

MASTER THESIS

How HR professionals relate to practice of psychological testing in
selection process

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Abstract

Aim of the thesis is to explore how HR professionals relate to psychological testing practices in context of selection processes. Three HR professionals share their opinions about selection processes, candidate experience, and psychological testing in semi-structured interviews. The findings include the persisting difference between research and practice, the lack of systematic approach to selection processes, and lack of knowledge and trust regarding psychological testing. The thesis concludes with recommendations on how to support HR professionals in transformation of HR into value-adding, strategic, and evidence-based discipline.

Keywords: psychological testing, selection processes, human resources

Table of contents

Introduction.....	5
Problem formulation.....	6
Research question.....	6
Purpose of this study.....	6
Organisation of this study.....	7
Literature review.....	7
The evolution of Human Resources Department.....	7
Current Strategic Talent Management Challenges.....	8
The critique of HR.....	12
Talent philosophies and their implications for recruitment.....	13
Current recruitment processes.....	15
Interviews.....	15
Psychometric testing.....	16
Assessment centres.....	16
Psychological assessment in human resource management.....	17
Practice of psychological testing.....	19
Methodology.....	21
Philosophy of Science.....	21
Method.....	23
Semi-structured interviews.....	24
Interview guide.....	26
Field notes.....	28
Empirical data.....	28
Anne.....	29
Bella.....	31
Cecilia.....	35
Presentation of data.....	36
1. The candidate experience matters and should be positive.....	37
2. Candidates do not have good experience on the job market.....	39
3. Processes currently used in selection processes are very much the same, especially in the first rounds.....	41
4. Psychology testing can be performed by few, if any.....	44
5. Psychology testing negatively impacts candidate experience.....	47
6. Recruitment is in need of change.....	49

7. HR processes are not systematically evaluated.	51
1. When personality testing could be potentially useful	53
2. HR professionals do not do a good job	55
3. Intuition as part of the recruitment process	57
Findings in comparison with literature	59
The importance of people	59
The critique of HR.....	59
The role of psychology in HR	59
Psychological testing is not widely used, and the most common method is still unstructured interviews	59
Arguments against psychological testing	60
When psychological testing is (un)suitable	61
Practice of psychology testing according to interviewees	62
Multiple methods and standardisation	63
Results	63
Recommendations for Current Talent Management.....	64
Education.....	64
Evaluation	64
Experimentation	65
Conclusion	65
Limitations and further research.....	66
References.....	67
Appendix.....	68
Transcript of interview with Anne.....	68
Transcript of interview with Bella	81
Transcript of interview with Cecilia.....	95
Field notes	107
Reflection	110

Introduction

During my third semester at the RUC university, I had completed six months of online internship at a large American company. The internship was with the human resources (hereafter HR) department and my task was to attract and select interns for the other departments, such as marketing, e-commerce, technical support, and other. During my working hours I represented the company, rejecting quite a few applicants, as I usually received tens of applications for each opening. During my working hours I was wondering how to obtain the information I needed to make the correct decision and how to quickly decide between so many applicants. In my free time, I was searching for a more permanent position in Denmark, because after the internship there were limited possibilities to join the organisation for people located in Europe. During my free time, I was one of the rejected unsuccessful applicants who was displeased with the process as companies seemed to ask for quite a lot of and give nothing in turn. This interesting experience of being on both sides at the same time led to my increased interest in selection practices. And one memorable experience focused my interest on one practice in particular: psychological testing. As a part of an application form, I was asked to fill a form consisting of quite a few questions. One set consisted of job-related questions, which were meant to assess HR knowledge and skills. The second set was more interesting from the perspective of this thesis: Tell us about a memory you cherish involving our product. Which colour would you be and why? What kind of a picture would you like to be used for as the colour? What are you passionate about? What is the ideal working day? After dedicating considerable amount of time to crafting answers to these questions and not moving forward in the application process, I was left wondering. Has anyone evaluated my answers? How? Were there correct answers? What was the purpose? Does analysing these answers truly help in making a decision about who would be suitable for the job? How? Some months and applications later, I received a job offer and started working full-time as external recruiter in an agency focusing on information technology. The information the client wanted from us covered the candidate's technical and linguistic skills. Information relating to personality were kept to minimum level. Only in cases, where the applicant was especially pleasant or on the contrary unpleasant, this was mentioned to the client. The contrast between companies filling-in a junior role and trying to assess the candidate's personality already in first round versus companies filling-in senior

roles and seemingly omitting the personality aspect altogether led me to the desire to investigate psychological testing in my master thesis. My interest especially revolved around fellow HR professionals. Based on my experience as a candidate the use of psychology testing seemed questionable at best. Nevertheless, based on my experience as HR professional I understood how advantageous the ability to understand and predict someone's behaviour would be. If I could understand sense-making of HR professionals, I could potentially understand the role of psychology testing in the selection process.

Problem formulation

According to some academics, psychology testing is one of the best practices, objective and scientific tool. Nevertheless, it is not the academics who use the psychological testing in practice. It is the HR professionals who influence the selection practices in companies. The HR professionals affect opinions of other professionals in their organisations as they set and shape the selection practices. And it is the HR professionals who create the experience for the candidates, who apply for jobs at the organisations. The sense-making of HR professionals is crucially affecting sense-making of other professionals in companies and the general public. In order to understand how psychological testing is currently used and understood, it is crucial to understand how HR professionals relate to psychological testing. And this thesis focuses on application of psychological testing in the context of selection processes.

Research question

In order to gain knowledge about how HR professionals view psychological testing, the following research question was posed: How human resources professionals relate to practice of psychological testing in selection process?

Purpose of this study

Purpose of this study is to gain insight into current recruitment processes, and to understand the specific role played by personality testing. The thesis seeks to answer whether HR professionals actually make use of psychology testing, how, who conducts the testing, in which stage of the recruitment process personality testing is utilised, and most importantly why. What the results are that HR professionals and their organisations expect from this type of testing.

Organisation of this study

Background and interest in the phenomenon are presented in the introduction. Problem formulation and research are outlined. The following section is dedicated to literature review. The literature review revolves about HR in general, selection practices, and psychological testing. The philosophy of science and method are discussed afterwards. Empirical data are presented next. Findings are then compared with literature. Results are summarised and recommendations are outlined. The thesis is summarised in conclusion. Lastly, the thesis addresses limitations and future research.

Literature review

The evolution of Human Resources Department

A brief overview of how the function of human resources department evolved over time will be provided. HR management, as any other management, needs to respond to both business needs, and macroenvironmental pressures. Understanding these factors allow for better understanding of the status of HR management. This section briefly explores how HR department's responsibilities and what was expected changed over time, and to provide better understanding why HR face critique nowadays. Until 1950s the department taking care of employees was simply called staff department. Its main focus was administering benefits provided for employees, and ideally representing employee concerns to head off conflicts and strikes. Later the department was renamed to personnel department. This signified a more formal approach to negotiating terms and conditions of employment, with the employees, and with unions as well. This was in reply to the growing legal framework and need to ensure the company complies with the new law. The department was viewed as a service centre, and a cost centre. Not as a department that is crucial to organisational activities or provides more value than keeping unions away. This was demonstrated for example by the lack of a seat for HR on the board of directors. In 1980s the department gained the name human resources. Employees were recognised as a resource necessary to achieve company's goals, but more in a sense of a tool. Supreme stakeholder became the shareholder. The department's goal was to protect company from potential lawsuits, as the legislation for equality and against discrimination increased. Seat on board of directors still has not been granted. In late 1990s the term talent management came around. The department's focus became attracting, developing, and retaining the best "tools", who make difference to organisational performance (return to shareholders), linking them directly to

fulfilment of the strategic plan. (Stacey and Mowles, 2016) Currently, some companies choose to name the department People and Culture Department, perhaps to show they do not view their employees as tools. These changes could be arguably linked to the increasing importance of the employees and increasing competition for the best of them.

Current Strategic Talent Management Challenges

“Work, workers, and organizations are changing in significant ways, and at an ever increasing rate, and there is every reason to believe that both the degree and the rate of change will continue to increase. Most of these changes have significant and profound implications for how talent should be managed. Simply stated, many of the old principles and practices concerning what makes for good talent management are obsolete as a result of the changing nature of work, workers, and organizations. What used to be good or best practice—or at least good enough practice— with respect to how people are recruited, selected, trained, developed, rewarded, and evaluated simply does not fit today’s workforce and workplaces. ... This includes many of today’s best reward, selection, and development practices. So far the talent management principles and practices of most organizations have not changed significantly in response to this new world of work. They still follow a job- based bureaucratic model, focusing on job descriptions, equating fairness with sameness and seniority, and are managed by human resources (HR) functions that are not changing as fast as the world of work is. This has resulted in numerous books and articles that are critical of HR... ... There is considerable evidence that the HR functions in most organizations are not strategy driven and are not changing as fast as they need to.” (Lawler III, 2017)

One of the strongest critiques of HR is based on its failure to evolve and meet needs of contemporary business. The business landscape has changed and keeps on changing. According to Lawler, the factors that require HR to change are following: global competition, disruptive technology, workforce diversity, pressure for sustainable performance, accelerating change, and criticality of talent for organisation’s performance. Each of these factors will be briefly examined in turn to visualise the business landscape HR is required to operate in.

Global competition

“Organizations now increasingly operate in global business, social, and political environments because the products, services, and customers of most large corporations are multinational. ... Even those organizations that do not operate globally are significantly affected by the organizations that do; they compete for labour with them, and often find themselves doing business with and at times competing with global organizations. ... One of the most important features of the global business environment is the ability it provides to internationally source the production and delivery of products and services. Information technology has made it possible to globally source talent for software development as well as phone sales and customer service. ... As a result, an increasing number of organizations now face global competitors rather than just local ones. This is true of both service organizations and manufacturing organizations. A major factor that has led to the highly competitive, rapidly changing global business environment that exists today is the availability of financial capital. ... individuals and organizations who wish to create new businesses or grow existing ones can access the financial backing they need relatively easily. There is no reason to believe that in the foreseeable future this supply of capital will decrease; the best prediction is that there will be an ever greater number of start-ups on a worldwide basis in decades to come and, as a result, the business environment will become increasingly competitive.” (Lawler III, 2017)

Disruptive Technology

“Technology—particularly in the form of information technology and intelligent computing—will increasingly be a major disruptive force when it comes to how, when, and where work is done and how it should be managed. ... What people do, and when, where, and how they do it, is going to change dramatically and continuously over the next decades. How their performance is monitored and measured is also sure to change. Organizations are increasingly going to need to be able to quickly change what they do and how, when, where, and how well they do it, as well as deciding who will be responsible for doing it. And they will need to change as technology makes certain products and services obsolete as well as the means of producing them. ... A key issue is how organizations develop a workforce, and how they coordinate and evaluate the performance of individuals who are not necessarily collocated but can communicate quickly and easily with each other. Advances in computer

hardware, algorithms, and data analytics will increase the work that machines do and migrate many kinds of work from individuals to technology- based operations. ... The challenge for organizations is to find the optimal balance between human- and machine-controlled operations and decision making.” (Lawler III, 2017)

Workforce Diversity

“In most organizations, many changes in the composition of the workforce have already taken place. These organizations’ workforces are much more diverse than they were just ten years ago, and there are many reasons to believe that we will see continued growth in their diversity; this is particularly true in developed countries that have laws against discrimination based on age, race, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity. ... The age range of the workforce is going to go up, the gender balance is going to shift, and the workforce is going to include more transgender and ethnic minority people. Overall, most organizations will have increasingly diverse workforces with respect to every important characteristic of human beings.

Different age groups think about careers, and the features of organizations, in different ways. This seems to be a product of not only aging and maturation but also of the reality that people from different generations have different experiences at any given age. As a result, they look at work differently at any given point in time. Every new generation is likely to think, act, and look at work and careers differently when compared to how previous generations did when they were that age, because the world is in a constant process of change. Overall, organizations must be able to manage individuals that differ in age, gender, race, sexual orientation, and national origin. As a result, there will be very few organization and talent management issues for which there is an effective “one size fits all” approach.” (Lawler III, 2017)

Pressure for Sustainable Performance

“The demand that organizations perform well has expanded over the last several decades in the sense that it is not enough for them to improve solely in terms of the quality of the products and services they produce and their financial performance. They are increasingly being asked to perform better in how they impact the environment, the society in which they operate, and their employees. ... As the world becomes more conscious of the importance of

sustainable corporate performance, there is little doubt that corporations will increasingly be held accountable for their global impact on the environment, their employees, and the societies in which they operate. The demand that corporations meet what are often called triple- bottom- line standards and report on their performance is growing. As of yet this is certainly not being undertaken by a majority of the corporations in either the developed or the developing world, but there is significant movement in this direction.” (Lawler III, 2017)

Accelerating Change

“...the rate of change is likely to continue to be rapid and increasingly disruptive with respect to traditional models of how organizations are designed and how they manage their talent. Most of our models of talent management and organization design assume a stance toward change that is episodic— that is, they argue for an analysis of the situation, an implementation of changes that are needed, and a period of stability until the next period of change needs to occur. It is now well established that the traditional change model is no longer appropriate because it operates too slowly. What is needed instead is a continuous change approach in which organizations are agile and capable of constantly changing the ways in which they operate. They cannot rely on periods of stability during which they can perfect recent changes and plan for the next ones. Rather, they need to be constantly experimenting and changing what they do and how they operate in order to respond quickly to the rapidly changing environments they face. To do this they must have talent management practices that support experimentation, agility, and change.” (Lawler III, 2017)

Criticality of Talent for Organisation’s Performance

“...in the future talent will be the most important asset for virtually every organization. Simply stated, the changing nature of the work organizations do and the rapidly changing, highly competitive environment they face will make it impossible for most organizations to perform well without the right talent. As a result, talent will become the asset that makes the difference between winning and losing. ... In many simple repetitive jobs ... there is no opportunity for talent to perform at an exceptional level, and there is little advantage to an organization if someone performs at an exceptional level; an adequate level is sufficient. This is particularly true with respect to the work in an organization that does not make a great difference with respect to organizational performance. The situation is different, however,

when the performance of organizations depends on advanced technology, knowledge work, and high value-added work. ... There is one additional point to be made about attracting and retaining the right talent in today's and tomorrow's work settings: such efforts have become more costly, and they will continue to be. It has always been true that training, turnover, and replacement costs depend on the complexity of jobs that are being filled. For some simple jobs, the cost is often only equal to a few weeks of pay; as a result, high levels of turnover are not a major cost for an organization. With complex work, the need for talented and well-trained individuals makes the cost of turnover much higher: it is often equal to six months or a year's salary. It is particularly important that organizations that perform knowledge work and complex customer service work do an outstanding job of attracting, retaining, and developing the right talent. They can gain a competitive advantage by doing this simply because they have lower turnover costs, but that may be the least significant result when compared to the resulting performance improvements that come from having a motivated engaged knowledgeable workforce. One direct effect of talent becoming a more important determinant of organizational effectiveness is that it brings more bargaining power..." (Lawler III, 2017)

The critique of HR

"For years now, the call for human resources' (HR's) head has been ringing through the halls of academic institutions and organizations throughout the globe. Whether it is Buckingham and Goodall (2015) calling for the total overhaul of performance management or Ram Charan (2014) asking us to split HR into the sum of its responsibilities, people have opinions of HR and the way it is practiced today and how it should be practiced in the future. ... The collection of thoughts provides a provocative evaluation of HR as a profession under the basic premise that HR needs to rise or to improve to meet the demands of modern business. In other words, their view supports the ever-growing chorus of voices calling for the head of HR on a platter." (Alonso, Kurtessis and Waters, 2017, p.32)

Alonso, Kurtessis and Waters argue similarly as Lawler that it is the changing business landscape that is behind HR's failure. They also name the same specific factors such as shifts in demography and technology. Furthermore, they agree with the importance of the people in knowledge economy and thus the importance of finding, attracting, and keeping the right

people. They also add a factor omitted by Lawler, and that is evolution in values of the workers, i.e., the talent itself.

There is agreement on the cause of the problem, but the recommendations differ. While there is an agreement that leverage of big data could provide HR with some answers on how to improve, Alonso, Kurtessis and Waters see the main solution in industrial psychology. And they argue that *“when HR is viewed as “strategic”, it is often a result of effective application of I-O practices for key process like employee selection or performance management.”* (Alonso, Kurtessis and Waters, 2017, pp.33-34)

An important difference between this and Lawler’s text is the opinion on the current state of HR. Although both texts are from the year 2017, Lawler is convinced that HRM has not improved at all, while Alonso et al. claim that HRM has already risen and continues to rise.

Talent philosophies and their implications for recruitment

The article about talent philosophies by Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe, and Dries is used here to categorise perceptions of HR professionals regarding talent. This is important, because the way recruitment processes are set in a company reflects what is perceived as a talent by the company. The purpose of the recruitment process is to select the person who is the best fit for the role. Naturally, companies enter the recruitment process with some kind of expectations and thoughts about what are the crucial factors that need to be fulfilled, what the person must be like in order to be able to perform the role successfully. I expected that managers who have exclusive understanding of talent (i.e., talent is rare) will use different assessment methods and prioritise different factors than managers who hold inclusive understanding of talent (i.e., everyone has a certain talent). This is what I expected, but the research did not show any correlation between perception of talent and the methods selected for the assessment of the candidate. *“Contrary to what we expected, we did not find relationships between the exclusive and/developable and inclusive/developable clusters and the degree to which HR managers perceived growth as opposed to foundational criteria to be important for talent identification.”* (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe and Dries, 2019, p. 562) Foundational (or stable) criteria in this text refer to cognitive abilities and personality. Growth criteria encompass motivation, adaptability, and learning orientation. This is the reason why I decided not to pursue the topic further in the interviews, as it seems

that the selection methods are not influenced by talent philosophies of individual HR professionals.

“Practitioners and academics agree that talent management (TM) is one of the top priorities for HR professionals. However, they often disagree on the exact meaning of the construct (e.g. Dries, Cotton, Bagdadli, & Oliveira, 2014; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). The different meanings ascribed to TM can be attributed to differences in individual perspectives on the nature, value, and instrumentality of talent... Talent philosophies can be defined as the ‘fundamental assumptions and beliefs about the nature, value, and instrumentality of talent that are held by a firm’s key decision makers’ (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). In other words, talent philosophies capture how senior (HR) managers define talent, who they regard as talented, how valuable they consider talented employees to be, and how they think talented employees should be deployed to maximize performance. As such, talent philosophies resemble mental models that have been extensively researched in the area of cognitive psychology and cognitive science (e.g. Craik, 1943). Mental models are cognitive representations of reality that influence individual reasoning, decision-making, and behavior.” (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe and Dries, 2019, pp.563-564)

While this definition explains the differing opinions among HR professionals and might explain some of the decision-making regarding HR issues in the companies, it omits the fact that it is not only the senior HR managers, who participate in the hiring decision. The first rounds of recruitment process are often conducted by employees of lower seniority and if the interview does not go well, the candidate will not even have a chance to talk to the senior manager. Hence, the hiring decision might be heavily influenced by the less senior employees and talent management philosophies they hold as they fulfil a gate-keeper role. For example, the senior manager might be convinced that the company offers opportunities for development and training and can afford to be inclusive in the hiring, i.e., give an opportunity to a person without the necessary skills. But the junior employee who actually went through the training might know that for a person without any skills this training will likely not be sufficient to perform well, and hence will be more exclusive in the hiring, i.e., looking for a person who already has some skills. In addition, it will be pointed out that talent philosophies differ highly among individuals, and thus it is impossible to expect that

everyone in the company will share the same talent philosophy, and make the same decisions.

