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Assessment, Measurement, and Prediction for Personnel Decisions

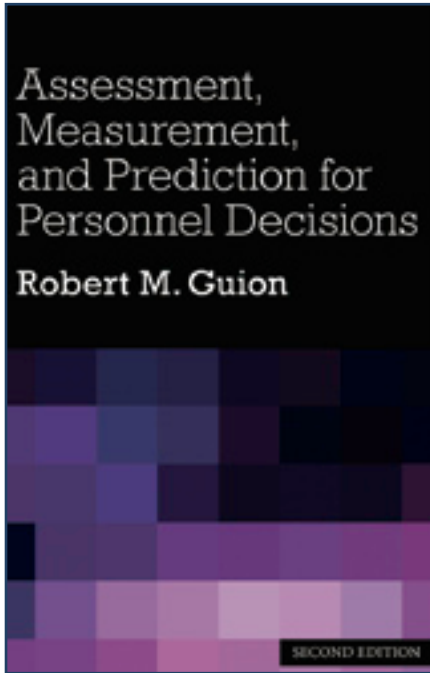
Robert M. Guion

SECOND EDITION

Assessment, Measurement, and Prediction for Personnel Decisions

Second Edition

Robert M. Guion



Robert M. Guion's best seller is now available in this new second edition. This noted book offers a comprehensive and practical view of assessment –based personnel decisions not available elsewhere in a single source. This edition more frankly evaluates the current research and practice and presents challenges that will change the basic thinking about staffing systems. This new edition suggests new directions for research and practice, includes emphasis on modern computers and technology useful in assessment, and pays more attention to prediction of individual growth and globalization challenges in the assessment process. The book will be of interest to faculty and students in Industrial Organizational psychology, human resource management and business. IO psychologists in private business and public sector organizations who have responsibilities for staffing and an interest in measurement and statistics will find this book useful.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert M. Guion, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus in the Department of Psychology, Bowling Green State University, has been at Bowling Green since 1952, when he initiated its program in industrial psychology, now known as industrial and organizational psychology. He received his Ph.D. in industrial psychology from Purdue University in 1952.

Honors include being elected President of SIOP (the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Division 14 of the American Psychological Association) and of the APA Division 5 (Evaluation and Measurement). He was twice awarded the SIOP James McKeen Cattell award for excellence in research design, and he also received SIOP's Distinguished Contributions Award and Distinguished Service Award. The Association for Psychological Science named him James McKeen Cattell Fellow for Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Science. He received a similar life honor, the Stephen E. Bemis Award, from the International Personnel Management Association Assessment Council. He was more recently named Scientific Honoree of the Foundation for the Advancement of Behavioral and Brain Scientists.

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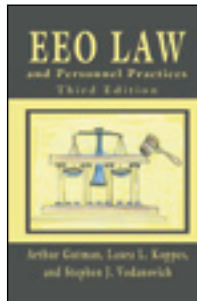
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Membership Decisions in Organizations

Organizations consist of members. Their members; the tools, equipment, and supplies available to them; their goals and purposes; their research activity; the community services they offer; their influence beyond the organization—such things create environments, social and physical and ideological, for their members and also for customers or vendors. Members are important; "workers should be viewed as long-term assets, not short-term costs" (Gowing, Kraft, & Quick, 1998, p. 261).

Organizations change. They grow or decay; they merge with others or divest themselves of functions and find new ones. Members die, retire, or change jobs and may (or may not) be replaced, and member roles change as organizations do. Organizations also face and react to external change. Some buggy-makers, facing the future, started making automobiles. In the automotive industry, skilled craftsmen made cars; product quality depended on their individual skills. Then mechanical equipment made assembly lines possible, and relatively unskilled workers could do what craftsmen had done—and with precision permitting interchangeable parts. Now much of automotive assembly is automated, and robots do things people used to do; fewer workers are needed, and many who are left are highly trained in new electronic crafts. Member roles and required qualifications changed as work environments changed from social to mechanical to electronic.

Change occurs spasmodically and in pockets—like "scattered showers" in a weather forecast. At any given moment, some people, and the organizations within which they work, do things in a totally new way; others stick to tradition. Sticking to tradition is partly perseverance (perhaps resistance to change), but it also happens because the stimulus for change doesn't occur everywhere at once. Besides, to recall collegiate French, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*—the more things change, the more they stay the same. Despite Frank Landy's urging that I follow his trend to find every job in this book and replace it with work, I find daily use still bemoans the loss of jobs in times of recession/depression, meaning work that gets paid. And, like Ilgen and Pulakos (1999), I believe that employee performance remains paramount to the health of both the employing organization and its members.

Not everyone joins an organization. People in some occupations—professionals, people in trades or crafts, farmers, or consultants among them—may form their own small organizations or work independently. Some of them must be certified individually to the public, to customers, or perhaps to potential employers that they are competent in what they do. Nevertheless, nearly everyone in a modern society works in some form of organization.

