THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

AIFP Research Report

AIFP Testing Predicts On The Job Performance of Victoria Police Recruits
Phase 3 - Summary

Overview

This is the study concerned with improving the psychological screening of applicants to the Victoria Police. The goal of this study is to determine whether specialised pre-employment psychological screening can improve the accuracy of selection decisions based on actual 'on the job' performance data.

Background

This study concerns two squads who were admitted to the Police Academy in 1991. They were selected from 3,000 applicants. Psychological screening was conducted using the MMPI-2. On their first day of training they were given a battery of psychological tests. Based on these test findings predictions were made about who would become 'Above Average', 'Average' or 'Below Average' performers. These predictions were provided in writing to Victoria Police within several weeks of the beginning of training.

Methodology

At the end of two years of 'on the street' experience, objective data was obtained to evaluate the performance of each Constable.

Table 1 indicates the relatively "hard" data obtained with the assistance of the Victoria Police Force.

Table 1: Personnel File Data related to Performance

1. Number of sick days

2. Number of WorkCare claims

3. IID investigations which resulted in a positive finding against the Probationary Constable

4. Motor Vehicle Accidents (MVA's) judged to be the fault of the Probationary Constable

5. $ cost of each MVA

We developed questionnaires which were sent to the Probationary Constable's Officer in Charge at the 10 month juncture, in September 1992 and at the 20 month juncture, in July 1993. This data is referred to as the Performance Appraisal Questionnaire (PAQ).

The Probationary Constable Training Evaluation reports, which were submitted to the Quality Control Section at the Academy by the various Officers in Charge, were also reviewed.

Based on all of this data, each member of the study was rated as either 'Above Average', 'Average', 'Below Average' or 'Poor'.

These ratings were then compared to the predictions made on day one of their training, based on test data only.

Results of Phase 3

Predicting people's job performance over a two-year span is an extremely difficult task, particularly done with test data only.

We initially predicted that 12 of the 51 constables would become 'Below Average' performers. After two years on the job, 7 of these 12 became either 'Poor' or 'Below Average' performers. The likelihood of making this prediction by random chance or 'luck' is approximately 1 in 9 million.

Of the group of 51, 17 either did not complete Academy training, or later became 'Below Average' or 'Poor' performers. This represents an error rate of 33% among applicants who successfully passed all of the screening steps, including the MMPI-2.

In making our predictions with test data, but without an interview, we had an overall error rate of nine, or 17%. As we were evaluating a group who should have been 'the best of the best' prediction accuracy would have been improved considerably had testing and interviews been conducted with a larger, more representative sample.

Implications of Phase 3

Clearly, hiring and training a new recruit who either drops out, or who becomes a questionable performer, is a very expensive exercise. The following figures are provided as indicative costs.

If all salary and oncosts (payroll tax, WorkCare, superannuation, etc.) for a Probationary Constable who is a Poor performer is considered to be totally wasted, then the recruiting failure rate in these two Squads cost - from graduation from the Academy to the time of confirmation: **$2,215,349.**

If only 20% of the salary and oncosts for a Probationary Constable who is a problem performer is considered to be wasted, then the recruiting failure rate in these two Squads cost - from graduation from the Academy to the time of confirmation: **$971,745**

If using the AIFP system prevented the admission of **even one** person who would have been an Academy dropout, the **net savings after profiling costs would be $13,070**.

If using the AIFP system prevented the admission of **even one** person who graduated and went on to become a poorly performing Probationary Constable the **net savings would be between $48,236** (a very conservative estimate) **and $121,389** (a somewhat conservative estimate).

We believe that these savings are very much within reach, and could be achieved readily. Further, over time, as we are able to gain follow up data on more and more people admitted for training, we believe that the accuracy of predictions can be improved even further, yielding greater savings in the long term.

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