“In line with the idea that cognitive representations of reality differ per individual, Dries (2013) has pointed out that talent philosophies tend to vary considerably between individual managers. Most notably, individuals disagree on whether talent is either rare or common (exclusive versus inclusive), and on whether talent is determined by either nature or nurture (innate versus developable) (Howe et al., 1998; Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013; Stahl et al., 2012). Based on these two areas of disagreement, Meyers and van Woerkom (2014) developed a conceptual framework of four distinct talent philosophies that vary along the two dimensions exclusive/inclusive and innate/developable... (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe and Dries, 2019, pp. 564 - 565)

Talent philosophies did not seem to explain reasoning behind different choice of selection practices, thus I did not use the theory in my analysis. Similarly, I decided not to discuss the culture versus talent paradigms. In a similar line of thought, these paradigms do not seem to provide explanations for different approaches to talent management.

Current recruitment processes

“Selecting candidates involves two main processes: shortlisting, and assessing applicants to decide who should be made a job offer.” (Maxwell, 2021). The focus of this paper is assessment, i.e., selection between the candidates who seem suitable for the job after the shortlisting. Recruitment processes that are used for assessment and are most relevant for the focus of this paper will be briefly introduced, together with recommendations of best practice issued by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Interviews

“...interviews are very widely used in the selection process, as demonstrated by our successive surveys of recruitment practices. Interviews can be structured in various ways, with competency-based interviews and the content of CVs and application forms being very common, according to our latest Resourcing and talent planning survey. For the employer, the interview is an opportunity to: Gauge candidates’ experience and ability to perform in the role. Explain the employee value proposition, including learning opportunities and employee benefits. Give the candidate a positive impression of the organisation as a good employer.

For the candidate, the interview is an opportunity to: Understand the job and its responsibilities in more detail. Ask questions about the organisation and the employee value proposition. Decide whether they would like to take the job if offered it. ... Our behavioural science research suggests that to avoid instinctive or hasty judgements interviewers should pre-commit to a set of interview questions that are directly related to performance on the job. Structuring the interview can help improve its ability to predict performance in the job. A structured interview means that: Questions are planned carefully before the interview. All candidates are asked the same questions. Answers are scored using a rating system. Questions focus on the attributes and behaviours needed in the job only. There is a risk, however, of having an overly rigid approach in which there is little opportunity to ask the candidate supplementary questions and the candidate does not feel at ease, so a balance is needed.” (Maxwell, 2021)

Psychometric testing

“Tests have become an important part of the selection process and can benefit the overall talent management process. Evidence suggests that standardised tests or tests of cognitive ability can be good predictors of job performance, especially for occupations that require complex thinking, although test results should never be the sole basis for a selection decision. ... Used correctly, psychometric tests allow employers to systematically assess individual differences (for example in ability, aptitude, or personality). ... Tests should be supported by a body of statistical evidence which demonstrates their validity and reliability. Most tests are developed by occupational psychologists and should be accompanied by detailed manuals that explain how test scores should be used so that employers can compare their test candidates against benchmark scores of similar people (also known as a norm group). Administering tests and analysing the results is a skilled task...” (Maxwell, 2021)

Assessment centres

“Assessment centres are used for selection as well as promotion and professional development purposes. They require candidates to complete several different tasks and often combine behavioural ratings, cognitive and personality assessments obtained from multiple sources. The tasks set should clearly relate to the person specification and reflect the reality of the job. They must be administered in a systematic way, with candidates being given the same types and numbers of tasks to complete in the same time, so that they have equal

opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Depending on the nature of the job, tasks might include individual or group work, written and/or oral input, and tasks prepared in advance as well as those performed solely on the day. This could involve delivering a report or presentation, time management or task prioritisation exercises, individual problem solving, group discussions, simulations of business activities, or functional role-play. Assessment centres should be overseen by experienced selectors to ensure objectivity and consistency. Selectors must be trained to observe, actively listen, record, classify and rate behaviour, and seek evidence accurately and objectively against the job description and person specification.”

The overall recommendation of Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (further CIPD) is following: *“To ensure fair and successful selection, it’s best to use several methods in the decision-making process. Insights from the interview should be supported by other data where possible, for example psychometric tests or task simulation activities, which could be conducted at interview stage or with technology beforehand.”* (Maxwell, 2021)

In other words, recruiters should not rely on a single selection method.

“It’s important that selection interviews are conducted professionally. Everyone involved in assessing candidates should have the necessary skills (for example in interviewing and testing) and have been adequately briefed about the job in question and its requirements.” (Maxwell, 2021)

The need to emphasise that everyone involved in employee selection should have the necessary skills to do so, signals that the author of the article is under the impression that many who are part of the processes actually do not possess the necessary skills.

Psychological assessment in human resource management

“Psychological assessment refers to the process whereby different methods and techniques are used to test hypotheses about people and their psychological characteristics. Understanding employees’ psychological makeup is key to allow effective human resource management, from hiring to retirement. However, the gap between scientific evidence and organizational practices dealing with psychological assessment is still great. ... Assessment refers to a process aimed to deliver judgment and make an evaluation or decision (McDermott, 2012; Ceschi et al., 2017a, b, c). ...When specifically aimed at investigating

psychological characteristics, psychological assessments are carried out by using a combination of methods and techniques (Sartori and Pasini, 2007). These can either refer to the idiographic or clinical approach, aiming at a global evaluation of people, for example by using interviews, or to the nomothetic or psychometric approach, which focuses on a targeted assessment of specific features and mainly makes use of standardized instruments such as psychological tests (Luthans and Davis, 1981; Sartori, 2010). ... In the organizational context, psychological assessment is key to inform human resource management (HRM) including personnel selection (Dunlop et al., 2011; Lievens and De Soete, 2011; Vecchione et al., 2012; Sartori et al., 2016a, ... That is, psychological assessment represents a key component of HRM that can be used to assist employee-related decision making, from employees' hiring to retirement (Sartori et al., 2013a, b, 2018). Yet, despite the centrality of psychological assessment for HRM, a gap exists between evidence-based recommendations and organizational practices (Highhouse et al., 2016), where psychological instruments are rarely, if ever, employed (Ones et al., 2007). For example, according to a survey conducted among 1627 HR managers representing large organizations in the US, while 68% of employers engage in various forms of job skill testing, only 29% of them use one or more forms of psychological measurements (SIOP, <http://www.siop.org/workplace/employment%20testing/usingoftests.aspx>). These data are consistent with other findings showing that less than 20% of US companies currently use personality tests and that 82% of organizations do not use personality tests in the hiring or employee promotion process (Dattner, 2013). Likely, research shows that when it comes to personnel selection, unstructured interviews are still the most common tool used to make hiring decisions despite abounding evidence on their lower validity and reliability compared to structured and standardized instruments (Sartori and Pasini, 2007; Sartori, 2010; Cubico et al., 2010). In a similar vein, a study conducted in the Netherlands showed that HR managers hold stronger intentions toward unstructured interviewing compared to structured interviewing (van der Zee et al., 2002). Similarly, in a study conducted in Italy among 21 HR managers and recruiters, participants perceived individual interviews as unavoidable to assess candidates' psychological characteristics (Sartori et al., 2017). Moreover, results from this study showed that psychological tests were perceived as lacking a fit with specific organizational needs or too time-consuming with regard to administration and analysis of results. ... Such phenomena can be explained as the result of at least two cognitive biases, i.e.

the illusion of control (Langer, 1975), which refers to the tendency to overestimate one's ability to control events, and the overconfidence effect, which occurs when subjective confidence in one's judgments is greater than one's objective accuracy (Sartori and Ceschi, 2013; Ceschi et al., 2019). For example, research shows that while HR managers are aware of the availability of standardized tests and instruments their beliefs regarding the validity of such tools are mixed and include perceptions of being skilled enough to reliably assess psychological traits through unstructured interviews (Sartori et al., 2017). (Sartori, Costantini and Ceschi, 2020, p.284,285)

Practice of psychological testing

“There is a growing awareness that attracting and retaining talented employees can provide organizations with a sustained competitive advantage. The importance of attracting superior employees, together with low unemployment rates has led to intense competition for the best applicants in a wide variety of occupations (O’Leary, Lindholm, Whitford and Freeman 2002). ... Psychological testing is generally regarded as an integral part of best practices for selection (Terpstra and Rozell 1993; Harel and Tzafirir 2001; Guest, Michie, Conway and Sheehan 2003). The use of psychological tests for selection purposes has been increasing in recent years (Bartram 2001; Taylor, Keelty and McDonnell 2002; Anderson 2005; Wolf and Jenkins 2006). (Carless, 2009, p. 2517)

“Professional guidelines about the use of psychological tests for selection purposes offer very clear recommendations about general assessment issues, for example reliability, validity, norm groups, cut-scores and feedback to the applicant... On the other hand, the guidelines offer very limited practical advice about how psychological test data should be used to make selection decisions. ... The majority of articles on psychological testing and selection focus on technical aspects and tend to be written for other psychologists (Terpstra and Rozell 1997). ... Concerns have been expressed about the growing schism between science and practice, especially in personnel selection... Some argue that the research–practice gap can be explained by a lack of knowledge about selection practices (Terpstra and Rozell 1997; Ryan and Tippins 2004; Anderson 2005). Evidence supports the knowledge hypothesis; a large discrepancy exists between research findings and practitioners’ beliefs about selection practices (Rynes et al. 2002; Carless, Rasiah and Irmer 2009). Others have argued that the scientific literature is inaccessible (Terpstra and Rozell 1998); articles are too long and of little

practical relevance (Gelade 2006). ... HR professionals are an important source of information about psychological testing (Hoque and Noon 2001; Wolf and Jenkins 2006) and thus influence whether or not managers adopt best practices with regard to psychological testing.” (Carless, 2009, p.2518)

Carless provides several practical suggestions on how to correctly administer psychological testing. She addresses issues that are hard to compromise on and require fully following one approach. One of the problematics have been agreed upon and that is analysing the job requirements prior to the test administration, this has been found to increase the predictive validity of testing. Prior to any test selection and administration, it is necessary to evaluate what the job requires in terms of *“job environment, job context, job tasks, behaviours and activities performed, or worker characteristics (SIOP). Of central importance for the selection process, is information about the worker requirements, that is, the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSA) and other personal characteristics. A useful feature of a job analysis is that it specifies whether an employee is expected to have all the important KSA before selection into the job or whether training will be provided after selection (SIOP). Job analysis is also used to identify the general level of KSA needed. ... Job analysis is fundamental to properly designed selection procedures because it ensures that only those constructs that are job-related are assessed.” (Carless, 2009, p.2520)* Assessing only job-related constructs increases the predictive validity of the testing. In addition, it can help to direct the focus of the selection procedure.

Lesser agreement surrounds reporting results of the tests. The question is to whether report the full results or whether report only results that are job-related. In both cases there is a possibility to distort the decision-making. Nevertheless, in agreement with focusing on only job-related assessments, Carless recommends reporting only relevant personality data to managers, not the entire psychological profile. Tentative conclusions surround previewing the test results prior to the interview. Previewing *“may stimulate more productive questioning by providing the interviewer with leads to pursue in the interview. It should enable interviewers to gather unique information not readily available from other sources.” (Carless, 2009, p.2523)* While evidence suggests that practitioners preview the test results as they feel it helps them in the decision-making, Carless suggests that previewing decreases the predictive validity. That might be due to less structure in the interview which is caused by more individualistic approach to each interviewee, and also due to the interviewer’s pre-interview impressions, and confirmatory biases.

If data is to be previewed, it should be always standardised.

Careless also offers recommendation on how to score the tests and overall, how to work with the results. Careless recommends statistical methods over judgemental methods because statistical methods are objective. Nevertheless, judgemental methods are used more common in practice. Careless suggests that to reach optimal results is to employ more than one method of selection and combine the data.

Careless concludes with suggestions on hiring recommendation. Careless suggests that the final decision should be always left with the hiring manager. The role of the assessor is to report results and describe the candidate. Nonetheless, several surveys of industrial and organisational psychologists demonstrated that between sixty and seventy percent of the respondents give a hiring recommendation. If hiring recommendation is given, it should not be consulted before the interview is completed and ratings are made.

Methodology

Philosophy of Science

Social constructivism was employed to guide the research. This theoretical approach regards social realities as *“continuously being brought to life in meaning-making processes over time.... Meanings, institutions and social practices are therefore never fixed and are always under reconstruction”* (Carroll et al., 2019, p.227). Sense-making is indeed at the heart of the project. The purpose of the project is to understand sense-making of HR professionals and *“identifying the way in which thought and speech – as well as the everyday truisms people live with and under – are established, used and changed...”* (Egholm, 2018, p. 144) Aim of the project is not to seek a universal truth, but rather sense-making in different contexts. As social constructivism rejects unity of science and one objective truth, it is a fitting approach for such aim. In addition, while the sense-making is highly influenced by context, the *...social reality is an ongoing accomplishment of social actors rather than something external to them and that totally constrains them”* (Bryman, 2016, p.30). The interviewees’ react to the context and in turn shape others’ sensemaking. As I am a member of the researched group myself, i.e., I am an HR professional with focus on recruitment, I am well aware that my explanations of the phenomena are socially constructed accounts influenced by my opinions and experiences. Thus, my position as a researcher is reflexive, recognising that I have impact on the research.

An abductive approach was applied in this study. *“Instead of moving from theory to data... or data to theory..., an abductive approach moves back and forth, in effect combining deduction and induction (Suddaby 2006). ... Abduction begins with the observation of a ‘surprising fact’; it then works out a plausible theory of how this could have occurred.”* (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016, p.148) The tasks of literature review, data collection, and analysis were intertwined throughout the research. The process started with a literature review related to talent management, psychological assessment, HR practices and recommendations. Interview guide was formulated based on my own observations and the literature review. The interviews were conducted with quite long intervals in between, hence there was time for further literature study. Two interviews were conducted online, one in person. Once the interviews were transcribed and coded, analysis, discussion and areas for further research were compiled based on the empirical data.

“Social constructionism indicates that partially shared meanings and realities are dependent on people’s interpretation of the events that occur around them. Since meanings in qualitative research depend on social interaction, qualitative data are likely to be more varied, elastic and complex than quantitative data. ... Qualitative data are likely to be characterised by their richness and fullness...” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016, p.568)

Qualitative data were more suitable in order to reach understanding of sense-making of others.

Given that research on psychological testing is mostly produced by psychologists for other psychologists (Terpstra and Rozell 1997 in Carless, 2009), the opinions of HR practitioners seem to be overlooked. HR practitioners are on the receiving end of guides and best practices but are rarely asked in-depth to express their opinions. Exploratory study seemed suitable in order to discover new perspective.

“An exploratory study is a valuable means to ask open questions to discover what is happening and gain insights about a topic of interest. ... An exploratory study is particularly useful... to clarify... understanding of an issue, problem or phenomenon, such as if you are unsure of its precise nature. ...Because of their exploratory nature, these interviews are likely to be relatively unstructured and to rely on the quality of the contributions from those who participate...” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016, pp.568-569)

The thesis is interpretative and is not free of my values and preconceptions. This would not even be possible as knowledge always stems from a specific context.

“A conclusion is credible if it fits in with the system of other statements on the basis of which you reached the conclusion in a manner free from contradictions... a coherence-based concept of truth.” (Egholm, 2018, p.166)

Method

“...the strategy-as-practice literature advocates that we need to look into the perceptions, discourses, and actions of individual managers (strategists) to fully understand strategy (Whittington, 1996)” (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe and Dries, 2019)q

Three qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviewees were familiarised with the topic and the questions prior to the interview. Topic was predefined, but the interviewees had the freedom to elaborate on anything related to the topic that could be of interest. The interviews lasted on average for around forty minutes. All interviewees are anonymised and referred to as Anne, Bella, and Cecilia. Anne is a senior with fifteen years of experience within human resources management, and an owner of a staffing agency, that has been on the market for six years. Bella is a junior with around one year of experience in human resources management. Nevertheless, she has partaken in all HR-related activities in the company, as she has for example led interviews on her own, have preselected applicants, and has been in charge of onboarding in part-time and student positions. Cecilia is also a junior with year of experience within HR, more specifically recruitment. She has experience with both internal and external HR and has interviewed candidates from all around the world.

All interviewees I knew personally prior to the project. One of them is my superior, one is a former colleague, and one is a former classmate. All interviewees are females, which is not surprising, as most HR professionals are females. *“In 2016, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found that 72% of HR managers were women; in 2017, Payscale.com reported that a whopping 86% of HR generalists were women.”* (Sands, 2019) And the numbers are very similar in Europe. All interviewees are of Czech nationality. Anne has experience only with Czech labour market, Bella only with Danish labour market, Cecilia has world-wide experience in general as she worked for international company and interviewed applicants

from several continents, but she is most knowledgeable when it comes to European market, and especially Czech due to her later job. No significant differences between recruitment processes that could be attributed to cultural differences of the Czech Republic and Denmark have been observed. All companies use similar recruitment processes, and all have currently struggled with lesser number of applicants recently. The difference of opinions when it comes to personality testing itself is attributable to different personal experience mostly and the acceptance of this type of testing in the professional network of the interviewees.

All interviewees are from B2B companies, which is a coincidence.

Semi-structured interviews

I have chosen to utilise semi-structured interviews. The HR professionals who were so kind to give me an interview were close connections from my network. Firstly, it is generally quite difficult to collect primary data. And especially for students, and especially through interviews, which are time-consuming and rich in data. Only close connections were willing to undergo the process, and more importantly share quite sensitive internal data, which could not be accessed in other way. Hence, I did not select the interviewees by other criteria than that I knew they would be willing to assist me in the research. The advantage of the personal connection is that the answers were very open and honest, and the interviews passed pleasantly, more as a conversation about a topic of common interest. The potential disadvantage of a less formal approach could be loss of focus and omitting some requisites.

If I could choose ideal interviewees for this project, I would apply the following criteria:

Size of the company

I would choose a medium-sized company approximately between fifty and two hundred and fifty employees. The numbers would not matter too much, the most important factor would be an established HR department. For small companies without dedicated HR employees, hiring is a more of a special occasion. It is hard to draw strong conclusions from the few hires that happen throughout a year. It is hard to generalise how the company actually conducts the process. Also, the number of applicants might be lesser, or vary dramatically depending on unforeseeable circumstances. In addition, the number of decision-makers is smaller, and hence the whole process is less complex. Finally, the process could be less organised, and

more intuitive, as HR processes will be likely not prioritised when it comes to resources. On the contrary, corporates are too complex, with often rigid structures, and processes that are hard to change. Also, the number of applicants might be way above the market average, based just on the brand name. This in turn results in processes that might be designed just to easily filter out large numbers of applicants.

In conclusion, a medium-sized company would be an ideal representant of the general state of recruitment processes.

Internal personality testing

An ideal informant would be a person that uses this type of questioning themselves. While it would be interesting to juxtapose an interviewee who is convinced that personality testing is a nonsense altogether, it would be interesting to hear a take of a person who utilises this technique for their own work. Ideally, I would have the opportunity to interview more than one such HR professional to discover potential differences and similarities between the specific questions used, the interpretation of the answers, and perhaps even in motivation why to use these questions. None of my interviewees personally uses this type of testing, which could signal that this type of testing has declined in popularity. I was provided with good insight into why the testing is not used in their companies. On the other hand, this paper lacks the insight of the opposite side.

Seniority of the HR manager

"...it has been recommended, and established as common practice to use (senior) HR managers as key informants in HRM research, most notably, when assessing HR practices (cf. Arthur & Boyles, 2007)." (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe and Dries, 2019) Only one of the interviewees is a senior HR manager, because I did not have other senior HR managers that I could reach out to. One of the limitations of this research is the limitation of my own network. Ideal interviewee then would be internal HR manager, though it must be acknowledged that there might be others in the company shaping the selection processes. *"...it remains to be questioned whether even senior HR managers hold 'absolute' power over organizational approaches to TM. It is likely that other senior managers and/or the board of directors exert an influence on intended HR practices, while line managers influence the*

actual implementation of practices on the shop-floor.” (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe and Dries, 2019)

Interview with a person from agency selling the tests

One of my interviewees (Anne) offered to arrange an interview with acquaintance of hers, who develops and sells psychological tests at a dedicated agency. While this interviewee would differ from the selected group, it would be very interesting to bring a different perspective. Especially perspective of an expert, though a biased expert likely. It is especially regrettable that the person rejected to partake in the research in the end, since the rest of the interviewees showed to hold rather unfavourable view of psychological testing. The research could have been more balanced with the participation of a person dedicated to psychological testing.