Organizations function through their members. Recruiting and hiring new members are chronologically the first steps in bringing in new people. Hiring new people is the end state of a selection process and is only one of several kinds of personnel decisions. The selection process—choosing among applicants those who will be hired—is a prototype for the processes

leading to many other kinds of decisions. I use *selection* as a generic term for deciding who among a field of candidates shall have a specific opportunity. Every hire (at whatever level), every promotion or transfer, every acceptance for special training, implies an agreement that employer and employee will work together for mutual benefit, often called a *psychological contract*, rarely formalized, often unrecognized until it is broken. The term acknowledges that the employer (employing organization) expects to gain something by offering the opportunity for a position in it. The selection process should make clear what the employer expects (e.g., through realistic job previews) and also what may be offered in return (related to pay, hours, working conditions, and more). In return, the person offers something (skills, special knowledge, dependably showing up and working well). The person also has expectations, such as a reasonable degree of permanence or opportunity for advancement.

New members (or old members in new roles) are chosen for fairly specific organizational roles—fairly specific sets of functions, duties, and organizational responsibilities—in the belief that choosing them will benefit the organization. "Fairly specific" is the right term. Some may be chosen to do very well-defined tasks, others to do whatever is needed in a loosely defined area. A role may be quite specific if the new member is simply taking the job of someone who has left. It is less specific if the newcomer offers relief to someone in an overloaded role or does things not assigned to anyone else—or if organizational policy is to give lots of latitude. Work roles may change over time, starting with specified activities but shedding or adding functions and purposes along the way.

Personnel decisions are based, if organizational leaders are not too whimsical and impulsive, on some sort of assessment of the person and prediction (explicit or implicit) of future behavior. It is always hoped that the decisions are wise. Consequences of wise decisions can range from the mere absence of problems to genuinely excellent outcomes promoting organizational purposes, such as substantial increases in mean performance levels and productivity. Consequences of unwise decisions can range from inconvenience to disaster.

The best personnel decisions are based on information permitting at least an implicit prediction that the person chosen will be satisfactory, perhaps better than others, in the anticipated role. The prediction is based on known or assumed attributes (traits) of the candidate.

ANTECEDENTS OF PERSONNEL DECISIONS

Once one or more applicants have been identified, selection decisions follow a typical chain of events: (a) identification of relevant traits, (b) assessment of candidates in terms of those traits, (c) prediction of probable performance or other outcomes of a decision to hire, and (d) the decision to hire or to reject (or, with more promising candidates than positions to fill, the decision to hire one in preference to others). The chain is often longer, but these seem generally minimal.

One illustrative employment process for choosing new members is shown in Figure 1.1. It has two chains. One of them, condensed to three big steps, is the support chain providing data and logic in support of the other. The actual decision chain is presented in more detail. The support chain, a personnel research chain, begins by gathering information about the work to be done in the job at hand, the needs and goals of the organization, and the development of ideas about what should be predicted and what traits are likely to predict it (predictive hypotheses), and the various processes conducted in seeking evaluative

"Robert Guion is one of the smartest and most knowledgeable Industrial Organizational psychologists. His chapters have all of the generally accepted theoretical perspectives and practical implications, but go beyond them and offer his extremely insightful comments." - **Fritz Drasgow, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, USA**

"Imagine getting a private tutorial from Joe DiMaggio on how to play baseball. What an extraordinary learning opportunity from the renowned master of the game it would be! For 50 years Bob Guion has been the voice of authority within industrial/organizational psychology on personnel decisions. When the best in the business offer us their talents, it behooves us to listen and learn, and to appreciate the moment." - **Paul. M Muchinsky, Joseph M Bryan Distinguished Professor of Business, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro**

"The book is remarkably comprehensive, beautifully written, full of wisdom about the topics, and useful to academics, students and practitioners." - **Walter C. Borman, University of South Florida, USA**

"The focus and approach of this book are absolutely relevant to current scholarship and research in this field, featuring numerous cutting-edge summaries as well as important pieces of guidance for future research. The new chapter 10 summarizes recent research in five "hottest" personnel assessment and decision research areas." - **Mo Wang, University of Maryland, USA**

"Guion describes ideas for many dozens of research studies that will better inform and invigorate our field for years to come. You know the information contained in this book is correct!" - **Neil Schmitt, Michigan State University, USA**

"The new edition of Assessment, Measurement, and Prediction for Personnel Decisions puts the process of making personnel decisions in context and challenges the reader to think in new ways about the problems of measurement in organizational settings. Regardless of the number of years you have worked in this field or the number of times you have read past editions of this book, you will learn something new. Carefully written, profoundly wise, and often amusing, this book is essential and a pleasure to read." - **Nancy T. Tippins, Valtera Corporation, Greenville, SC, USA**