background checks don't necessarily give employers the information they seek. A core principle of modern criminal justice holds that we all are innocent until proven guilty. However, some screens will turn up both conviction and arrest records. This is problematic because fewer than half of arrests end in conviction. While the use of arrest records is prohibited in many localities, that is far from a universal rule. Other investigations have found that online criminal records checks are prone to false positives, reporting that someone has a criminal past when they do not.

Another problem is lack of relevance. While many would agree that a person convicted of assault is not a good candidate for work that requires carrying a weapon or associating with vulnerable populations, it's less clear how a petty-theft conviction might raise the same concerns. Sociologist Christopher Uggen summarizes by observing, "We haven't really figured out what a disqualifying offense should be for particular activities."

*Sources:* Based on B. Appelbaum, "Out of Trouble, but Criminal Records Keep Men out of Work," *New York Times*, February 28, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/business/out-of-trouble-but-criminal-records-keep-men-out-of-work.html?_r=0; C. Zillman, "Koch Industries Stops Asking Job Candidates about Their Criminal Records," *Fortune*, April 27, 2015, http://fortune.com/2015/04/27/koch-industries-stops-asking-job-candidates-about-their-criminal-records/; and G. Fields and J. R. Emshwiller, "As Arrest Records Rise, Americans Find Consequences Can Last a Lifetime," *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 2014, http://www.wsj.com/articles/as-arrest-records-rise-americans-find-consequences-can-last-a-lifetime-1408415402.

# CHAPTER REVIEW

**MyLab Management** Discussion Questions
Go to www.pearson.com/mylab/management to complete the problems marked with this icon ⭐.

## QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

**17-1** What is the value of various recruitment methods?

**17-2** What are the methods of initial selection?

**17-3** What are the most useful methods of substantive selection?

**17-4** What are the similarities and differences among the main types of training?

**17-5** What are the methods of performance evaluation?

**17-6** What are the various roles of HR in the leadership of organizations?

# APPLICATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

Human resources policies and practices have a tremendous influence on the culture and ultimately on the success of an organization. Recruitment and selection enables organizations to increase their human capital resources. Training can also strengthen the knowledge, abilities, and skills of employees that drive organizational performance. HR practices and policies also determine how performance is measured, which guides many important organizational decisions. In this chapter, you helped develop many skills that are useful in the workplace.

You learned how to apply your knowledge by examining how the 24-hour workplace can be harmful and examining the best way to fire someone. You also learned valuable lessons about social responsibility concerning HIV/AIDS and hiring candidates with criminal records. In the next section, you will continue to build these skills while also applying critical thinking to designing an assessment center exercise, deciding whether to hire a friend, looking at problems with internships, and facing modern slavery in the United States.

## EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE    Designing a Virtual Assessment Center Exercise

In this exercise, you will focus on creating a performance-simulation test for selecting a new head of character design at a digital animation studio. The position is completely virtual. Candidates are being assessed from Detroit to Dubai. To assess candidates from so many varied geographical areas, the hiring manager wants to use an assessment center to select the new employee. As you learned in the chapter, assessment center exercises are meant to simulate problems that employees may encounter on the job. Because assessment centers are conducted offsite, employers can create virtual assessment centers that candidates can take part in on their computers. For example, candidates for a management position may be asked to sign into a website to access a virtual e-mail inbox. Responses sent through this virtual inbox can then be used to assess how a candidate responds to e-mails or memos over a set time period.

A couple of details are unique about the position. Unlike many other positions that may be selected using assessment centers, the head of character design should be very creative, technically proficient, and artistic. A competitive candidate should be a great artist but also good at managing other artists. More typical assessment center exercises would not be suitable for this position.

**Step 1:** Form groups of two or three people each. To start the exercise, consider the common tasks someone in this position would encounter. What would managing other artists entail? To assist in this step, it may be helpful to look up job descriptions for creative directors, head animators, and character designers at large firms like Pixar and Dreamworks. List 5 to 10 essential tasks for someone in this position.

**Step 2:** Next, pick a task that can be simulated in a virtual assessment center. As a group, write a brief description of the task. Make sure to consider the following: the objective of the task, what instructions the candidates would receive, and how much time the candidates would have to complete the task.

**Step 3:** When you have created your assessment center exercise, consider how to score applicants' work. To create a good rubric for scoring, first decide what results would reflect good or poor performance. Next, decide what traits would be needed to be successful during this exercise. Each trait should be measured by something that can be seen while the person is completing the task or by accessing the results of the task. Create a rating scale to assess candidates on your assessment center exercise.