[Interview guide](#)

The first half of the interview guide is dedicated to get to know the company the interviewee works at. The aim is to gather information about the practices the company employs in its selection processes and what is the reasoning behind the choices. I wished to understand what companies seek to accomplish with each step of the process, and what purpose the psychological testing has in the selection process. If the company did not employ personality testing, I wished to see if it utilised other process that would serve the same purpose, or if the company did not employ any similar tools.

There are two questions (number six and seven) that required to be modified depending on whether the company used the personality testing or not. If the company used the testing, then the interviewee would be asked to describe the situation in her company. If not, the discussion would already at this point turn to opinions of the interviewees. Generally speaking, if the interviewee utilises personality testing, the beneficial outcome of the interview would be understanding of the reasons why and how personality testing is helpful and how it is practically implemented. If the interviewee does not utilise personality testing, the beneficial outcome of the interview would be understanding why personality testing is not needed or what are the obstacles in implementing it.

The second half of the interview guide aims to collect personal opinions of the interviewees and is dedicated to more general topics related to job market and candidate experience. Based on the literature and my own experience, the power of candidates on the job market increased. I wanted to investigate if this is reflected in the selection processes and in attitude of the HR professionals, thus I posed the questions dedicated to candidate experience. Since I did not want to limit myself to clear yes and no answers and one-sided conclusions, I wanted to leave space for specific contexts where personality testing could be suitable and unsuitable. I had a strong idea based on my own experience as I have seen that the selection for IT roles is highly skill-oriented, and personality seems to be less important than it is for business roles for example. In order to allow the interviewees to come up with own suggestions I posed the question: How do you think psychological testing allows other organisations to select employees? This was either opportunity to come up with contexts where the testing is suitable, or to understand how HR professionals understand choices and practices of their colleagues, especially those who think differently.

- 1) What is the recruitment process like in your company?
- 2) How do these steps help you in selecting the right employees?
- 3) Do you evaluate your selection processes?
- 4) Does your organisation use personality testing? For example, questions of the following type? „What animal would you like to be?“ „What colour would you like to be?“
- 5) Why do you (not) use it?
- 6) If you use it, do you utilise them across all jobs (HR, IT, accountants...)? Is there a difference? Is personality testing more appropriate for certain kind of jobs?
- 7) Do you know who put these questions into use? The recruiter, senior management, HR department, C-suite...? Who do you think most often decides how the selection process will look like?
- 8) How do you think psychological testing allow organisations to select the right employees?
- 9) Do you think that the candidate experience is important?
- 10) Why is it (not) important?

- 11) How do you think these questions influence candidates' experience?
- 12) Do you think that candidates have a good experience on the job market?
- 13) What could be done to improve the candidate experience?
- 14) Do you think new selection methods in recruitment are needed?

Field notes

Field notes can be found in the appendix. I made these notes during my work as external recruiter. To clarify: companies who struggled with a hire would contact us, and we would assist in finding suitable candidates and collecting certain information about them, so the client company would have easier time deciding whether they want to invite the candidate for an interview. These field notes capture events I directly partook in. Most of the field notes revolve around particular statements I heard during an interview with the candidates that shaped my view on recruitment. Many of these are related to the increased power candidates currently have on the job market and their options to choose between several job offers at a single moment. The IT industry seems to be an extreme in this sense. Nevertheless, I struggled filling other roles as well due to the intense competition.

Field notes regarding my own manager, regarding some of our client companies, and my most recent experience as a candidate led me to other discrepancy between the literature and practice. It is generally agreed that the war for talent intensifies. Yet, some companies still act as if the talent was not a priority. I do not think there is other explanation for the lengthy decision-making than that other things take precedence. Managers task HR professionals with finding and attracting talent, but are slow to give more specific instructions, grant approval or other feedback, and are not involved in the HR processes more than is necessary.

Empirical data

At the time of writing this paper, which is winter of 2022, I have worked as HR professional in Anne's company for eight months. This has given me an opportunity to gain a closer insight into how recruitment is conducted at her company. I, myself have experienced it as

an applicant, and in November of 2021 I have attended four interviews, where I had the chance to ask questions, and contribute with my opinion to the hiring decision. Interview with Anne had taken place before my participation in the interviews. The information Anne has provided in the interview matched how the interviews were actually conducted. Though, it is necessary to mention that Anne has not followed her plan to include task-simulation in the selection process as she discussed during the interview.

Anne

Anne has fifteen years of experience in HR management. She worked as HR manager in internal HR prior to establishing her own company. As HR manager Anne experienced hundreds of selection procedures and made use of several methods: interviews, assessment centres, and aptitude testing including personality testing. Anne is of Czech nationality and now owns a small company, i.e., less than ten employees, in the Czech Republic. The company she owns is a staffing agency helping other companies to fill-in their vacancies. Anne is taking care of the hiring process on her own. While for her clients she uses active search method, i.e., she approaches suitable candidates with the job offer through email, for her own company she uses classic methods, such as posting on a jobsite. This is for several reasons. Firstly, until now Anne has not faced problems with getting sufficient number of applicants. Secondly, using the time and energy of her employees on looking for new colleagues would divert these resources from completing project for clients. And that is something Anne currently struggles with, because her team does not have enough members to take on all the projects. The interview took place six weeks after a new member joined Anne's team.

Throughout the interview Anne stressed several times that her hiring process was different before the pandemic. Before the pandemic Anne posted a job advertisement on one of the biggest job portals in Czech Republic, equivalent to Jobindex in Denmark. She went through the CVs and selected potentially suitable candidates based on their job experience and skills. She called the selected candidates on a phone, confirmed their interest, and asked them for possible dates for an interview. Anne met with the candidates in person, accompanied by her colleague, who was a team lead, and was in charge of onboarding, training, mentoring, and managing the team. In the interview Anne was focusing on job experience, what exactly was the candidate doing, what results he accomplished, how has the role changed since he

started. She also asked into potential discrepancies. If the candidate was successful, he was invited for a second round of interview. Part of this interview was a test of skills in Excel, followed by a conversation about mutual expectations. During the pandemic and up to this day, Anne has made several changes to the recruitment process. Firstly, she utilises social media, namely Facebook, in addition to classic job sites. Social media have better reach in her opinion, because only active seekers are present on job sites, and passive applicants who might react to the right offer will not be targeted. In addition, she finds job sites quite expensive. Secondly, Anne has not met the applicants in person, but online. In Anne's opinion, it is not the same. It is not as important for pre-screening, or for the first meeting, but she claims she does not get as good impression as when meeting face-to-face. The Excel test was not part of the online interview either. The CV helps Anne to get a general overview of the applicant's skills and work history. The first-round interview allows Anne to get an in-depth insight of the applicant's skills and work experience. In her questions Anne is very focused on the results the applicant achieved. It also helps her to evaluate how well would the candidate fit into the team, which is very important criteria for Anne, and the main reason why she likes the team leader to attend the interviews as well. She likes to hear how someone else perceived the applicant and she also likes to receive feedback on how she herself presented the company and the role. The Excel test allowed Anne to see the computer literacy of the applicant, which is quite crucial, as the person works with different systems and databases. The second round of the interview allowed Anne to discuss mutual expectations, and to assure herself in the decision. Anne does not evaluate her hiring process on a regular or systematic basis. She evaluates it after an unsuccessful hire. Anne made three hires since January 2021 until now: end of October 2021. The first newcomer left the company after six days after mutual agreement. Anne hired the person prior meeting them face-to-face. Anne stated she did not have a good feeling about this the moment they met for the first time face-to-face and that it was not either personal or a professional fit. The second hire was also made based on phone call and two online meetings. This newcomer has finished the probation period and is staying with the company. The last hire was done after a phone call, an online meeting, and a personal meeting. Anne decided to invite the person to the office and to show them the systems and databases they are going to work with before signing the agreement. After the person was showed the tools and was presented with tasks that are going to be the daily routine, they

were asked to confirm whether they are interested in starting the job. The person started the job in the beginning of September 2021 and left after one month. Anne in response started contemplating her recruitment process in turn. Anne stated she is not aware where she made the mistake. She maintains the person is a good personal fit, her personal relationship with the person in question is still good, and also with most of the team the person has a friendly relationship. For now, Anne came to the conclusion she would like to meet applicants face-to-face again. In addition, she is contemplating possibilities how to spend more time with the applicants prior to signing the contract. One option is to invite them for a “try-out working day,” to spend a working day or at least couple hours with them in the office. Another option is to give them a task to complete. Anne does not utilise personality testing in her organisation. Anne has administered different kinds of tests when she was working as HR manager, and she has filled-in these tests herself too. According to Anne, the tests did not capture her own personality, she could not agree with the results. She also named a case, where she was deciding between two applicants who both seemed highly qualified, and she was unable to decide between them. She used the personality test to help her in the decision. The results of the test recommended the more senior candidate and stated that the more junior applicant is not a good fit for the role. Anne disregarded the results of the tests and chose the more junior candidate, who turned out to perform really well in the role. Last reason that led Anne to conviction that personality testing is rather useless was hearing opinions of two of her colleagues, both psychology graduates, who condemned personality testing as a nonsense.

Bella

Bella is of Czech nationality, and works in Denmark, in a small Danish company, i.e., around fifteen people. Bella started as a marketing assistant, and out of her own interest she became the only employee of the HR department. She conducts interviews for student positions and assists in the interviews for full-time positions. She has over a year of experience in HR. The recruitment process for part-time and student positions differs. For student positions an ad is posted on Graduate Land, a website where students typically look for jobs. The applicants are asked to provide a CV, a cover letter, and in rare cases a transcript of grades. Maximum of five to six applicants is invited for an interview, due to limited capacity of

employees, who all have other duties. Though, it is not a problem as lately the company is struggling to attract student applicants. For a marketing role, they received seven applications last time. For a technically oriented role they receive on average between fifteen and twenty applicants. According to Bella, the reason for low numbers of applicants is that her company is relatively far from both Copenhagen and Roskilde, and the number of companies based in Copenhagen make for a competition for talent. Especially, for such roles as marketing, since almost every company needs marketing people. Technically educated people are focusing on a niche, and hence there is a lesser number of suitable positions. For a full-time position, the process is different as mentioned previously. The job ad is posted on LinkedIn because that is the platform that currently works best when attracting full-time employees, according to Bella. The company uses paid options to increase the reach and posts it as easy apply. Easy apply option requires only CV to apply, and since the process is easier, more people are interested. If the CV is deemed interesting, the applicant is asked to write a cover letter. In the next stage, the candidate is invited for an online thirty minutes interview. The candidates who are being seriously considered are then invited to spend a whole day at the company. For managerial and crucial positions personality testing conducted by an external agency is the last step in the process. Around one hundred candidates applied for a full-time sales position. Half of them were asked to provide a cover letter, and ten were invited for the online interview. The CV is used to get a rather basic information such as years of experience, background, educational institution, and the tasks the applicant has experience performing. The cover letter is used to understand the applicant's motivation, or alternatively to make up for the CV, i.e., as a chance to explain or provide more details. Language skills are also evaluated. The reason is that while it is a Danish company, the company language is English, many customers are abroad, and hence it is very important to see, if the person can express themselves clearly and properly. The interview is used to check the language skills once again, to get to know the person closer, and to check if the experience stated in CV and cover letter corresponds to reality. It has happened even in Bella's rather short experience that the candidate claimed certain experience, and the interview proved otherwise. Psychological or personality aspects are not covered during the interview. It is skills and experience oriented, but the atmosphere Bella's

company is trying to set is as a chat with a friend over a coffee. The day spent together at the office is used to assess whether or not there is a chemistry. So, it is focused on meeting the team, and showing the company. Bella claims that this round is more for the applicant's sake. It takes place before signing the offer, and it is a chance for the candidate to assess whether this is an environment he would like to work in. Since personality or similar testing is not part of any of these rounds, in cases where it is deemed necessary, it is left for the final round performed externally. Bella's organisation does not utilise personality testing internally. The main reason according to Bella is that nobody in her company has the necessary education or skills to assess the applicant's answers, and to draw some psychological conclusions.

For crucial positions in the company, Bella's company is seeking a confirmation of their hiring decision. In the interview Bella called it a "sort of an insurance." As mentioned previously, the personality testing is used only for full-time positions, and only for those employees who get to present the company externally, such as sales professionals, or customer service professionals. The logic behind this decision is that people in direct contact with customers can do more damage if they are not a good fit. Bella stated that she trusts the results of the test, but she is not sure how useful this type of testing is, since she does not have sufficient experience to evaluate it. She has not seen neither the questions, nor the results.

It is the CEO and a senior manager who decided to put these tests in use. Based on the provided information, it is likely because the company does not possess strong HR capabilities, and the senior management wants to and needs to be ensured in hiring decisions. I asked Bella, if she would change the current process, if she got to be an HR manager for the company. Bella answered she would not change the current structure. Or at least if she had the budget. But if she needed to save costs, she would have to take a look, if the tests bring any value, because they are expensive. Bella answered the question about candidate experience very honestly. If the candidate does not have good experience, it is a bad branding for the company. One of the reasons is quite selfish, you never need who you will need tomorrow, and hence it is better to keep good relationships. Other reasons are more personal to Bella: People deserve to be treated properly. And Bella herself would not feel good, if the candidates had bad experience.

Bella believes that the personality-oriented questions might help in deciding if the candidate is the right fit, but only if there is someone who can actually assess the answers correctly. And in Bella's opinion few HR professionals can do that. Bella thinks that most job applicants nowadays are prepared that similar questions might be part of the interview. It is also very easy to search for interview questions and even for answers. According to Bella, if is an experienced candidate interviewing, his experience will not be influenced, if these questions are used, because they are a standard part of the "game" now. But, if the candidate has not been through too many interviews, he might be thrown off, and then his experience will not be that good. In general Bella thinks that utilising these questions do not leave good impression. General public do not like these questions and think it is a nonsense. That is just an HR person trying to look smart. Bella's company does not evaluate its recruitment processes on regular basis. Only after a bad hire was made. This is again probably linked to the fact, that the company does not have a dedicated HR department. Bella's company decided to outsource the recruitment to an agency. Since the person was not a good fit, the agency was looking for a replacement. Since Bella's company sells a niche technology, it was not easy to find a suitable person, and the agency did not find a second candidate. The payment was returned, and two personality tests for free were offered. Bella's company made their own hire in the end. According to Bella, the tests are being used also for this reason, that they are currently for free.

Bella is convinced that new methods in recruitment are needed. Because recruitment should be objective, and not subjective. In any way. But it is very hard to determine how exactly it should be done. Bella is not convinced that artificial intelligence would be a suitable solution for example, despite the potential for objectivity. Bella was asked if she believes it is possible to be completely objective, and what does she do, when she has some subjective feelings about the candidate. Bella said she is very aware of the feelings, and then she tries to suppress them as best as she can. In her opinion, it is not justifiable to judge someone based on a half-an hour or an hour-long conversation. It is necessary to add that the focus of our conversation was on negative feelings. I actually have not asked Bella if she is trying to suppress positive inclination towards the candidate.

Bella thinks that candidates do not have a good experience on the job market. Or at least not on the Danish market, which was the one, she was referring to, since her only experience has been the Danish market. In her opinion, Danish companies are not transparent in their processes. They do not get back to applicants they are not interested in with rejection messages. They often do not state how long it will take before they get back to the applicants. Bella is not satisfied with the situation in her own company either, stating that it takes them between four to six weeks to decide. On the other hand, Bella makes sure to reply all applicants, also to the rejected ones. So far, no one has complained about the number of rounds, or the structure itself, or the personality testing. Bella stated that the process is organised in such a way, that only candidates her company is truly interested in are moving forward in the process. The applicants need to write cover letter only if the company finds their CV suitable.

Cecilia

Cecilia is of Czech nationality and has over a year of working experience as HR. Some experience she has from a global company with headquarters in the United States, some she has from a Czech company specialised in recruitment. In the global corporate she was an intern, assisting with hiring for other intern positions. In the Czech company, she works as a head-hunter with focus on IT roles. Cecilia mentioned the same recruitment tools as Anne and Bella, i.e., CVs and interviews mostly, cover letters and writing tests on the side. While some of the questions aimed at discovering the candidate's personality, none of them could be qualified as a psychological testing. It was standard HR questions to be expected at an interview. Cecilia stated in agreement with Bella that few people would be able to perform true personality testing, and in addition management prioritises other aspects during the hire, such as experience and willingness to work. Cecilia is also convinced that use of personality testing decreases the candidate experience, as most candidates get stressed out and probably do not see any meaningful purpose behind it. When it came to evaluation of recruitment processes, Cecilia stated that none of the companies she was involved in evaluated the process, systematically or unsystematically. When discussing when it would be suitable or more appropriate to use the personality testing, Cecilia partially agreed with both Anne and Bella. Cecilia suggested that when it comes to deciding between equally suitable candidates the test might be one of the last

resorts to compare them as Alice suggested. She also suggested performing these tests only for the crucial roles, which was in agreement with Bella's thoughts on the matter. Cecilia also mentioned that companies who have too many applicants and need to reduce dramatically the number of applicants who proceed to the next round make use of psychological testing. Interestingly, according to Cecilia the tests do not help them to select the right applicants, but rather dismiss easily a higher number of the candidates. Cecilia stated that while the management outlines the main steps in the process, it probably does not check which specific questions the recruiter uses during the interview and hence the experience depends very much on the individual recruiter the applicant meets, which was similar to Anne's thoughts. Cecilia expressed in agreement with Anne and Bella that candidates do not have good experience on the job market. Partially due to the waiting and lack of clarity about the process, but also due to lack of the feedback and lack of transparency in the selection decision. Cecilia also agreed that the candidate experience is important, nevertheless stressed that it is truly important for those who compete for talent. Those who can easily find workforce do not need to be as invested. On the other hand, few companies are in that position nowadays according to Cecilia. Cecilia thinks that recruitment is in need of change. Not necessarily new tools and approaches though. Cecilia suggested increased use of tasks as part of the selection process. According to Cecilia, task would prove both skills and attitude, and would also increase the fairness and objectivity in the selection process.

Presentation of data

The first step in order to analyse and work with the data was to transcribe the interviews. One of the interviews (with Anne) needed to be translated from Czech to English language. This required caution as the meaning needed to be preserved and accuracy maintained. After each interview was transcribed, I summarised the transcripts into a shorter, succinct texts that captured the opinions of the interviewees. These texts showed the main points discussed and the interviewee's stance. Then I compared the texts to see similarities and differences. There were several topics where the interviewees agreed with each other strongly. When these topics were discussed, interviewees held strong unambiguous opinions. Two of these topics relate to candidate experience, two relate directly to psychological testing, two relate to HR practices, one is about recruitment in general.

Contrarily, there was a topic where the interviewees had quite different ideas, and I decided to include it in the analysis. Not only the interviewees came up with each their own suggestion and thus disagreed with each other, but all of these suggestions were also in contradiction to the academic recommendations. In addition, this was an interesting topic as it related to suitability of psychological testing in different situations. Lastly, there were two topics where interviewees did not express themselves directly or strongly (or at least not all of them), nevertheless the tone and language suggested a certain perspective. These two topics interestingly related to HR professionals. Seven topics that the interviewees agreed upon are presented first and are discussed as the findings of the research. Three topics where the agreement was not as strong (or quite the opposite) are discussed as interesting points worth of further discussion.

1. The candidate experience matters and should be positive.

All interviewees agree that the candidate's experience is important and also the reasons why it is important are very similar.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you think that the candidate's experience is important?"*

Anne: *"Sure. 100%. It's sales."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"And do you think that the companies act like that? Does it look that way?"*

Anne: *"Well, you know yourself... When there's unlikable HR person and does not give you a good impression, will you accept a job at the company? When there is a superior who is unlikable? Will you not prefer other company, where the people are nice and where you felt good? I think it's crucial the impression."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"And do you think that even when you are not interested in the person it's important?"*

Anne: *"Sure. Because even if you don't like the person, you are introducing the company, you don't give details, but you tell him how it functions, you provide some information, and you create the image... So, it's important."*

While Anne entirely focuses on company image, Bella also talked about having a good feeling about herself and her job performance.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Do you think that the candidate experience is important, you know, how they perceive the recruitment process? If it's pleasant or not? Do you think it is important?”*

Bella: *“Yes, I think it's ... very important. ... Well, I personally, but also the company in general, is ... trying to focus on to make it pleasant for both us, but definitely also for the applicants.”*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Why do you think it's important?”*

Bella: *“I think there's multiple reasons, but one of them being very, very selfish one, to be honest. And that being you know, if you have a person that had a bad experience during the interview, then there is a chance that they will go around, say bad things about the company, which can hurt the company, obviously. And, you know, also you never know who you will need to work with at some point. So, it's never good to make enemies. Quotation marks enemies, but yeah. So that, I would say, is a very selfish reason, I guess, but it's definitely one of them. And then second reason, well, because I think, you know, people deserve to be treated properly, and in a very good way. ... I wouldn't feel good about my job and myself, if I wasn't trying to do my best to, you know, offer them a pleasant experience during the interview.”*

Cecilia agreed that candidate experience is important but mentioned that is not as crucial for businesses for whom the talent is not as crucial. On the other hand, she is also convinced that few businesses do not compete for talent nowadays.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“And do you think that candidate experience is actually important?”*

Cecilia: *“Yes, if you want to build employer branding and attract the best talent as they say. I would say it's always good to treat people well or at least uphold some basic politeness, you can never go wrong with that. Because you never know who you are going to need. But to be honest, or to see it from the business perspective... If you have many applicants and you don't care, because you know you'll always find people easily, then you technically don't*

need to bother with it. But if you compete for talent, and nowadays almost everyone does, then it's very important."

2. Candidates do not have good experience on the job market.

All interviewees agreed that the candidate experience is important, nevertheless without hesitation they all also agreed that the candidate experience is poor. Regardless, whether it is a Czech or a Danish job market.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you think that candidates in general are having a good experience?"*

Anne: *"I think they don't have. Because there's lot of dumbasses sitting in the HR department... Do you remember when we put out the ad that it's without HR? (The selection process). That they will be directly speaking to the managers, and do you remember how many guys said that it's great, to skip this phase? Because nowadays 90% of women want to do HR and... (Chuckle). Well, they cannot do it, they are not good at it. ... And I think that the candidates are tired, that they would welcome some new method."*

While Anne criticised the HR staff in general for not handling their affairs very well, Bella brought up a very specific issue.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you think, generally speaking, that people do have a good experience on the job market?"*

Bella: *"I mean, I can only talk about the Danish market, to be honest, because I don't really have that much experience with the Czech one. But as for Denmark, I don't think so, unfortunately."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Why not?"*

Bella: *"Um, some of it is based on my own personal experience, some of it is based on my friends' experience. And some of it is actually also based on what the applicants, you know, told us and then not having good experience. Not me, not my friends and not the applicants. I think it's mostly because Danish companies are not being very transparent, and in like, how long it will take whether the applicant will receive an answer and so on. So, I think that's the main issue or the main thing that the applicants are missing the most on the Danish market."*

Just at least getting rejection, you know, letter or email, which I mean is actually something we, which is actually something that like the CEO, and my managers were very surprised about because they had no idea that it's common in Denmark not to receive a rejection letter. So, so yeah, that's definitely like, in in my company or I, myself, you know, I always made sure that everyone gets an answer, even though if it's a no."

Cecilia made the same point as Bella, i.e., the waiting time and often an absolute lack of an answer. She also added the lack of feedback that would help the candidate to understand the decision.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you think that candidates have a good experience on the job market?"*

Cecilia: *"No, definitely not. Based on my own experience and everyone I know. I have never heard anyone say: I am going to look for a job and I am so much looking forward to it. It's one of the most dreadful, unpleasant experiences. Stressful."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Why do you think is that?"*

Cecilia: *"Because of all the waiting. Companies pressure people to start as soon as possible, but when it comes to them answering and moving the process forward, it can take even months sometimes. Weeks when you're just hanging and waiting, even have to ask for the feedback or what's going to happen yourself! That you need to remind people you're still there. And I don't mean in cases that they are not interested. They might be and they still forget about you. And second, it's not transparent at all. You do not get any feedback. Or at least nothing honest. Or useful. I get that you chose another candidate, since you have not chosen me. But you are left hanging and wondering if you said something wrong, or if there was simply a more experienced person, or what... It's very much guessing what happened or not."*

When asked how the experience could be improved, she also added that applicants are asked to provide way too many documents and to complete too many quite demanding steps.

Cecilia: *"Second, the amount of the rounds and papers companies want. A CV, a cover letter, a transcript of grades, and two sets of interviews for a junior position. And maybe a test or*

something to solve. Why should I spend two hours or more writing an original cover letter, when... they will never maybe even read it because they will skim through my CV and just reject me. Why do I have to enclose a transcript of grades, because... maybe... no one even cares and will not take a look at it... ... They ask for so much and in the end they maybe don't even look at half of the things you give them. Or you go through two rounds of interviews, answer weird questions and then they choose the person who has most years of experience anyway. I think they ask for way more than they really need or way more than what they really base their decisions on and it's unfair. To sum it up, cut the waiting time and... ... focus on the things that are relevant. Streamline the process. Make it more transparent. What's gonna happen and when."

3. Processes currently used in selection processes are very much the same, especially in the first rounds.

All interviewees use either social media or job portals to attract applicants. All interviewees start the process with screening a CV, or application form that is created by the job portal, but mostly CVs. Interview or interviews follow the screening of CVs. This finding is not surprising and was included mostly to show that recruitment processes are standardised across companies, meaning that the interviewees share similar concepts and experience.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"...what does the recruitment process looks like in your company? What are the steps like? Processes?"*

Anne: *"...So, advertising and the next phase is that we make use of social media, such as Facebook. So, we have an ad there and we combine it with classic with the Jobs. (Jobs.cz is the biggest job portal in the Czech Republic, similar to JobIndex in Denmark). ... After that CVs are being looked at or the applications, that's a standard, then it's the first round. Earlier it used to be face-to-face, there was also an Excel test, because we used to have everything in Google Sheets. Nowadays it's an online meeting, but I would like to combine it with face-to-face again, because I think it's really important to see each other. ... Well, I will describe how it was before covid and how it is after covid. Before covid it was a personal meeting and then the second meeting was also face-to-face, there was the Excel test, we tested communication with client, someone unpleasant to see how he would react, we tested that, and now I would like to return to this, because the selection was deeper and better. Nowadays everyone is used to... I don't know what the response will be like when we will want to meet face-to-face,*

because many people... The first round not, but the second one for sure. But many people will not want that, not even for the second round. Because they are used to that, when they search for a job, everything is online. And the recruitment process is experience, job results from the previous work, education does not interest me, that's interesting about me, but I am really mostly interested in the previous results. They say that the interview can last ten to fifteen minutes, but you will know it's a suitable person when you ask him what the result of his work was. ... So that's the most crucial question for me, what was the result of the job historically. I always focus on that."

The process at Bella's company differs from Anne's by the use of cover letters. Anne does not ask for cover letters, Bella asks for cover letters, but only the applicants who are considered to be suitable after scanning CVs. The cover letter then presents a separate round. In addition, Bella's company is the only company in my research that actually uses personality testing. The personality testing is conducted by specialised external agency.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"...what is the recruitment process like in your company? Meaning what are the steps? ..."*

Bella: *"Well, it depends on the position to be honest. ... So, for the students, the process a bit shorter and less complex... So for the students, we usually post the job ad on GraduateLand, one of those websites for student positions. And then we asked them to send us their CVs and cover letter. And sometimes we also asked them to send us their grade transcripts, even though that's only rarely to be honest. And so we do that, and once we evaluate their documents, we invite some of the applicants for interviews, it's usually around five, six people max, to be honest, since we don't really have the capacity to interview more people. But I mean, it, of course, depends if we, you know, if we interview five people, and none of those people are a good fit out for us, then we may have to interview more, obviously. So that's the process for the students. And then for the sales position. So for more managerial position, I would say it's, we usually use LinkedIn quite a lot for the recruitment there. So we, we use the Pay option for LinkedIn there. And we usually use the easy apply on the LinkedIn platform, because we found out that then we get more applicants. I mean, I'm not sure if the quality corresponds, but we at least get four applicants, which is a good start. So and then basically, when they, when they are applying through the easy to apply option, they have to submit their CV. So that's like the first round, and then we sift through the CVs and CVs that we find*

interesting, then we go back to the applicants and ask them for their cover letter as well. So that's like a second round. And then the third round is the interviews, which I think previously be that first like initial interview, thirty minutes interview online. And then out of those four are who are forefront, actually was that we invited the person to the to the company for like a full day, but then that was usually only one applicant. So the very, very last left. And then I think sometimes we also asked them to do like, some type of like a personality test, I would say, but that's not us that do it, we usually use external agency for that. But that's also only for the managerial positions. So for the ones that like the company has to invest quite a lot when we decide to hire them. So yeah, that's pretty much it."

Cecilia currently works in external recruitment, but since the real selection is in hands of the client company, for the purpose of this paper she describes her past experience with internal recruitment for intern positions. The process is quite the same and differs from the above described by its shortness as only one round of interviews is conducted after CV scanning, which is understandable given the junior positions in question.

Cecilia: "I guess you always start with a CV or with LinkedIn profile. I took a look at the CV and then I took a look at the LinkedIn. If the CV looked good... .. It was to see if there were any more details, skills... Something else than in the CV... Or actually... It was more to check if the people have the same in the CV and in the LinkedIn. Because sometimes they had different things in each, and then I did not proceed, because either they were lying, mostly, or they did not bother to align it, or update it. ... So, CV plus LinkedIn, sometimes, rarely, there was a cover letter. That was always a plus. Because it provided some more details, it expressed the interest, I could of course see that some of the letters were generic, and that these applicants used them all the time, but I mean, it's fine, it's more of a introduction, or... presentation of yourself, and explaining some basic stuff, like: Yes, I am studying marketing, so I would like to gain some experience... blah blah blah. But at least you could see that the person can express themselves properly. Or at least in the written form. ... And then the interview. We started with a writing test. ... If the writing test showed decent English and decent answers... It also happened that the English was fine, but the answers were weird and arrogant... Then we did the talking part in the end. I also asked some of that stupid questions like where do you see yourself in five years... We had them on the list... We did not have to use them, but they were there as recommended... But the whole point with this question was

to realise if the person had some kind of vision. Those who knew why they needed the internship and what they wanted to do next tended to perform way better than those who were... less certain about what they would like to do. ... Or basically, there were three main things, apart from English, I was looking for. Determination, goal, the will to keep going. Ability to work alone. There was not much help. ... So, if the person had good English, reasonable motivation, self-sufficiency, and some goal ideally with the internship, then I took them."

4. Psychology testing can be performed by few, if any.

Anne: "I am not saying that the tests are bad, definitely not, these tests are being developed for I don't know thirty years... There are some psychologists behind it with good attitude, but I... I don't believe these tests... I don't entirely... see the value. And I remember Monika (a colleague, that left two months prior, to pursue a PhD. Degree in Psychology) when we discussed it, she is a psychologist and Lenka (another previous employee) too, both studied psychology and both said that the tests are total bullshit. (Laughter). That it won't tell you anything useful. And no one knows what is right and what is wrong. For example: Do you like staring into the fire for a long time? And if yes, you are aggressive. That seems totally crazy. Where does this analogy come from?"

Bella has a more positive opinion about personality tests in comparison to Anne. She trusts the results of the tests. She hesitated when it comes to the usefulness of the tests, but her trust in psychology backing the tests in the end decided in favour of the tests. Nevertheless, Bella is convinced that regular HR professionals do not know how to interpret the tests and are unable to draw meaningful conclusions from this type of testing. And if you do not have the background to assess the tests and few do in Bella's opinion, then it is not very useful to pose these questions and tests.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"And do you think, in general, that this is actually useful? ...do you trust the results of the personality tests?"*

Bella: *"Mm. ... Well, I do trust the results that I do, but if it's actually useful, I'm not so sure to be honest. I mean, I don't think I have the experience yet to be able to assess those. Since I am never, you know, I never seen the results or the questions they were actually asking. But*

since again, since I assume it's based on some psychology studies, then I would say it's probably useful. Yes."

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: "So, you have never seen... You don't know actually what the people you're hiring are being asked there."

...

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: "If you were let's say the HR manager, who would be responsible for these things, would you say suggest doing these personality tests?"

Bella: "Mm. Yeah, I think so. I mean, yeah, I would probably keep the same structure as it is now. So not for the student assistants, but for the full-time employees, I guess. Yes. I mean, the thing is that the personality tests are also quite expensive, to be honest. So that's also something that needs to be considered too whether it is actually worth including them or not. But if I had the budget for it, then I would probably."

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: "And if you let the interview yourself, would you include some kind of these questions, like what animal you would like to be?"

Bella: "Actually, I did lead some of the interviews myself, and I didn't include them. Because as I say, I, myself, I don't see any value in them, because I just, I don't know what it means that someone likes elephant." (Laughter).

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: "But what if the questions that they are being asked in the personality test are exactly these questions?"

Bella: "Well, then I am assuming that the person who actually goes through the answers know what it means and can make some conclusions or some results out of them that makes sense for them, the regular HR people who don't know those."

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: "Do you think there is a correct answer to what kind of an animal you would like to be?"

Bella: "No, no, I don't think so. I just think that, you know, if you say, I would like to be a tiger, then it says something about you like that you are very push through and not necessarily aggressive, but much more like, not shy in any way, you know, going for what you want, and so on."

...

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"... Do you think there's any justification for these questions? Do you think these questions allow the organisations to select the right employees? Do you think there's any benefit?"*

Bella: *"I mean if there is someone in the company who actually has the ability to assess those questions properly and to get some conclusions out of them, then maybe. Maybe it can reveal a bit more about the person, but I would say rather their personality than their skills and experience you know. But for some reason I don't believe that that many HR managers, assistants whatever have this background. So, in general I would not say so."*

Cecilia agreed that few people would be able to draw a reasonable conclusion from this type of questioning. She also mentioned that people will not answer honestly in fear what the answers could potentially mean. In addition, even to these personality-oriented questions are supposedly correct answers, so there is a risk that the applicants will try to answer "correctly."

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Why do you think they opt not to use it?"* (The personality testing).

Cecilia: *"Hmm. No one would know what the answers are supposed to mean. Like if you said that you want to be an elephant... I don't know. I heard some of the "correct answers" to these questions. You are supposed to say that you would like to be a mole! Because you can't see him, only the results of his work. But everyone hates the results of his work. No one wants piles of dirt on their garden, or in their flowerbeds. It makes no sense! Why would you want to be a hated animal?! That makes damage?! (Laughter). Or the colour... You're supposed to say dark blue, because that's the colour of the business, or green because that's the colour of money. At least in the U.S. But I mean if I said red, people would think I am aggressive? Or what? It's ridiculous, and more importantly people will not answer honestly. People could imagine what some of the animals could be linked to... And... To answer your question: I think there are very few people who would know what to conclude from these answers. And I honestly think the management did not care about what colour people want to be. They were not interested. They gave us questions they judged to be the best practice in*

HR and wanted us to find people who are willing to work. Most people really only care about what you can do and how much are you willing to work."

5. Psychology testing negatively impacts candidate experience.

Anne has developed such a distaste for personality testing that she would refuse to be tested herself in this way. She is also convinced that majority of applicants dislikes the testing too. And, as pointed out earlier in the section about candidates not having good experience on the job market, in her experience many candidates are quite happy to avoid contact with recruiters altogether.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"How do you think this personality testing and similar questions such as what colour you would like to be influence the candidate experience?"*

Anne: *"It's a catastrophe. ... And if someone gave it to me, I would just get up and say: No, I am sorry. And my opinion strengthened because the psychologists told me that it's worthless. ... I would like to be a tiger and why? Because I like it and it's the most beautiful animal. And now tell me if I would be suitable for an assistant job."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"So you think that vast majority of people dislike it?"*

Anne: *"I think so."*

Bella is also of the opinion that use of this type of testing and questioning decreases the candidate experience as most people do not see a purpose in this. Nevertheless, she thinks that those who do not have much experience with interviewing are probably impacted more than those who are more experienced and used to this.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"How do you think these questions influence the candidates' experience? When someone is on the interview, and they get this type of a question? What do you think the people think?"*

Bella: *I mean when I was preparing for interviews, I always had in mind that they could ask those questions, so I googled what the most common HR questions are and tried to come up with an answer to them. If you already have this in mind because you either you have some experience with doing interviews or with HR in general, then I don't think it influences the experience that much. But I can imagine that for someone who has... Maybe it's their first*

interview or they don't know the processes, it can kinda throw them off. Or I can imagine it would definitely throw me off and my experience would probably be decreased to be honest or be worse, because I would be thinking like what the hell. So, in general I don't think they leave a good impression, if the HR department ask those questions. Because I mean again, my personal opinion is that the general public does not see any purpose in those questions except for you know... The HR department wanting to look smart."

Cecilia, similar to Bella, mentioned that candidates might feel uncomfortable and nervous being asked these questions, which adds just more strain on already stressful situation. She also mentioned that people might think this is just something the HR personnel does, but without any good reasons.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *„How do you think this type of testing and questions influence the candidates' experience?“*

Cecilia: "I think people get uncomfortable. Like sensing the trap. I think people are tired of the game. Because do they really evaluate you based on this? You think hard about what to answer, and maybe they already decided based on your language skills or something else, more tangible. I think people are sceptical and... I don't think people like it. I heard one guy saying it was interesting being asked about who he'd go to dinner with, because he has never been asked that before. But maybe he was just polite and did not want to tell me. But I mean we had a few client companies where we had trouble. (Cecilia is now talking about her current job in the external recruitment). Because the interviews with the HR were really weak. And people complained. It was actually exactly the same company. There was an HR with a habit to ask these weird questions. And the IT people are especially not interested in this. They want to talk technology, not... This. But most people don't. I have never heard anyone saying anything positive about this. About personality testing. And yeah... There was even one company where the candidates did not want to go for an interview. Just because of this. They were also asking these questions like: How many tennis balls would fit in this room. Or how many cars do you think pass out on the street each minute. That's not a personality testing, I guess, I just think people are... People don't like any of this. I think most people have hard time seeing the point. Of these mysterious HR questions. I think most people are going to interviews nervous and guarded. Asking them weird questions... I think most people do not see the point and on top of that it makes them even more nervous. I would be for sure

wondering. And it's hard to see what the point exactly is with this... I cannot imagine anyone being excited about this, especially if you really care about the job. I think most people are convinced it's just some weird HR stuff. I can't imagine having it any...beneficial...or positive effect. On the contrary, making people nervous... And annoyed."