As a class, after all the groups have designed the assessment center exercise and rating scale, discuss what each group did.

**Questions**

**17-7.** What were some of the challenges of creating an assessment center exercise for this type of position?

**17-8.** How did you determine the core tasks that would be needed for this type of position?

**17-9.** Could you use the assessment center model to determine if a candidate had all the traits needed to complete the job?

**17-10.** Was it easy to create a task that could be used in a virtual rather than in-person assessment center? Would using another means of selecting candidates (structured interview, work sample) be easier?

## ETHICAL DILEMMA  Can I Recruit from My Social Network?

In this chapter, you learned about the process of recruiting into an organization. Recruitment can be a long and difficult process. If you have ever had to find people to fill a position, you probably wanted to find any shortcut possible. Traditionally, recruitment can involve going to universities, posting jobs on websites, and reaching out to relevant professional organizations in the area. Sometimes, however, hiring managers may supplement or forgo these processes and instead recruit through their own personal social network. For example, a restaurant owner may ask his friends if any of their children are interested in working as a server rather than advertising a job opening for a new server.

There are many benefits to recruiting from one's friends and family. It will probably be easier, quicker, and cheaper than more formal methods of recruiting. Hiring through personal connections can also be tempting because the hiring manager is likely to know more about the candidate than they would about a typical job applicant. Yet there are also drawbacks to hiring through one's social network. It may be hard to be objective when dealing with an employee who is also a friend (or a friend of a friend). Will it be easy not to play favorites when it comes time to decide on a promotion? What about evaluating performance? If someone hires his or her neighbor's child, will this supervisor feel comfortable telling the server that he or she is doing a bad job?

**Questions**

**17-11.** How often do personal connections affect recruitment and selection? Is it okay to use a recommendation from a current employee in the selection process?

**17-12.** Is it fair to hire a friend or acquaintance? How might using one's social network to find job candidates affect diversity in the workplace?

**17-13.** Will an employee who is friends with the boss be as motivated as an employee who isn't? Why or why not?

*Sources:* Based on P. LeSaffre, "Why You Should Never Hire Your Friends," *Fortune*, June 29, 2016, http://fortune.com/2016/06/29/startup-entrepreneur-hire-friends/; and S. Tobak, "5 Things to Consider When Hiring Friends," *Entrepreneur*, June 27, 2014, https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/235194.

## CASE INCIDENT 1  Getting a Foot in the Door?

Many business students are familiar with the pressure to get internships or part-time jobs in their career field while in school. The surest route to the career track for many is to take on these limited-duration work assignments.

Internships do give employers an easy way to size up potential applicants in a setting identical to the one in which they would perform. And unlike employees, interns are easily terminated if they don't pan out. It's the same

situation for part-time or summer workers, who are sometimes let go at a moment's notice.

Internships are such a powerful tool for finding jobs that some students have begun to take on low-paid or even unpaid work assignments. While such internships used to be associated primarily with large organizations, many start-ups have begun to attract students. For example, Remy Agamy took an internship at a three-person design company, knowing that it wasn't likely to turn into a job. Still, in the job market she found that other prospective employers were keen on learning what she'd done in this internship. "I think we talked more about my eight-week internship than my four years of consulting experience," she said.

The value of internships for students, however, has long been questioned. While there may be a promise of a chance to learn, many students complain of doing little more than acting as unpaid, unskilled labor. Christina Isnardi is one student who felt exploited by the system. She described working 16- or 17-hour days at Lions Gate Entertainment, doing work like taking breakfast orders or working in locations far from the actual film set, which Isnardi mentioned made her "feel as though our dreams are holding us hostage to this unfair, unethical labor practice." Isnardi's experiences are not uncommon. Interns working for organizations as diverse as MTV, Warner Music Group, and Madison Square Garden describe similar experiences, which is why all these organizations have faced lawsuits from former interns.

Other students have negotiated great-sounding internships at organizations that regularly hire interns and pay them, but then the organizations don't know what to do with these temporary employees. One student we know of was encouraged to make the best use of his time during his summer internship in a major city, including taking a paying job elsewhere and just staying in touch by phone when work hours overlapped! Because of his ingenuity, he reported it was a very productive summer, but the internship didn't provide the learning opportunity he was seeking. Whether internships have value remains an open question. Most of the controversy does suggest that students need to know the details before agreeing to these arrangements because not all internships offer a fair living wage or a strong career experience. HR departments are responsible for monitoring and designing internship programs.