6. Recruitment is in need of change.

Anne mentioned that most candidates are tired of the current recruitment practices and would welcome some new method, when we were discussing if candidates have good experience on the job market. Anne came up with a specific suggestion of a practice that was used earlier but would be deemed too costly and lengthy now according to Anne.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you think something new is needed in recruitment? Some totally new method? Or if recruitment needs new tools in general? Or on the contrary it should calm down a little and stop?"*

Anne: *"I think that in the Czech waters what used to be really good were the trial periods, not that you right away start the process, get all the know-how... But to observe, meaning e.g., the famous Baťa circle (Tomáš Baťa was a Czech entrepreneur and founder of a footwear company, which operates globally, recognised for his innovation and leadership skills, as well his social consciousness). Whoever joined the team, even foreman, went through the work, how the shoe is cut, where the textile is made, how to sew it together properly, who are the people in the team, and I think this as a part of the recruitment process... But no one would want to undergo this and for a company it's of course... Because every day costs something. It's costs. If it's not a corporate, that basically does not care, they will get him into it right away into the working process, but I think if there was a space within the trial period for making e.g. the Baťa circle, meet each other in the crisis situations... it would be great. I think that would show a lot, show the true colours."*

Bella is convinced innovation is always needed but did not have any specific suggestions. According to Bella it is important to ensure objectivity of selection processes and decision, but is uncertain how to do so, because she does not think that the solution lies within artificial intelligence either, though A.I. would have greater chance at being objective compared to humans.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Do you think that there is need for any for new methods in recruitment?”*

Bella: *“Ah, yeah, probably. I mean, as any other industry or as any other department, you know, innovation is always needed. So, I think so for sure.”*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Any ideas on ... what should be different? What kind of methods?”*

Bella: *“Well, I do have an idea, but I have no idea of how to solve it. And it's actually also something we discussed with a friend of mine who also works in HR, is that we basically... concluded that it's very hard, almost impossible to be 100% objective. Which is very... bad, because I don't think that the recruitment process should be subjective in any way. So, I think I would try to somehow find a way...how to make the process more objective even though yeah, as I say, I am not sure if it's possible or how it is possible, because I also don't think that, you know, implementing... artificial intelligence in the recruitment process is a good idea. Which would then maybe ensure the objectivity. But since, you know, as for now, and probably for further future, it will be always people assessing people, then it's, it's very hard to stay 100% objective, I would say.”*

Cecilia was unsure if something truly new is needed in recruitment but was convinced that change was definitely needed. Cecilia discussed tasks as a fair and comprehensible tool, based on which candidates can truly be evaluated. She also mentioned that it would be beneficial if interviews could be more honest and open.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Do you think new selection methods in recruitment are needed?”*

Cecilia: *“...I mean change is needed, but if it has to be something new... ... I think tasks are good. Let's not waste each other's time with an interview, when I don't have what it takes to do the job. Based on a task you can really evaluate a person. And it's fair as well. I think people would accept it more. Because they could understand why the decision was made. Nothing too long or complicated, but something that could easily show if the person has the basic skills, how they approach tasks, and maybe also how they deal with feedback. ... And it would be great if interviews were more honest, more like a conversation. Not this forced*

learned sentences...answers. ... Just to be a more honest, and not have to pretend or to guard yourself too much. The applicant I mean. What's the point anyway? You know, if you... If you can't talk openly."

7. HR processes are not systematically evaluated.

Anne does not evaluate the recruitment process at her company in any systematic way. She contemplates changes after a bad hire, but what actually prompted her to truly contemplate were the differences in her selection process before and after the covid pandemic. The online interactions required by the pandemic are not as effective as the face-to-face interactions according to Anne.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you evaluate your recruitment process sometimes?"*

Anne: *"Hmm. No. There have been so many already, that I don't."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"You said in the beginning that you would prefer to see them (candidates) in person. That the online does not bring the same..."*

Anne: *"Well, definitely. There is an effort to minimize the mistakes. It's feedback also for me. Because I understand the work in a certain way, and I have an idea of who could be good for the job, and then it is not a fit. Because if you don't put enough energy into the recruitment process, they will tell you what you want to hear. And if you don't start digging into it, and you will not start nose around, you will not get to know the stuff. And I also evaluate it... Or I often ask, if there is someone else with me, if I don't scare the candidates too much. Because I scare them a lot. (She means portraying the job as difficult). ..."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Are you doing this systematically?"*

Anne: *"Me and systematically?" (Laughter).*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Ok, do you evaluate the hiring process when it's successful, or rather when it's unsuccessful?"*

Anne: *"Unsuccessful. ... Because in that case, back to your question, it is about me asking where we made the mistake. What we could have done better."*

Neither Bella's company evaluates the selection process unless a poor hire occurs. It was a poor hire and uncertainty about internal competences to hire a crucial employee that prompted the company to use personality testing and make use of recruitment services of an external agency.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Do you evaluate your recruitment processes in the company?..."*

Bella: *... Ok, to answer your question, I don't think we really evaluate our processes on regular basis, ... If we do really bad hire, and then it's like what the hell happened. (Laughter). Which is actually what happened with the previous salesperson. So, I think that also the reason why the management now also asked for personal test and we took an initial interview first to quote what they said; because we got burned a little bit and they just want to make sure that the hire is the right match for us, because as I said it's a quite big investment for the company when hiring someone and especially when it does not work out."*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"... So, after bad hire and then... Do you think your manager would say the same? That they want to be objective and that's maybe why they asked for the personality testing at the agency, because then they believe it's objective?"*

Bella: *"Eh. I would not necessarily say he'd say it's objective, but I think he would probably say it's some type of insurance. That they have someone else saying: Yes, this is a good person. In quotation marks. A good person for the company."*

Cecilia mentioned she has not been a part of company which would evaluate its recruitment processes on regular basis. She was evaluating her own interviews on an individual level though.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *"Have they looked at the process from time to time and thought about what worked well and what did not? Perhaps even on a regular basis?"*

Cecilia: *"No, none of the companies I was part of did that. They had their procedures and as long as they would function at least somewhat, they would keep it the way it is. In the internal recruitment, they wanted us to come up with some suggestions, but they never did anything. Never changed anything. No, no evaluation at all. But I was. In the interviews I led. I was thinking about what worked well, which... What things the good candidates had in*

common. Which questions yielded more interesting answers, or how to get to know certain things. So, I evaluated my interviews.”

In the following section I would like to present the most interesting perceptions, opinions, and suggestions the interviewees differed about. While it cannot be stated that the interviewees disagreed with each other or had opposite opinions in each case, the differences in their expressions are still considerable, thus it is necessary to discuss them separately.

1. When personality testing could be potentially useful

All interviewees were asked when personality testing could be useful. Anne expressed that she still does not believe the tests, if she did, then she would use them from the start, but in cases where you cannot decide, the test could bring new information into the decision-making process.

Anne: “Perhaps the test can be used, when you have two candidates, who are equally good. And you want something, and you can’t decide. Both have the same results, good job history, they have something to offer. ... I personally don’t attach importance to people from HR... I don’t entirely believe it. It’s not my style simply. Because if I believed it, I would say: Fine, now we are going to do selection process, we are going to give him a test, and we’ll see.”

Bella seems to be in support of her company’s decisions and processes. When asked if there are jobs for which the personality testing might be more appropriate, she answered in accordance with her company’s practice.

Barbora

Hagemann

Hontela:

And what do you think, ... personally, just in general, do you think that there are jobs that it's more useful for? ...is there a difference?...”

Bella: “Mm. Yeah, I think it's more important to do those tests, or like to be sure that the person is a good representation of the company, when it comes to like sales or customer service, just basically anyone who faces or is in contact with, with the clients or customers, just because it can damage the company much more, if you know, in the end, the person isn't a good fit, I guess. So, I would say it's a bit more important for those.”

Cecilia, similarly to Anne, also suggested that the test could help in situations when it is hard to choose between the applicants. Nevertheless, she was more specific. Cecilia would use the tests only in crucial situations, when looking for executives or top-tier managers. Or other important situations, where perhaps the personality could be of high importance. Cecilia does not believe that the personality is necessarily an important factor in all hiring processes, especially when the person who selects the new employee will not come to work with the person.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Do you think there are any types of jobs where these questions would be more useful, or appropriate to use?”*

Cecilia: *“Ehh. Maybe if you were looking for an executive or something really important high-up there. Because if you had let’s say even only three candidates, who all had lot of experience, years of experience, great results, big companies and brands... they worked for big companies and brands... How would you choose between them? Maybe I would look at how they would fit with my culture, or if they dealt with similar issues we face now in the past, or something along side these lines of a fit with where the company currently is or is going to. But what if you could not find anything... And these people must be very used to the hiring processes and are probably better than most at putting a mask. So maybe if you have candidates who are very hard to judge based on the qualifications... And it’s very important the decision... And the personality really matters... Or the likeability... Or the fit with the team.”*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“You don’t think that the personality matters?”*

Cecilia: *“It does of course to the people you will be really working with. But not to the management. As long as there is not too much trouble, the team functions, and delivers... I don’t believe they care. Only if the problems are too big that they would have to step-in. But as long as the team functions and has the results it’s supposed to have on one cares if the person is introvert, extrovert, and has great abstract thinking. Nothing that does not directly influence the job performance interests them. ... It’s different with executives perhaps. If the person stirred conflicts in the C-suite, the impact would be too big. Even the Board could see that something’s up and it could seriously affect even the global performance. But not some regional team.”*

It is interesting that while Cecilia does not have a positive opinion of personality testing, she would use it to help her in situations of the utmost importance, e.g., when hiring for the top-tier managers. Nonetheless, she stressed that she would use the test only once she was unable to find anything else she could base her decision on. The test then would be used as a last resort.

In general, the suggestion put forward by my interviewees is to place the personality testing as the last step, after hard-skills and qualifications were evaluated. Here I would like to insert my own experience from a job interview for HR position, where I was asked by the HR person about my opinion about personality testing. The interviewer stated she has no experience doing it, because she does not believe it, and if there should be a way of administering the test, then it should be prior to any contact with the applicant. Because as soon as we exchanged an email, I already have some kind of perception of the applicant, she said.

2. HR professionals do not do a good job

When Anne was asked who she thought shaped the recruitment process, she answered that in most cases it is management, but the individual HR person can shape the process a lot. While it is management who opts and consequently pays for the tests, the individual HR who leads the interview can decide to implement certain questions and make decisions based on these questions as well. Anne then discussed that overall she is convinced HR has bad reputation as such and built on her previous point that candidates do not have good experience on the job market, because many HR professionals do not do a good job.

Anne: "Because there's lot of dumbasses sitting in the HR department. ... Because nowadays 90% of women want to do HR and... (Chuckle). Well, they cannot do it, they are not good at it. ... But it's up to the HR what really happens. If a crazy HR decides to ask you: If you were a dog, what colour would you have? Who would you go to dinner with? It's her implementing these things. ... I am partially tired from all these... ... I can get angry when I meet a crazy HR, that is going in these... And you know if it's enthusiastic HR working there one or two years... But it's mess when it's a person with fifteen years of experience sitting there and asking you where you see yourself in three years. That's why the HR has such a reputation. (Bad). It's not people who can think."

Anne expressed that she herself is convinced that HR professionals do not perform well and that in general public the reputation of HR is poor too, and she discussed this in some depth. Bella on the other hand mentioned only the perception of the general public and only briefly when we discussed the impact of personality testing on candidate experience.

Bella: "So, in general I don't think they leave a good impression, if the HR department ask those questions. Because I mean again, my personal opinion is that the general public does not see any purpose in those questions except for you know... The HR department wanting to look smart."

While this cannot be interpreted as a critique of the HR professionals as such, or Bella stating that HR professionals do not perform well in her own opinion, there is an expressed tendency for the general public to judge HR professionals or their practices unfavourably.

Cecilia did not openly express that HR professionals do not perform well in her opinion. Nevertheless, throughout the interview she mentioned that the general public does not see meaning behind certain HR processes, and she definitely suggested that the processes could be improved, and candidates should be treated better. She also mentioned interacting with candidates who did not want to go for an interview at certain client companies just because of the internal HR processes at the client companies.

"People don't like any of this. I think most people have hard time seeing the point. Of these mysterious HR questions. ... I think most people are convinced it's just some weird HR stuff. ... I don't think management decides too often for the HR what they are supposed to ask. I would think they'd say what they want to know, ask the HR to check the basis. But I wonder if they know what kind of questions the HR asks. If... But can you imagine the management telling the HR to ask the person what kind of animal they want to be? Or colour? Or who'd they go to dinner with? Ohh, we will never know if he's a good manager until we know which historic figure, he would take for a dinner... (Laughter). So, I think it's up to the individual HR, at least on the interview level. If these questions are part of some more sophisticated application process than the management could be involved. But I still doubt it. ... So, I think it comes to how many applicants you need to reject. The more applicants, the more rounds in an attempt to... to find that one, while spending as little effort and time on your side. If you have only couple applicants, you need to treat them better and you also have motivation to

dig deeper. ... They ask for so much and in the end they maybe don't even look at half of the things you give them. Or you go through two rounds of interviews, answer weird questions and then they choose the person who has most years of experience anyway. I think they ask for way more than they really need or way more than what they really base their decisions on and it's unfair. To sum it up, cut the waiting time and... How to put it... Focus on the relevant and don't bother people... ... But I mean we had a few client companies where we had trouble. (Cecilia is now talking about her current job in the external recruitment). Because the interviews with the HR were really weak. And people complained. It was actually exactly the same company. There was an HR with a habit to ask these weird questions. And the IT people are especially not interested in this. They want to talk technology, not... This. But most people don't. I have never heard anyone saying anything positive about this. About personality testing. And yeah... There was even one company where the candidates did not want to go for an interview. Just because of this."

Expressions such as "weird HR stuff" or "mysterious HR questions" do not convey a positive opinion of HR professionals. In conclusion, while all the interviewees are HR professionals themselves, all of them expressed some more or less hidden unfavourable look upon HR professionals.

3. Intuition as part of the recruitment process

Intuition was not part of the interview guide, though it might have complemented well the topic of personality testing. Nevertheless, the topic was touched upon in two of the interviews, as it arose naturally.

Anne relies on her intuition when hiring people. I have witnessed it myself as I was part of the interviews led by Anne. Moreover, Anne mentions it during our interview. Firstly, when she is asked about evaluation of the hiring processes at her company. One of the main reasons she was left wondering after an unsuccessful hire was because she liked the person.

"I am really wondering now where the mistake was. Because we liked her immediately..."

Anne mentioned intuition directly when asked about candidates having good experience on the job market. She stated that most HR people do not perform well. And that maybe she herself does not either, she uses her intuition, whether it is good or not. Anne is not stating

whether use of intuition is correct in the hiring process, simply that she does use her intuition.

“Well, they cannot do it, they are not good at it. Gee. I am not saying I can. I follow my intuition, my notions, how my personality’s built, if I have some, that does not matter, but...”

Bella does not use her intuition. On the contrary, she is trying to suppress any non-objective feelings, as she is convinced that recruitment should strive to be completely objective.

“I tried to ignore the feeling to be honest and to force myself to be objective. I am very much aware of me feeling in a certain way. But then I just try to ignore it and not to include it in the recruitment process, because it’s not fair towards anyone, I think. So, yeah, basically just try to control it and ignore it.”

Barbora Hagemann Hontela: *“Okay, so you don’t think it’s a gut feeling you should listen to?”*

Bella: *“Mm. ... Well. That depends also on the round which the applicant is in, because if it’s you know me reading a CV or a motivational letter, I don’t think I have the ability to have like a correct gut feeling. Because basically I don’t see a person, I see a piece of paper. So, in that case, I don’t think I should follow my gut feeling, because I don’t have any proper base for feeling in a certain way. But then of course during the interview or then when showing the person around the company, then it is also... You need to match with the person in a certain way, if the feeling is not right, I would probably take it into consideration a little bit, but I would still try to keep it to minimum to be honest. Because meeting someone for thirty minutes, or an hour, isn’t justifiable I think to feel about the person in a certain way.”*

With Cecilia we have not discussed anything related to instincts or intuition in the selection process. Since the topic did not arise during the interview, perhaps Cecilia did not have a strong opinion either way. In any case, the observation that can be made here is that the younger and junior HR professional is convinced that recruitment should strive to be objective, even at the cost of suppressing feelings towards an applicant, while the older and more senior HR professional relies on intuition to a certain degree.

Findings in comparison with literature

The importance of people

All interviewees agreed that it is important for the candidates to have good experience. Interviewees stated reasons such as: company's image, keeping good relationships for the future's sake, and good feeling about own work. None of the interviewees discussed scarcity of talent or the difference between performance of top talent and average employee as the reason why companies should strive to create a positive experience for the candidates. While there is an agreement that people are important, the reasoning of practitioners and academics differ. While the literature is quite homogenous, for example Carless is the only author stating low employment rates as a reason for competition for people.

The critique of HR

All interviewees are of the opinion that HR processes are in need of change. All interviewees also agreed that candidates do not have a good experience on the job market. All interviewees also expressed that the general public does not have a good perception of the HR, which is highly likely linked to the negative experience of most job applicants. From the perception of the interviewees it seems that both HR professionals and general public have not witnessed the rise of HR yet and would more likely side with Lawler and others who hold a rather critical view of HR.

The role of psychology in HR

All interviewees expressed opinion that psychology testing is not very helpful and can be helpful only in hands of experts. And few HR possess the necessary expertise according to my interviewees. None of my interviewees has background in psychology either. The perception of psychology in HR by general public is negative according to my interviewees. Psychology testing is not perceived as best practice by the interviewees. Lawler vs. Carless vs. Sartori vs Alonso

Psychological testing is not widely used, and the most common method is still unstructured interviews

In agreement with current literature, all interviewees rely on interviews as the main selection tool. While all interviewees had some experience with psychology testing, either as administrator, candidate, or both, none of the interviewees approached the topic as something they have been exposed to neither often nor regularly.

Arguments against psychological testing

Sartori, Costantini and Ceschi briefly discuss two main groups of reasons behind the low acceptance of personality testing. One of the groups encompasses reasons on the organisational level such as lack of fit with organisations' specific needs, or time strenuousness. The second group encompasses reasons on the individual HR manager's level such as overconfidence in own abilities to properly assess the candidate and general feeling of being in control over the process. None of the interviewees stated these reasons. On the contrary, the lack of ability to properly conduct psychological assessment was one of the main arguments against any form of psychological testing. Rather than performing it poorly, it is better not to perform it at all. The interviewees did not express confidence in their own skills, stating they do not need to make use of tests or other tools thanks to their own capabilities. Instead, they doubted the usefulness of the tools. Organisational reasons were not discussed in depth, only Bella mentioned that the tests are quite expensive, so when faced with budget cuts, she would investigate whether the tests are worth the costs. Since the article is from the year 2020, it is unlikely that opinions of HR professionals have evolved so drastically. The difference could be attributed either to cultural differences, as Sartori et al. focuses his research on different European countries, for example Italy, but it could be many other factors, such as seniority of the HR professionals involved in the studies cited by Sartori. After all, two of the interviewees participating in my research had only over a year of experience, so it is understandable they would feel less confident in own professional capabilities compared to more senior HR practitioners.

Carless in her article states several reasons why the use of psychological tests increased in the recent years. It is necessary to point out that the article is from 2009, i.e., it is more than ten years old. I was not able to find a clear answer to whether usage of personality tests have increased or decreased in the recent years. The reasons Carless states are following: the cost of testing has been reduced, the relative ease of testing candidates has increased, the turnaround times for reporting results have improved, and there is a growing awareness that testing is part of best practice. As Carless states, the internet greatly increased availability of these tests and thus their use. On the other hand, with greater ease of usage, people who are not qualified to administer these tests started administering them, which in turn decreased the tests credibility and

overall efficiency of the tests, as the poorly administered tests could not have brought correct results. In addition, easy access means that candidates are able to prepare for the tests, in such extent that they are learning how to answer the questions, which defeats the entire purpose of the testing, i.e., to learn the person's authentic personality. It is advised to give candidates some resources so they can prepare for the tests, so they do not feel uncomfortable, and they know what to expect. But to make clear division between prepared candidates and candidates who are prepared to cheat is quite difficult. Based on answers of the interviewees, psychological testing seems to face ever the same critique: candidates are prepared for the tests and are not honest in their answers, credibility is low, few are qualified to administer these tests, the costs are still high, and general public together with high number of HR professionals avoid it if possible. Easier administration of tests thanks to internet is not crucial in context where the tool is not trusted.

When psychological testing is (un)suitable

All interviewees were asked if they think there is a situation where personality testing could be beneficial. In summary, I received three suggestions. Personality testing could be helpful when: hiring sales and customer care professionals, when deciding between equally good candidates, and when hiring executives. Careless mentions briefly several positions where personality testing is unsuitable: *"unusual jobs, executive positions, or lower level jobs in small organizations when only one applicant will be chosen..."* (Carless, 2009, p.2526)

Carless mentions quite a specific context of lower-level jobs and small organisations, nevertheless it seems that the situation of only one applicant being chosen could indicate that personality tests should not be used to decide between applicants in order to choose one. When it comes to executives, the academic recommendation is clearly in contradiction with the interviewee's suggestion. Judgemental method is recommended in executive selection. It could be deduced that in more complex and less usual decision-making academia would urge practitioners to use judgemental methods. But it was exactly these cases, where the interviewees would consider administering a test. This finding is paradoxical in one additional way: The interviewees do not trust the tests, but in a case, they were not able to make a judgement on their own, they would turn to the tests.

Practice of psychology testing according to interviewees

A comparison will be made between the practice guide prepared by Carless, which is discussed in section Practice of psychology testing and how the interviewees would approach personality testing in practice. None of the interviewees mentioned job analysis or anything else that would suggest some kind of systematic preparation or reflection on expected outcomes prior to administering the tests. I did not ask Bella specifically how the tests are administered, nevertheless the sequence of events that led to implementation of the tests in her company highly suggests that it was not result of a careful analysis. (The tests were provided for free by an external agency, who was unable to help Bella's company in previous hire situation). In addition, Bella stated that her managers expect the personality test to be a kind of insurance, a final confirmation that their hiring decision was a good decision. Bella's managers were also given a hiring recommendation. And this recommendation changed their opinion completely as based on the previous interaction with the applicant, the managers were inclined to hire the person. Anne also mentioned receiving a hiring recommendation, Anne on the other hand decided to proceed with the other candidate, based on her own judgement. Carless suggests that the final decision should always be left with the hiring manager and should stay within the company. I have not collected any data on how the results were reported, whether the data was standardised, and which evaluation method was employed; statistical or judgemental. I can conclude that in comparison with Carless's recommendations, only one of them seems to be upheld in practice in this research: The results of the tests are not previewed prior to interviews. This is likely due to the fact, that the tests are the final round in the selection process. Cecilia, who discussed the practical aspect only theoretically, as she has not administered the tests so far, too suggested that she would consult the tests as the last step, i.e., after she had formed her own opinion during the previous stages.

In conclusion, despite the fact that both Anne and Bella collaborated on the psychological testing with expert external agencies, the utilised practices were in most cases contradictory to recommended practices. This means that not only internal HR professionals are to be blamed for the poor experiences with psychological testing.

Multiple methods and standardisation

“Research has shown that the integration of different methods and techniques can increase the validity and reliability of psychological assessment and improve its predictive value (Sartori and Pasini, 2007; Sartori, 2010). Moreover, while assessment situations vary, the use of standardized tools is largely encouraged to avoid biases in evaluations (Sartori and Pasini, 2007).” (Sartori, Costantini and Ceschi, 2020, p.284) “In summary, best practice is to use a statistical method of combining psychological test scores with other selection data.” (Carless, 2009, p.2526)

All interviewees described CV screening and interviews as steps in their selection process, there were mentions of cover letters as well. Anne mentioned tasks to verify technical, writing, and interpersonal skills. Nevertheless, she did not employ any kind of task during the time I had the possibility to observe her. CV and cover letter screening is a short-listing method, not an assessment method, thus Anne and Cecilia (their companies respectively) utilise a single method for employee selection, namely an unstructured interview. This means that in contradiction with academic recommendations, neither multiple methods nor standardised methods are used. Bella discussed utilising psychological tests. In conclusion, only Bella’s company employs more than one selection method.

Results

The overall result of the comparison of my findings with the literature can be summarised as follows: *“Evidence supports the knowledge hypothesis; a large discrepancy exists between research findings and practitioners’ beliefs about selection practices...” (Carless, 2009, p.2519)* Despite the years that passed between my thesis and the literature I utilised for my thesis, much is the same. The research recommendations still have not been put into practice. The reputation of HRM remains doubtful. There is nevertheless an interesting difference: The HR professionals are aware and they themselves use language that doubts HRM. In a brief final literature comparison, I would like to state my disagreement with Lawler when he claims: *“Perhaps the best way of stating what needs to happen is that talent management needs to move from the category of gut feeling to the category of evidence- and data- based decision making.” (Lawler III, 2017, p.29)* The lack of what Lawler calls evidence-based decision making does not seem to be a result of overconfident HR professionals that rely on their gut feelings. How HR professionals relate to themselves and

how they believe others relate to them bears no sign of overconfidence. In addition, Lawler is not leaving any space for tacit knowledge.

Recommendations for Current Talent Management

Based on the analysis and comparison with the literature, I would like to present several recommendations related to selection practices in the following section.

Education

The interviewees relate to psychological testing through opinions of their managers, colleagues, peers, and their own experience. None of the interviewees based her argument on e.g., reading an article or similar. While it is possible, that HR professionals with academic background in psychology or HRM would relate differently to psychological testing, Anne's statement regarding her colleagues (all psychology graduates who deemed psychological testing as a nonsense) should not be omitted. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the interviewees related to psychological testing as something doubtful understood by handful of experts, if by anyone. The opinions were not opinions of informed educated professionals. Nevertheless, this is not something only the HR professionals should be blamed for. Companies should ensure that their professionals have possibility to educate themselves, i.e., provide the resources necessary. Educated professionals have a higher chance of making the right decisions for their organisations. To be clear in my argument, I am not referring to academic studies. I am referring to access to seminars, courses, and literature. I am referring to the possibility to use some of the working hours to development of new skills and knowledge as well.

Evaluation

All interviewees stated they do not systematically evaluate selection processes, only in case of a bad hire. It would be unthinkable to launch a marketing campaign, not analyse it in any way, and just let it be unless it was received very negatively and decreased sales for example. *"...a majority of HR departments are not using big data. ...the most frequent response was because of a lack of knowledge and expertise in compiling, analyzing, and interpreting data."* (Alonso, Kurtessis and Waters, 2017, p.35) Nevertheless, I would not necessarily suggest big data, especially not as the first step. Simple, but regular examination of costs and outcomes could suffice for a time, yet improve much. For example, at the

moment Bella's company can hardly evaluate whether the psychological testing proved to be beneficial for the organisation. A simple comparison of successful versus unsuccessful hires (internal and through the agency) augmented by cost analysis could provide an evidence-based insight into further decision-making.

Experimentation

One of the reasons stated by Sartori et al. for rejection of psychological testing is lack of fit with organisational needs. In agreement with Lawler, I would suggest that companies should *"...experiment with new approaches and determine if they work based on performance data."* (Lawler III, 2017, p.29) If HR is supposed to make difference in organisational performance, i.e., be strategic, companies should find their own approach which will fit the organisational strategy. Practices can be modified, used differently in different contexts, and abandoned again. A partner can also have a crucial impact. An expert agency could change perception of the practice, in this case psychological testing, entirely.

The three suggestions are intertwined to a degree. An educated HR professional who is aware of different possibilities and industry trends will more likely be able to design a new process and will also be able to evaluate its success. All three suggestions also require the support of management since they require resources and trust. Here I would like to differentiate my critique of HR. I believe that the state of HR is caused by management. Currently it is fashionable to state that employees are the most important asset. Nevertheless, it is not seen in actions. Candidates have poor experience during selection processes. Hiring decisions are paused and delayed. If selection processes were deemed important, they would be prioritised, evaluated, and discussed. HR professionals would be given more opportunities for development, similarly to colleagues in technical fields for example.

In conclusion, HR and HR professionals need more than new tools or alliance with organisational psychology. HR need support of its organisations and management.

Conclusion

This thesis investigated how HR professionals relate to psychological testing in selection processes. The main finding: HR professionals relate to psychological testing rather

negatively. HR professionals view psychological testing as something accessible to few experts and are convinced that few HR professionals have the necessary background to get involved in psychological testing. This finding corresponds with the fact that the practice of psychological testing is often in contrary to academic recommendations. Compared to other research on the topic, the negative perception of psychology testing stems rather from uncertainty about the topic, rather than from overconfidence of the HR professionals. In addition, even the specialised agencies offering these services do not always follow the recommended practices. Thus, it is not only internal recruiters who are to blame for the ambiguousness of psychological testing. There are several recommendations provided to rectify the situation. HR professionals should be encouraged by their organisations in developing their expertise. HR professionals should have the opportunity to learn about developments in the industry and best practices from quality resources. Organisations should treat selection processes as a strategic process that needs to be monitored, evaluated, and improved if needed. Just as many other business processes for which it is a standard practice. Final recommendation is to experiment with selection processes in order to find the most effective approach that will support the organisation's strategy. Some practices that have been used for many years are still used by many companies. Yet, an effective selection process could turn into a strategic advantage in a situation where companies have to fight for talent.

Limitations and further research

This thesis uses qualitative in-depth method and low number of interviewees. The knowledge produced is quite contextual, bound by time, place, and experiences of the participants.

Other sources of data would be beneficial, such as documents on company policies regarding selection processes. The thesis relies predominantly on singular source of data; the interviews.

In addition, the thesis lacks counterview. Since I did not succeed in obtaining interview with a person who would hold more favourable view of psychology testing, the thesis poses practitioners and academics against each other in a way.

Further research could explore how can best practices be adopted by HR professionals and their organisations. The discrepancy between academic research and practices in

organisations suggest that there is need for more practice-oriented guides. Practice guides or case studies showing how to approach for example use of data for more informed decision making in HR, or how to adopt or modify existing selection practices to suit organisational needs. Literature that could bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners, and between HR and other business functions would surely help HR to evolve in order to meet current business needs.

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Appendix

Transcript of interview with Anne

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

The first question is, what does the recruitment process look like in your company? What are the steps like? Processes?

Anne:

You probably know that despite us doing an active search, for ourselves we don't do it. So, advertising and the next phase is that we make use of social media, such as Facebook. So, we have an ad there and we combine it with classic with the Jobs. (*Jobs.cz is the biggest job portal in the Czech Republic, similar to JobIndex in Denmark*). Which is the main domain for job searching. Well, it's maybe also because the market has changed now due to covid.

Earlier Jobs was enough for these positions, but it's not enough now. Firstly, because people, the IT people are holed up, they don't have the need to change (*jobs*), so they need to be motivated to the change, so today the recruitment process is Jobs, job portals in combination, it did not used to be like that, but nowadays in combination with social media.

After that CVs are being looked at or the applications, that's a standard, then it's the first round. Earlier it used to be face-to-face, there was also an Excel test, because we used to have everything in Google Sheets. Nowadays it's an online meeting, but I would like to combine it with face-to-face again, because I think it's really important to see each other.

Because online is fine, because you can get to know the experience, you can figure out many things, but it's better to see each other one time, than to hear each other a thousand times

and then to see each other online five times, so now I want to meet in person with the person.

Well, and there used to be two rounds as a standard.... Well, I will describe how it was before covid and how it is after covid. Before covid it was a personal meeting and then the second meeting was also face-to-face, there was the Excel test, we tested communication with client, someone unpleasant to see how he would react, we tested that, and now I would like to return to this, because the selection was deeper and better. Nowadays everyone is used to... I don't know what the response will be like when we will want to meet face-to-face, because many people... The first round not, but the second one for sure. But many people will not want that, not even for the second round. Because they are used to that, when they search for a job, everything is online. And the recruitment process is experience, job results from the previous work, education does not interest me, that's interesting about me, but I am really mostly interested in the previous results. They say that the interview can last ten to fifteen minutes, but you will know it's a suitable person when you ask him what the result of his work was. And when he says: Look, I did this, this, and this, and I was responsible for that, and you say fine and how did you manage, and he says I fulfilled by this percentage, and then you know if the person is good for your job, so you use a question: Baker bakes to make a bread, and you went to the job why? For what reason and what was the result, and how well you managed? So that's the most crucial question for me, what was the result of the job historically. I always focus on that.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Good. Why don't you use motivational letters?

Anne:

Because it's rubbish. It's nonsense. Everybody can stylise based on the job ad. Sometimes... Something else is a cover letter and something else is a motivational letter. *(By a cover letter Anne means a general letter that describes the sender, rather than an application for a specific job)*. But it happened many times that when we received a motivational letter, they had only one letter for everyone, and the salutation was Dear Mrs. Dvořáková *(a common Czech surname, the point here being that the person did not change the surname in the letter, and sent the same letter to every job application)*. You can read interesting things, that they are interested in working with something, something that motivates him. That's what

you are supposed to put there, the results of your job etc. Sometimes when the motivational letter is good, I read it, fine, I'll form some opinion, or prepare questions for the next meeting, for example. But in the majority of cases, I don't ask for it, and I don't deem it important, because I can ask these things during the interview.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok, good. So, the CV is enough for you to make the decision with whom you want to speak?

Anne:

Definitely.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

So you will rather talk to the person than read a motivational letter?

Anne:

Yes.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Good. How do you think these individual steps help you in selection of the right employees?

Anne:

What do you mean?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

What do you expect when you see a CV, for example? When do you see a CV, how does that help you to make a decision? Seeing the skills, or something different? The overall impression?

Anne:

The work and experience.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And then the interview helps you to assess the personal fit, I suppose?

Anne:

We touch upon the results there, and what he did or does, what was the focus and task. I

also often ask, what did the tasks look like when they started the job and how it looks now when they are leaving. I validate what they say, because everyone can write I am a sales representative, I filled the quota 100%. Ok, so tell me about a client that was difficult and what kind of complications you were solving. And he should be able to answer that. And when I find something that does not fit, I start to dig into it. And I dig and I dig, just that one thing and just based on that I can intuitively discover if the person is lying, or is making it sound better, or it's only half-truth. And if you put the energy into it, he will not be able to hold the role, and then you will see he lied, or that there was a problem with the team for example, and he will tell you the truth. Not the first time, but if you dedicate the energy, you will get it out of him.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you evaluate your recruitment process sometimes?

Anne:

Hmm. No. There have been so many already, that I don't.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

You said in the beginning that you would prefer to see them (*candidates*) in person. That the online does not bring the same...

Anne:

Well, definitely. There is an effort to minimize the mistakes. It's feedback also for me. Because I understand the work in a certain way, and I have an idea of who could be good for the job, and then it is not a fit. Because if you don't put enough energy into the recruitment process, they will tell you what you want to hear. And if you don't start digging into it, and you will not start nose around, you will not get to know the stuff. And I also evaluate it... Or I often ask, if there is someone else with me, if I don't scare the candidates too much. Because I scare them a lot. (*She means portraying the job as difficult*). That maybe I draw the reality... I exaggerate... Or not exaggerate... But I repeat it several times how it really is so they know what they are going into. Because it's not just about having a beautifully written job ad and that we are smiling at each other, but he must know that there are unpleasant candidates, that you have to send emails, that's our product. (*She means that it's active search, where you have to contact the candidates, not the other way around*).

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Are you doing this systematically?

Anne:

Me and systematically? *(Laughter)*.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok, do you evaluate the hiring process when it's successful, or rather when it's unsuccessful?

Anne:

Unsuccessful. For example, right now with Caroline *(an employee that has just left after a month of not doing a great job and being very unhappy, this I know because Caroline discussed it with me)*. I am really wondering now where the mistake was. Because we liked her immediately with Kate *(Anne's back then right-hand and team leader)*. And we have been through thousands of recruitment processes. And you defend yourself from them telling you what you want to hear, and you go after the nuances and the work history and results. But you say to yourself, what was the mistake, when you present what the job's like and she says: Great, I like it. You ask her one more time, then you get to it third time by a detour, it is really like this, is this what you imagine doing?

We even met here with her and we showed her everything, the systems, what exactly she is going to do, before we gave her an offer. So she knew exactly what she was going into. Then there's of course the thing that the job is very dynamic, it changes a lot, you have to flow with it, dance through it. I told her, but it was probably a big bite, personality-wise. Because in that case, back to your question, it is about me asking where we made the mistake. What we could have done better.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Does that lead you to a question, if you could use something new at the interview? In what way does it lead you, what would you like to change?

Anne:

If there was a time for it, I would like to have one round more. One day without binding effect, maybe even paid, sitting with us for one day, so we could get to know each other.

Because you can hold the role for a while, but not for long. And I think that the one day... Though we did that with her, not a whole day, it was like three hours. We showed her the charts, the profiles, the clients, we showed our cards. This is how it is, the job would be this. I don't know where happened the... that it started to fray at the edges. That she realised, ok, recruitment is something I don't want to do. I don't know. It's rather... I don't know, if some tests... And I have done that before, in the internal HR, that's stupid, that never... I've been through it (*testing*) myself. And I never... Of course, extroversion etc. it can assess, fine. But that it could tell this person fits the role 100%... We had this Transformia we were paying, and I will never forget that. We had two candidates for this position and the tests said that the person I would never bet on, is a good candidate. And because we were not convinced, we did not trust the tests, we chose the other candidate. There was a really experienced manager, with long history, a bit older, and he was in charge of a subsidiary in Prague. We chose the younger one, because he seemed for the role... He managed. The test said: Don't take him, he won't manage, the other one will manage who is already more experienced, by ten years. But it was not true.

And I underwent it myself too, some tests, being tested, and it often gave the result that I am not a teamplayer. Which I think is nonsense. I don't know...what's your experience, but I don't trust these tests. ... Something yes, some things can be ok, but it is definitely not as determining so that I would say: Ahh, ok, test said he does not fit this, so I won't choose him for this. It can be a help, but not a 100% way to do it.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Good. I know the answer, but now there's a question if you use personality testing in your organisation?

Anne:

No, we don't.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

What about the questions such as: What animal you would like to be and what colour you would like to be?

Anne:

Ehh. Hmm. You know, we talked about it many times, that we are all prepared for an interview. What's your weaknesses? What's your strengths? Who would you go to dinner with? Where do you want to be in three five years? How would you react if you had a quarrelsome person in the team? We are all prepared for it. (*Pounding the table with her palm*). When I am looking for a job, and I am interested in preparing for it... So to listen to things such as: My weakness is that I demand too much from my colleagues, and I am impatient. My strength is that I am very communicative... (*Laughter*). This does not have any value for me. Because only the reality... Because there are the results in the job... Then it really shows if he can manage stress... If... I don't know... How he is in the team... If it's a senior, if he's the one who pulls it forward, or if he's the one delaying the team... You will only get to know this once he talks about his experience. I am not saying that the tests are bad, definitely not, these tests are being developed for I don't know thirty years... There are some psychologists behind it with good attitude, but I... I don't believe these tests... I don't entirely... see the value. And I remember Monika (*a colleague, that left two months prior, to pursue a PhD. Degree in Psychology*) when we discussed it, she is a psychologist and Lenka (*another previous employee*) too, both studied psychology and both said that the tests are total bullshit. (*Laughter*). That it won't tell you anything useful. And no one knows what is right and what is wrong.

For example: Do you like staring into the fire for a long time? And if yes, you are aggressive. That seems totally crazy. Where does this analogy come from?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

I guess we could skip this... But let's do it as well. Do you think that the personality testing is more suitable for certain types of jobs?

Anne:

Hmm. ... Perhaps the test can be used, when you have two candidates, who are equally good. And you want something, and you can't decide. Both have the same results, good job history, they have something to offer. Because you during those four five hours of the selection process, you cannot discover how he functions in a team. You could ask for references, but! Someone wants to damage you or does not want you to leave and will not

give you a good reference. That all can be... You can side, but... I personally don't attach importance to people from HR... I don't entirely believe it. It's not my style simply. Because if I believed it, I would say: Fine, now we are going to do selection process, we are going to give him a test, and we'll see. I don't know. I just don't think...

For example, I was doing five-hour tests... You know what's good? What I like about the tests? The stress resilience. They put there... We also did it, that you have tasks with time limit, and you know time is running. And it's demanding tests. And they... I don't know if still... They did not tell us, because it was their know-how, if they are watching your movement on the keyboard, how much you are nervous. I think that the stress-resilience is interesting. But I still think that the test, we all stylise ourselves, it's better to be face-to-face for a day. Plan it and make space for it. Like when you have selection processes for salespeople, and you take them with to meet the clients. When you make new clients and you notice how he's catching on, what he noticed. You don't want him to talk, but you observe him in action, based on behaviour. I think that tells the most.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Good. Do you know or who do you think most often decides about what the selection process will look like?