### Questions ⭐

**17-14.** If you were an HR professional at Lions Gate Entertainment, how might you evaluate Isnardi's claim of exploitation? What changes might you suggest to top management and to managers?

**17-15.** What specific characteristics would you look for in an internship?

**17-16.** Do you think interns who feel they've had a negative or exploitive relationship with a company should file lawsuits? Why or why not? What types of company actions might make you think a lawsuit is justified?

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*Sources:* Based on R. Feintzeig and M. Korn, "Internships Go under the Microscope," *Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 2014, B7; L. Gellman, "Diving into the Intern Pool before Starting at B-School," *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2014, B7; and C. Zillman, "Unpaid Interns Have Their Day in Court—Again," *Fortune*, January 29, 2015, http://fortune.com/2015/01/29/unpaid-internships-legal-battle/.

## CASE INCIDENT 2  You May Be Supporting Slavery

It's your birthday, and you're going out for hors d'oeuvres at the club followed by a celebration at your favorite restaurant. The club staff greets you warmly as always, and your seafood dinner at the restaurant is predictably excellent. You've visited these places many times before, own a stake in the club, and regularly take company clients to the restaurant. How did you not know that you and your company support slavery?

It may be a case of ignorance being bliss, according to experts. Alberto Pozzi, who manages Miami Shores Country Club, claimed he was unaware the 39 Filipino workers he employed through a staffing agency were slaves. The agency, Quality Staffing Services, charged immigrants fees for food, housing, and utilities that almost completely depleted their earnings and left them perpetually owing the initial $5,000 recruiting fee. Living conditions were awful, medical care was refused, and abuse was common. Workers' visas were withheld, so they couldn't leave. Yet, Pozzi said, "These people never had a word or outward indication that they were unhappy."

Consumers are equally unaware of the slaves who bring P.F. Chang's signature calamari to the table. New Zealand fishermen with United Fisheries may complain of the indignities they suffer because of their enslavement through a staffing agency—no net pay, squalid conditions, debt, 16-hour workdays, lack of safety equipment—but no one hears them half a world away, where much of the company's revenue is generated.

The cases of Miami Shores Country Club and United Fisheries are far from unique. There are more than 27 million victims of human trafficking worldwide, and their number is growing with the increasing demand for inexpensive labor, particularly in the United States and other Western democracies. In response, U.S. law now holds companies responsible for violations even when they are not the direct employers. According to the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, employers are liable if they are aware of or profit from human trafficking. Individual states are following suit, enacting laws such as the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act, which requires large multinational companies to address slavery proactively throughout their supply chains.

HR departments are on the frontlines when it comes to the use of slavery, whether slaves are employees in our midst or employees of suppliers. "Just like you've got to know where your raw materials come from, you've got to know where your people come from. I think HR people are just awakening to this," said ManpowerGroup executive vice president Mara Swan. Experts urge HR professionals to understand the laws that apply to their organizations, build no-tolerance policies, train employees to identify infractions, monitor contractors and suppliers, and join industry groups to share information.

While individuals can help end slavery by refusing to purchase items produced by indentured workers, HR professionals can play a pivotal role in eliminating the economic feasibility of the violators.

## Questions ⭐

**17-17.** What are two ways in which modern-day workers become slaves? Who do you hold ethically accountable for their indentured servitude?

**17-18.** How might an employer seek to determine whether the individuals hired through agencies are in indentured servitude?

**17-19.** Once someone becomes an indentured worker, why might he or she stay?

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*Sources:* Based on B. DiPietro, "The Morning Risk Report: Coming to Grips with Thailand's Slave Labor Seafood," *The Wall Street Journal,* June 11, 2014, http://blogs.wsj.com/riskandcompliance/tag/p-f-chang/; D. Meinert, "Modern-Day Slavery," *HR Magazine* (May 2012): 22–27; and E. B. Skinner, "The Cruelest Catch," *Bloomberg Businessweek* (February 27–March 4, 2012): 70–76.

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## MyLab Management Writing Assignments

If your instructor has assigned this activity, go to www.pearson.com/mylab/management for auto-graded writing assignments as well as the following assisted-graded writing assignments:

**17-20.** Refer again to Case Incident 1. What responsibility do you think HR professionals have in designing, supporting, and telling candidates about their organization's internships?

**17-21.** From your reading of Case Incident 2, decide what you would do if you were in an HR department and discovered a group of your organization's employees were slaves to their placement agencies.

**17-22. MyLab Management only**—additional assisted-graded writing assignment.

# ENDNOTES

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