Anne:

Management definitely. But it's up to the HR what really happens. If a crazy HR decides to ask you: If you were a dog, what colour would you have? Who would you go to dinner with? It's her implementing these things. And then you realise... Who will tell you what is right? The trial period. *(Laughter. Meaning that only the trial period, the first three months, will tell you if it was a right decision)*. I am partially tired from all these for me... I can get angry when I meet a crazy HR, that is going in these... And you know if it's enthusiastic HR working there one or two years... But it's mess when it's a person with fifteen years of experience sitting there and asking you where you see yourself in three years. That's why the HR has such a reputation. *(Bad)*. It's not people who can think... I don't want it to sound like I am lax, because now when I am listening to myself, it can sound like it, but it's more about that I am tired by these answers, and I think, back to your question, that it's the company

management, because they are the one paying it, and sometimes it's really difficult the tests, but it's up to the HR person. I don't mean tests like IT people have. Programme something for us, that's fine. That's hard skills, that's clear. You can do it or you can't. Yes or no. But how do you want to measure soft skills? ... Job attitude? How can I measure job attitude? Stress resilience I can recognise, fine. I can recognise if he's extrovert, or introvert. Fine. But to eliminate he would be good in the job, based on... That in the test will be a result that he has a problem to communicate with people who are overfamiliar... Do you get it, will this show in the job? I don't know if you understand what I want to say with this.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Yes, I understand. Good. Why do you think other companies use these questions? How do you think they see it? How it helps them?

Anne:

Hm. ... It's corporates. It's corporate companies that have some practices and some notions about who... They have some competence models, and they know that a certain person fits this typologically. And they predetermine based on the tests who is suitable. It's not small companies, it's not companies that are growing. They want to give space to people who want to grow, and even if they (*the people*) have some weakness, they build it (*manage it*) together. But corporates come up with bullshit, come up with testing, come up with... Though, what's interesting, about the tests, I have to say, is assessment centre. And I acknowledge that, even though people stylise themselves so much, you can... There is big stress resilience, so you know, if the person manages or not, but you will get to know there a lot. And that's like the whole day together. So those are great. So, if you have to test, then through the assessment centre.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you think there's any connection between corporations having more applicants? So they can afford to do this?

Anne:

That's difficult. When I take (*one of our clients, a global company*), how big of a corporate it

is and they still don't have the people (*the applicants*). *My note here would be that the company is big, but not famous.* Difficult. Well, there are companies, I remember (*a Czech bank, an equivalent of Jyske Bank let's say*), I am not naming. (*She just did, but I am not going to use the name*). They don't have the applicants, but they are going to test everyone, and they will all go through assessment centres, and they will not find anyone in the end. Sometimes it seems that the HR people are creating work for themselves, so they have something to do. That they actually don't care about the candidates because they make the process that seems correct to them, first round – telephone pre-screening, second round – meeting in person, third round – assessment centre, fourth round – psychological testing. Who of the candidates will want to undergo all this nowadays? Why do we have the three months trial period? It's not only for us employers, also the candidate can say: Look, I did not imagine it this way. So definitely, you cannot see your performance is not visible as much... And... Ehh.... And when you come up with some slow lengthy processes, ineffective, unproductive... That's how I see it, that's my opinion, I could never function in a corporate, because it got me down, but yeah... They are minimising individual attitude, yeah. When you want something... For example, in the HR department. I was doing a selection process for (*another bank*) and that was horrible. It was clear how it must be (*pounding the table*), then they left in the trial period anyway. But they had a system, we organised it for them, but they had a system, they said: So, the first round will be telephonic pre-screen, the second one will be assessment centre, everyone who passes the assessment centre will have an individual interview the same day, and we will have a case study as well. Exhausting for everyone. And we in the end looked at success rate, where... I don't remember the numbers exactly now, but it was a big conference room. There were like thirty people for the assessment centre and seven of them passed. One started the job or nobody out of thirty people, due to lack of common sense.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Now we kind of naturally moved to the next part, don't worry, last four to go. Do you think that the candidate's experience is important?

Anne:

Sure. 100%. It's sales.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And do you think that the companies act like that? Does it look that way?

Anne:

(Chuckle). Well, you know yourself, when there's an HR person... *Interruption, a colleague enters and talks*). When there's unlikable HR person and does not give you a good impression, will you accept a job at the company? When there is a superior who is unlikable? Will you not prefer other company, where the people are nice and where you felt good? I think it's crucial the impression.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And do you think that even when you are not interested in the person it's important?

Anne:

Sure. Because even if you don't like the person, you are introducing the company, you don't give details, but you tell him how it functions, you provide some information, and you create the image... So it's important.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Good. How do you think this personality testing and similar questions such as what colour would you like to be influence the candidate experience?

Anne:

It's a catastrophe. I take it as... Look, Kate was systematic. For me, it's an ugly word. And I think that even her as a systematic person, who wanted order, even for her it would be pretty hard. And if someone gave it to me, I would just get up and say: No, I am sorry. *(Chuckle)*. And my opinion strengthened because the psychologists told me that it's worthless. That no tests exist... Something else is *(undiscernible)* psychology, where you have hours and hours... Yes, there is a test, but they talk to him for hours, interrogate him. I don't know... I am the... Until someone comes and says it has a meaning and puts some logical questions... The test would make sense, if they asked you about results, about what do you

want to do, about how it was, when they ask about your experience, empirical experience, not what animal you would like to be. I would like to be a tiger and why? Because I like it and it's the most beautiful animal. And now tell me if I would be suitable for an assistant job.

(Chuckle).

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

So you think that vast majority of people dislike it?

Anne:

I think so.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok. Do you think something new is needed in recruitment? Some totally new method? Or if recruitment needs new tools in general? Or on the contrary it should calm down a little and stop?

Anne:

I think that in the Czech waters what used to be really good were the trial periods, not that you right away start the process, get all the know-how... But to observe, meaning e.g., the famous Baťa circle (*Tomáš Baťa was a Czech entrepreneur and founder of a footwear company, which operates globally, recognised for his innovation and leadership skills, as well his social consciousness*). Whoever joined the team, even foreman, went through the work, how the shoe is cut, where the textile is made, how to sew it together properly, who are the people in the team, and I think this as a part of the recruitment process... But no one would want to undergo this and for a company it's of course... Because every day costs something. It's costs. If it's not a corporate, that basically does not care, they will get him into it right away into the working process, but I think if there was a space within the trial period for making e.g. the Baťa circle, meet each other in the crisis situations from clients, in our case, from candidates, it would be great. I think that would show a lot, show the true colours.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok, and last... Do you think that candidates in general are having a good experience?

Anne:

I think they don't have. Because there's a lot of dumbasses sitting in the HR department... Do you remember when we put out the ad that it's without HR? (*The selection process*). That they will be directly speaking to the managers, and do you remember how many guys said that it's great, to skip this phase? Because nowadays 90% of women want to do HR and... (*Chuckle*). Well, they cannot do it, they are not good at it. Gee. I am not saying I can. I follow my intuition, my notions, how my personality's built, if I have some, that does not matter, but... First of all, I think only women should do HR, every time I met a man it sucked. And I think that the candidates are tired, that they would welcome some new method. Or it depends on the person. You can't generalise. Because I met an HR woman that was great! She sat down with the candidates, not in a conference room, just for a coffee, she was like fifty-five. And she said: This is how it's gonna be. And it was a normal conversation. And I think the candidate was excited because he got to know what he wanted, she got to know what she wanted, and there were no methods. It was just a normal conversation about how they imagine things to be, and what she expects in this position, or what colleagues expect. She prepared the candidates for what the hiring managers are like, what colleagues are like, so he would know exactly what he's going into. And I think the candidates loved the way she was doing it. That is pleasant, non-stressful... She was really good, the only HR I really felt was in the proper place. An inspiration. And she could not fit the door, how tall she was, so she had authority, which I also think it's important. But I think, majority of the people is tired. How do you see it?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Well, I agree, they are tired. But I think it's absolutely dictated by the market. And in the moment, there will not be enough work, people will happily go to assessment centres. But at the moment, there is plenty of work, so they can pick. Either you can pick, or you can't. And people act based on that unfortunately.

Anne:

But the HR has to accommodate the people. You know how it is when the client gives tests? Around one third of the candidates drops out. They won't do it. Just the send the CV thing.

They say they will, but they are not able to.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you think your answers would be the same if the situation on the market was different?

The HR should accommodate people anyway?

Anne:

Hmm. You have to get them at the interview. You have to get the information you need.

Definitely. But... I would not give the tests, I would not push them. I would not make it several rounds. He seems one way in first round, totally different in the second round, and the third round is totally different. But when you already have the candidate, get as much as you can in one go. It's a difficult question. Probably, if there were more candidates... If the situation on the market wasn't as it is... Well, I would be stricter, probably yes. Nowadays the market is very very... We just talked about it in the car, the covid made it so that we cannot even find an accountant, how did it come to this?

[Transcript of interview with Bella](#)

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

So, first question is, what is the recruitment process like in your company? Meaning what are the steps? You know, like, are you looking at CVs, cover letters? You have some interviews, assessment centres, how does it look?

Bella:

Well, it depends on the position to be honest. But, I mean, I can only speak for two positions, or like two types of positions, because that's what I've been hiring people for. So, the first type is like student positions. And then I also hired or helped hiring one person in sales. So, for the students, the process a bit shorter and less complex, I would say, since it's, you know, it's not such a big investment for the company, of course, because I mean, our students only work around 15 hours a week. So for the students, we usually post the job ad on GraduateLand, one of those websites for student positions. And then we asked them to send us their CVs and cover letter. And sometimes we also asked them to send us their, like grade transcripts, even though that's only rarely to be honest. And so we do that, and once we evaluate their, you know, their documents, we invite some of the applicants for interviews,

it's usually around five, six people max, to be honest, since we don't really have the capacity to interview more people. But I mean, it, of course, depends if we, you know, if we interview five people, and none of those people are a good fit out for us, then we may have to interview more, obviously. So that's the process for the students. And then for the sales position. So for more managerial position, I would say it's, we usually use LinkedIn quite a lot for the recruitment there. So we, we use the Pay option for LinkedIn there. And we usually use the easy apply on the LinkedIn platform, because we found out that then we get more applicants. I mean, I'm not sure if the quality corresponds, but we at least get four applicants, which is a good start. So and then basically, when they, when they are applying through the easy to apply option, they have to submit their CV. So that's like the first round, and then we sift through the CVS and CVS that we find interesting, then we go back to the applicants and ask them for their cover letter as well. So that's like a second round. And then the third round is the interviews, which I think previously be that first like initial interview, thirty minutes interview online. And then out of those four are who are forefront, actually was that we invited the person to the to the company for like a full day, but then that was usually only one applicant. So the very, very last left. And then I think sometimes we also asked them to do like, some type of like a personality test, I would say, but that's not us that do it, we usually use external agency for that. But that's also only for the managerial positions. So for the ones that like the company has to invest quite a lot when we decide to hire them. So yeah, that's pretty much it.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

How many applicants do you get, for example, for student positions?

Bella:

Um, to be honest, like, lately, we've been struggling quite a lot, because we haven't received that many applicants. And we've been going through the different reasoning behind it that I might I mean, my personal opinion is that we are quite far out from Copenhagen and quite far out from our scope as well. So you know, the positions are not that attractive for the applicants, especially since we are competing with so many companies in Copenhagen. So I mean, if I'm being completely honest, like recently, we've been hiring for marketing position, and we received around seven applications maybe so really, very little. And then for the more R&D positions, so like chemists or mechanical engineering and these very technical

positions, we received a bit more. And the reason is that, since we are a very specialized company, again, my personal opinion, then I think it's much harder for the for the applicants to find a job that's suitable for them because they have, you know, much nicher scope, I guess, since but then when you compare it to like a business person or marketing person, then it's very easy or much easier for them to find a job, I would say. So, for the r&d, R&D students, maybe we get around fifteen, twenty. So, I guess double the amount. And then for the sales applicants, or like the, again, managerial positions, that's actually quite good. And it might be also because of the easy apply option. So, I think the first round we did somewhere in the beginning of summer, we got around hundred applicants, actually, so many, many more than than for the student positions.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay. So how these things help you in selecting the right employees, you know, how does seeing the CV help you? Or you know, like, what are the things maybe... How do you know, what's the choice? When you see the CV? For example, what makes you say, okay, yes, or that you're not interested?.

Bella:

Well, I would say that, I mean, if I take it for the, for the sales position, for example, because that had many more rounds, than I think in the CV, we usually, you know, look mostly for the experience. And then for the, for the amount of years as well, because it also depends whether we are looking for a junior position or a more senior position. So if it's, if it's a junior position, then it's like some type of experience at least. We are not that strict, I would say, with the number of years they have to have. So, for example, for the sales position, now we were looking for a junior person. So we said, you know, at least some type of experience, and if they worked also with customers, that's a benefit. Plus also, well, for us, it's a bit more complicated, because since my company is so, so technical, and the industry is extremely niche, it is quite hard for, like, you know, a person without technical background to understand what the company actually does. So what we actually also did in the last round, or the last time we were hiring was that we were also looking, if they have some type of background in technical stuff, either, you know, either an education from, from DTU, for example, or all those technical universities in Denmark, or even outside of Denmark, it doesn't really matter, but basically a technical education, or if they at least, worked in a

company that somehow is not, you know, selling socks. Something a bit more technical than that. So I think that's, that's what we use CV mostly for basically just to get an, you know, an overview who the person is, or mostly what the person background is to be honest, rather than who is the person and then the motivation letter, then that's far more, who is the person you know, and for example, if we see that someone doesn't have that great amount of experience, but we can sense from the motivational letter that he or she is very, you know, passionate or motivated, then that's also definitely a plus. So, I would say the motivational letter is more for that, you know. Also, actually to, to evaluate the person's language skills, because since we were hiring someone for a sales position, you know, then there is it's quite important that the person can communicate clearly and properly. So, yeah, so mostly, you know, motivation getting the person know a bit better and then the language skills in the in the motivational letter. And then in the thirty minutes interview, it was, again, actually to check their language skills. Because since we are, well I didn't mention this, but our company is working solely in English. And we are we are selling like globally actually. So then they are mostly using English so we also need to ensure that the person has good English skills, you know, and since we are in Denmark, and it's not a native English country, obviously, also just to basically double check, how can they communicate, and then getting the person know, getting to know the person even more, I would say. And also, I would maybe also say that to a bit check, if what they wrote in their CV and motivational letter is actually corresponding to what they are saying during the interview. Because we definitely did have some cases where the person looked amazing, you know, on the CV, but then during the interview, it was like meeting a completely different person. Mostly, mostly because of not having the experience than anything else. So, yeah, just shortly getting to know each other, you know, communication skills, and double checking the experience, plus, of course, going a bit in depth of, Okay, what did you did there, what do you do here, and so on. Yeah, and then, and then if the person gets to go to the company, then you know, it's, again, just to show them around. So they would also know where they would work. And also getting to know them even more. So to see basically, if there is a, you know, good chemistry, or if it could be a good fit, and also, so that they can get to know the team better. So basically, the last step is pretty much already like introducing them to the company to be honest. Like it is before signing the contract, but I think the last step is also mostly for them. So they can see the company from the inside out before, you know, deciding, okay, I can

work here, or I want to work here. And then the personality test.

Well, we were mostly doing that just to check to be honest, again, you know, because I assume that those are based on like psychology questions, which we don't really cover in any of the interviews. And since the company usually invests quite a lot, not only, I mean, also in in the hiring process, but then also, they spent quite a lot of money on their salaries and so on. We just wAnne, you know, make sure that they are, yeah, fitting well, with the culture, I guess. Funny enough, I'm not sure if I should say this... But there was one case where we picked the person or actually, I wasn't part of the company. But my manager told me a story that we picked one person, which seemed really good. He did really well in the interviews and everything. And then they sent him for a personality that and then the, the agency came back, saying that he is showing some signs of being a psychopath. So I'm actually not sure if they ended up hiring that guy or not. But yeah, I think it's just like, last check that you know, the person isn't... a bit... crazy, I guess. *(Laughter)*.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

That's a pity that you don't know if they hired him or not. That would be interesting to know if they actually...

Bella:

I honestly... and this is not 100%, but I think that they didn't in the end because the agency I think, advised them not to.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

So even though they liked him, and he did well, based on the test, they didn't hire him.

Bella:

I think so. I mean, as far as I know, at least.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Probably he wouldn't tell you oh, by the way, there's a person who got a psychopath results test and he's working in that department. *(Laughter)*.

Bella:

No, I mean, I'm not 100% sure since I wasn't part of the company back then. But I think they didn't.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

So when you're doing the interviews, you don't use any personality questions like what animal would you like to be or what color you would like to be, nothing like that?

Bella:

No, not at all.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

It's purely skills oriented. Kind of. Or?

Bella:

Yeah, skills... I mean, skills, interests like we also you know, try to ask a bit more personal questions but nothing like what animal do you like the most or anything like that. Just you know as if you were on a coffee date with a friend, I would say rather than any of those trick questions, I guess.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you know why they chose to go with the with the personality testing? I know that you said to check if there's nothing wrong with the person but what's the reasoning for that? Why don't you ask these questions yourself? Why do you trust an agency?

Bella:

Well... First of all, I think they're going for the personality tests solely because, you know, because it's a big investment for the company. (*The hire*). And I really don't think that there is any other reasoning further than that. Because, you know, as I said, hiring a student assistant is much less risky for the company, than hiring a full time, especially a salesperson, which is basically the face of the company in the end. So, I think they just really were more careful and wanting to ensure that it is a good fit for both sides, to be honest. And why don't we ask those questions ourselves? Well, again, to be completely honest, I think it's mostly because neither of us has the education or like the background to assess them properly. Because I mean, I don't think that anyone from the company actually, you know, could conclude something on a person saying that they like elephant over a tiger to be honest. So I, you know, I guess as I said, I guess it's based on some psychological, you know, studies, but I don't have the background in psychology, unfortunately, and none of the.... definitely no

one else has. So, as I said, I don't think even if we asked those questions, I don't think we would be able to actually make conclusions. Any conclusion based on the answers.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay. So do you know if they use them only for sales people? Or also for someone else full time working?

Bella:

I'm not sure to be honest. I don't know. I would, I would guess that for most people that are hired full time. But that's my pure guess. Because it's a very long time since the company was hiring someone else full time than the salesperson. So, I don't know.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And what do you think, you know, personally, just in general, do you think that there are jobs that it's more useful for? You know, like, is there a difference? Like you don't need them when you're hiring an IT guy, but it's more useful when you're hiring a salesperson? What do you think personally?

Bella:

Mm. Yeah, I think it's more important to do those tests, or like to be sure that the person is a good representation of the company, when it comes to like sales or customer service, just basically anyone who faces or is in contact with, with the clients or customers, just because it can damage the company much more, if you know, in the end, the person isn't a good fit, I guess. So, I would say it's a bit more important for those.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And do you think, in general, that this is actually useful? Like, do you trust the results of the personality tests?

Bella:

Mm. ... Well, I do trust the results that I do, but if it's actually useful, I'm not so sure to be honest. I mean, I don't think I have the experience yet to be able to assess those. Since I am never, you know, I never seen the results or the questions they were actually asking. But since again, since I assume it's based on some psychology studies, then I would say it's probably useful. Yes.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

So, you have never seen... You don't know actually what the people you're hiring are being asked there.

Bella:

Not me necessarily, but I'm pretty sure that you know, my managers do.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay. Do you know who decided that that's going to be a part of the recruitment process in your company?

Bella:

The management. The management, that being the CEO. Since I mean, since it's a small company, you know, it's the CEO who actually still makes a lot of changes and choices there. So that being the CEO and then one more person from the management.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

If you were let's say the HR manager, who would be responsible for these things, would you say suggest doing these personality tests?

Bella:

Mm. Yeah, I think so. I mean, yeah, I would probably keep the same structure as it is now. So not for the student assistants, but for the full-time employees, I guess. Yes. I mean, the thing is that the personality tests are also quite expensive, to be honest. So that's also something that needs to be considered too whether it is actually worth including them or not. But if I had the budget for it, then I would probably.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay. And if you let the interview yourself, would you include some kind of these questions, like what animal you would like to be?

Bella:

Actually, I did lead some of the interviews myself, and I didn't include them. Because as I say, I, myself, I don't see any value in them, because I just, I don't know what it means that someone likes elephant. *(Laughter)*.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

But what if the questions that they are being asked in the personality test are exactly these questions?

Bella:

Well, then I am assuming that the person who actually you know, goes through the answers know what it means and can make some conclusions or some results out of them that makes sense for them, the regular HR people who don't know those.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you think there is a correct answer to what kind of an animal you would like to be?

Bella:

No, no, I don't think so. I just think that, you know, if you say, I would like to be a tiger, then it says something about you like that you are very push through and not necessarily aggressive, but much more like, not shy in any way, you know, going for what you want, and so on.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay, okay. Now, I'm going to a slightly different part. Do you think that the candidate experience is important, you know, how they perceive the recruitment process? If it's pleasant or not? Do you think it is important?

Bella:

Yes, I think it's, it's very important. And that's actually also something. Well, I personally, but also the company in general, is, it's, you know, trying to focus on to make it pleasant for both us, but definitely also for the, for the applicants.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela :

Why do you think it's important?

Bella:

I think there's multiple reasons, but one of them being very, very selfish one, to be honest. And that being you know, if you have a person that had a bad experience during the interview, then there is a chance that they will go around, say bad things about the company, which can hurt the company, obviously. And, you know, also you never know who

you will need to work with at some point. So, it's never good to make enemies. Quotation marks enemies, but yeah. So that, that, I would say, is a very selfish reason, I guess, but it's definitely one of them. And then second reason, well, because I think, you know, people deserve to be treated properly, and in a very good way. So, I would, you know, I wouldn't feel good about my job and myself, if I wasn't trying to do my best to, you know, offer them a pleasant experience during the interview.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you think that there's anything else that could be done to improve the candidate experience?

Bella:

Oh, as in my company, or in general?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

In general. What do you think would help?

Bella:

Mm. Well, I'm gonna say first about my company, because I don't know in general. *(Laughter)*. But I think something that we could and should definitely work on is the response period, to be honest, which I know is also an issue for the applicants, I think. But I think we are quite slow when it comes to decision making process, which is, of course, unpleasant for everyone. But, yeah, unfortunately, we didn't really find more effective way yet. So sometimes it takes us, you know, a month, a month and a half, before people get an answer, which is not ideal, I would say. And in general. ... Nothing comes to my mind now.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

That's fine. No one has ever complained that you have too many rounds, for example, that they don't want to go to do the personality test?

Bella:

Um, no. No, as far as I know, no, but, you know, the reason maybe why no one complained is that like, we are trying to, you know, reject or not reject, but we are trying to only send the people to the next round, only the ones that we really believe would be the right fit. So you

know, for example, since we got 100 applicants, then we already in the first round... Let's say, okay, we got 100 applicants. So then let's say we asked, I don't know, maybe 50 applicants only to send us the motivational letter, and so we the cut by half and then for the interview, it's maybe 10 people or so. So I think that people haven't complained maybe also because even though they don't know, but at least for me, it's like, you know, we are trying to kind bother, the people with more rounds, only if we really believe that they could be the right fit, rather than, you know, sending everyone to the next round. And then people having to do six rounds only to find out that actually, they are not a good fit all hundred people, you know, but no, no one ever complained.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay, that's good. Do you think that there is need for any for new methods in recruitment?

Bella:

Ah, yeah, probably. I mean, as any other industry or as any other department, you know, innovation is always needed. So, I think so for sure.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Any ideas on like, what should be different? What kind of methods?

Bella:

Well, I do have an idea, I have no idea of how to solve it. And it's actually also something we discussed with a friend of mine who also works in HR, is that we basically, basically concluded that it's very hard, almost impossible to be 100% objective. Which is very, you know, which is very bad, in a sense, because I don't think that the recruitment process should be subjective in any way. So, I think I would try to somehow find a way how to, how to make the process more objective even though yeah, as I say, I am not sure if it's possible or how it is possible, because I also don't think that, you know, implementing, like, artificial intelligence in the recruitment process is a good idea. Which would then maybe ensure the objectivity. But since, you know, as for now, and probably for further future, it will be always people assessing people, then it's, it's very hard to stay 100% objective, I would say.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay, so if you were in a situation that you had a not that good feeling about an applicant, how did you work with that?

Bella:

Well, I tried to ignore the feeling to be honest and to force myself to be objective. I am very much aware of me feeling in a certain way. But then I just try to ignore it and not to include it in the recruitment process, because it's not fair towards anyone, I think. So, yeah, basically just try to control it and ignore it. *(Laughter)*.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay, so you don't think it's a gut feeling you should listen to?

Bella:

Mm. ... Well. That depends also on the round which the applicant is in, because if it's you know me reading a CV or a motivational letter, I don't think I have the ability to have like a correct gut feeling. Because basically I don't see a person, I see a piece of paper. So, in that case, I don't think I should follow my gut feeling, because I don't have any proper base for feeling in a certain way. But then of course during the interview or then when showing the person around the company, then it is also... You need to match with the person in a certain way, if the feeling is not right, I would probably take it into consideration a little bit, but I would still try to keep it to minimum to be honest. Because meeting someone for thirty minutes, or an hour, isn't justifiable I think to feel about the person in a certain way.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Okay. Mm. Do you evaluate your recruitment processes in the company? I guess you do. Do you do it on some kind of regular basis or is it just if you make a really bad hire and then you're wondering what happened there.

Bella:

Mm. ... Yeah. Well, that's actually what happened to our... Ok, to answer your question, I don't think we really evaluate our processes on regular basis, so it's more the latter case. If we do really bad hire, and then it's like what the hell happened. *(Laughter)*. Which is actually what happened with the previous salesperson. So, I think that also the reason why the management now also asked for personal test and we took an initial interview first to quote what they said; because we got burned a little bit and they just want to make sure that the hire is the right match for us, because as I said it's a quite big investment for the company when hiring someone and especially when it does not work out.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Yes. So, after bad hire and then... Do you think your manager would say the same? That they want to be objective and that's maybe why they asked for the personality testing at the agency, because then they believe it's objective?

Bella:

Ehh. I would not necessarily say he'd say it's objective, but I think he would probably say it's some type of insurance. That they have someone else saying: Yes, this is a good person. In quotation marks. A good person for the company.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And then I have last questions....

Bella:

Sorry, a last information I just remembered that they at least the agency, we are using, they have some sort of... This is going to sound really bad. They have some sort of a return period and that if you hire a person based on their recommendation and then the person... is hired because and it was not a good fit, we should be able to claim like return of the money, so that might be actually one of the reasons why the company is using it. And I think there is a certain time period, so if the person is... Ok, this is my pure guess, I am not entirely sure again, but I think if the person is fired within the first year, then we should be able to ask for a return.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

That's pretty solid of the agency, that's pretty nice. Thanks. That is interesting.

Bella:

That is actually what happened with again the very first salesperson, because for that person we did not hire him ourselves, we asked that agency to do the hiring process for us. And then since after three months we found out this is not working, they I think not only returned the money, but they also gave us I think two personality tests for free.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

The same agency? So they brought you a bad person and you're still using their personality tests?

Bella:

Laughter. I think this is purely from the perspective of cost-effectiveness. Since you know we have two tests for free, we might as well use it. I mean it's I guess somehow understandable, because everyone can make a mistake, I think it's pretty fair and since their attitude was sincere, since we messed up, we will give you this and that... I think it's quite ok.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok, this will be more maybe... There's no plan for establishing HR that they would want to make it more internal? You do not do hires that often, so you're gonna rely on the agency?

Bella:

I mean the recent hires it was actually us doing it. It was just the very first person we used the agency for. And I think the reason why we decided to hire the second salesperson ourselves to be honest we were quite forced into it, because we paid the agency to find the candidates for us. But after some time, they just came back to us that they can't find any proper candidates. Because again as I said it's quite complicated with our company, because it's really niche, so it's quite hard to attract the right people. So, then we just switched to internal hiring and then personality test as an option to outsource.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

This will be maybe more theoretical if you were a candidate... Have you ever been asked this question what kind of animal you would like to be or colour or something like that?

Bella:

Ok, now you have to let me think. Ehh. ... I don't think so actually to be honest. Or at least I don't remember it, so I don't think so.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

How do you think these questions influence the candidates' experience? When someone is on the interview, and they get this type of a question? What do you think the people think?

Bella:

I mean when I was preparing for interviews, I always had in mind that they could ask those questions, so I googled what the most common HR questions are and tried to come up with

an answer to them. If you already have this in mind because you either you have some experience with doing interviews or with HR in general, then I don't it influences the experience that much. But I can imagine that for someone who has... Maybe it's their first interview or they don't know the processes, it can kinda throw them off. Or I can imagine it would definitely throw me off and my experience would probably be decreased to be honest or be worse, because I would be thinking like what the hell. So, in general I don't think they leave a good impression, if the HR department ask those questions. Because I mean again, my personal opinion is that the general public does not see any purpose in those questions except for you know... The HR department wanting to look smart. *Laughter.*

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok. Ehm... And then I have the I think last question and that is... Do you think there's any justification for these questions? Do you think these questions allow the organisations to select the right employees? Do you think there's any benefit?

Bella:

I mean if there is someone in the company who actually has the ability to assess those questions properly and to get some conclusions out of them, then maybe. Maybe it can reveal a bit more about the person, but I would say rather their personality then their skills and experience you know. But for some reason I don't believe that that many HR managers, assistants whatever have this background. So, in general I would not say so.

[Transcript of interview with Cecilia](#)

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

The first question is what does recruitment process look like in your company? What processes you have, what kind of steps, how many rounds, etc.

Cecilia:

I have experience from both internal and external recruitment, and they differ. What should I describe? My latest job?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

You can describe your latest job, yes.

Cecilia:

Well, I work in external recruitment. That means that I search for the right people. And the right people are whatever the client says is the right people. The usual top requirement is the number of years of experience they should have, then the tools or programming languages they should be able to work with, lastly there is a required level of English. And most companies prefer advanced. Sometimes there's additional requirements such as certifications. So, in ideal case, I would go to LinkedIn, I would put some keywords and I would get a list of people based on the skills or certifications. Then I would look on the list, and select those who have the desired amount of years of experience. And ideally, their profile would be written in English, so I would know that they have at least some level of English language skills. And ideally they would describe at least a bit about the project they have been working on. Clients, or maybe the industry, though... that's not that important. Or the exact names are not. But the industry is usually of interest to the clients, at least vaguely, like financial industry... And then of course the technology they've been working with. But that can be found in the skills section. But sometimes, it's a problem that people have too much there, and maybe they were working with it only a little bit, or long time ago. And you never know that until you ask. But the problem is... There is not that much choice. If you found few people who fulfil all this criteria, you're lucky. So usually you have to go down. Four years instead of five. And... the certifications are sometimes more like a bonus, rather than a requirement. And then you send messages to these people and you hope that they will find the job offer interesting, and if they do, you get to have an interview with them. And then you sometimes realise that the person does not fit, maybe because their English is too weak, or they have not worked with lot of the technologies, or they have lot of weird requirements, or whatever... But if they... Or maybe they are not interested in the job after all, either because of the company or the salary or some other stuff. But basically, there's two steps, looking at their LinkedIn profile, and checking if they fit the requirements given by the client, and then there is an interview, where you check... And you get more details about the projects they worked on, and what kind of technologies they really can work with, and what type of tasks they are used to and so on, and you check if their English is ok... And then if everything fits, and they are interested, then you send them forward to the client. If it does not fit, then you either try to find a different position that could fit them, at a different client, or even totally other place, or you tell them you will get to them later and then you

make up some lie, like the position's been already taken or whatever. Because we're not allowed to tell them: Ohh, your English is not good enough, so I can't send you. Or... Yeah.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Hmm. Could you tell me a bit about how you select your own employees?

Cecilia:

Well, I am not really involved in that. But I can talk about how I used to select internal employees for my previous company. Or employees... Interns. But at least it was internal recruitment.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Yes please, go ahead.

Cecilia:

Well, in certain ways it was similar. I guess you always start with a CV or with LinkedIn profile. I took a look at the CV and then I took a look at the LinkedIn. If the CV looked good... Well, I used the LinkedIn as a guarantee, or not guarantee... It was to see if there were any more details, skills... Something else than in the CV... Or actually... It was more to check if the people have the same in the CV and in the LinkedIn. Because sometimes they had different things in each, and then I did not proceed, because either they were lying, mostly, or they did not bother to align it, or update it. If the people had some experience, the CV looked reasonable, and there were no discrepancies, then I invited them for an interview. I mean, I received around 60-70 applications on my job ad. And in the beginning, I really wanted to go through all the applications, and answer everybody, but... After some time, I realised that there's lot of people just trying it, and that there are lot of people who are not even able to follow some very clear instructions, so I also gave up. And once I had some... enough candidates... I mean, I ranked them. I invited them for the interview in the order I thought they were, in the ranking on how good it was. So, CV plus LinkedIn, sometimes, rarely, there was a cover letter. That was always a plus. Because it provided some more details, it expressed the interest, I could of course see that some of the letters were generic, and that these applicants used them all the time, but I mean, it's fine, it's more of a introduction, or...

presentation of yourself, and explaining some basic stuff, like: Yes, I am studying marketing, so I would like to gain some experience... blah blah blah. But at least you could see that the person can express themselves properly. Or at least in the written form. So... And then the interview. We started with a writing test. Some of the questions were like this... E.g. Are you an organised person? How do you manage your time to be efficient? I mean, who's gonna say: I am not organised at all, and I hate organising stuff. I always keep things to the last minute. I am exaggerating of course and... I mean it's not a bad question, especially in combination with the other... the following that encourages you to actually prove your statement by adding some details... But...Who's gonna answer honestly? I have never seen anyone writing that they are not organised. Not once. Hm. No. I think we can subconsciously... I think we can all sense somehow what the right answer is. Or at least what the wrong answer would be. It was quite important to be organised to be somewhat successful in the internship, it was not for people who can't organise themselves, but does the question have a meaning when you don't answer truthfully? Maybe in order to make you understand that it is important to be organised in order to succeed, on the other hand, do you know any jobs where it is isn't important? Also, the question: Why did you choose our company? If it's not famous, and it's doing nothing interesting, it's hard to come up with an answer. I read so many times kind of the same answer. When someone was actually able to come up with something interesting and new, he immediately had a point though. But I would never judge anyone on this question because it's really hard. If the writing test showed decent English and decent answers... It also happened that the English was fine, but the answers were weird and arrogant... Then we did the talking part in the end. I also asked some of that stupid questions like where do you see yourself in five years... We had them on the list... We did not have to use them, but they were there as recommended... But the whole point with this question was to realise if the person had some kind of vision. Those who knew why they needed the internship and what they wanted to do next tended to perform way better than those who were... less certain about what they would like to do. If a person said, I study organisational psychology and I'd love to work in the HR one day, it made sense. Unlike a person who said: Well, it sounds interesting. Because a person with a more long-term goal will keep going in order to reach that goal, while a person who was just interested may realise this is not that interesting after all and I am going to quit. But if their English was good and their answers reasonable... Or basically, there were three main things,

apart from English, I was looking for. Determination, goal, the will to keep going. Ability to work alone. There was not much help. Also, those who need to be part of team would feel very lonely, you were very much on your own. And lastly, the ability to create a structure in your days. The management was results oriented. They did not care about the process, only about the outputs. But if you did not know how to reach the outputs... So, if the person had good English, reasonable motivation, self-sufficiency, and some goal ideally with the internship, then I took them.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

I guess you partially answered already, but how did these steps helped you to decide if the person is a fit?

Cecilia:

The CV was only really important if the person had some relevant experience. But since these people sought internship, quite a few of them did not. Then it only mattered in the sense that I could see how much effort they put into the CV. If they had some experience, it was definitely a plus point. If not, but they had a nice cover letter or the CV and... or LinkedIn showed effort and interest, I would still invite for the interview. The will to do something was more important than the skills, I'd say. If they had too much experience, such as they were working full-time for some years, I was not sure they would stay because it would be too easy for them, but some of them I invited nonetheless, or at least one, but she accepted a full-time position then. So, I was right in a way. The communication before the interview was also a step. Is the person reliable? Polite? If the person forgot about the interview or ran seriously late, I would not continue the process. The interview helped me to understand their motivation, get to know them, and help me to assess the three things I mentioned before... The determination, self-reliance, and ability to organise their days. But it was more about listening to them talking about their studies and student lives, rather than asking them directly: Are you able to work alone? Are you organised? It resulted from them talking about their part-time jobs and how they approached them and similar. If I had some doubts, they were cleared during the interview. I had very few cases, maybe one... That I was left wondering. Usually, it was quite a clear yes, or no for me. On the other hand, it was also easy positions I was filling-in. Not some senior management or CEOs. So, experience, English, motivation, reliability, or the ability to organise.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok. Did your organisation use personality testing? Namely questions of the following type:
What animal would you like to be? What colour would you like to be?

Cecilia:

I have never been part of a company that used them. We had some questions that we were recommended to ask, some we had to ask... But none of them was... like this... like: What would you like to be...

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Why do you think they opt not to use it?

Cecilia:

Hmm. No one would know what the answers are supposed to mean. Like if you said that you want to be an elephant... I don't know. I heard some of the "correct answers" to these questions. You are supposed to say that you would like to be a mole! Because you can't see him, only the results of his work. But everyone hates the results of his work. No one wants piles of dirt on their garden, or in their flowerbeds. It makes no sense! Why would you want to be a hated animal?! That makes damage?! (*Laughter*). Or the colour... You're supposed to say dark blue, because that's the colour of the business, or green because that's the colour of money. At least in the U.S. But I mean if I said red, people would think I am aggressive? Or what? It's ridiculous, and more importantly people will not answer honestly. People could imagine what some of the animals could be linked to... And... To answer your question: I think there are very few people who would know what to conclude from these answers. And I honestly think the management did not care about what colour people want to be. They were not interested. They gave us questions they judged to be the best practice in HR and wanted us to find people who are willing to work. Most people really only care about what you can do and how much are you willing to work.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok. How do you think these questions influence the candidates' experience?

Cecilia:

I think people get uncomfortable. Like sensing the trap. I think people are tired of the game.

Because do they really evaluate you based on this? You think hard about what to answer, and maybe they already decided based on your language skills or something else, more tangible. I think people are sceptical and... I don't think people like it. I heard one guy saying it was interesting being asked about who he'd go to dinner with, because he has never been asked that before. But maybe he was just polite and did not want to tell me. But I mean we had a few client companies where we had trouble. (*Cecilia is now talking about her current job in the external recruitment*). Because the interviews with the HR were really weak. And people complained. It was actually exactly the same company. There was an HR with a habit to ask these weird questions. And the IT people are especially not interested in this. They want to talk technology, not... This. But most people don't. I have never heard anyone saying anything positive about this. About personality testing. And yeah... There was even one company where the candidates did not want to go for an interview. Just because of this. They were also asking these questions like: How many tennis balls would fit in this room. Or how many cars do you think pass out on the street each minute. That's not a personality testing, I guess, I just think people are... People don't like any of this. I think most people have hard time seeing the point. Of these mysterious HR questions. I think most people are going to interviews nervous and guarded. Asking them weird questions... I think most people do not see the point and on top of that it makes them even more nervous. I would be for sure wondering. And it's hard to see what the point exactly is with this... I cannot imagine anyone being excited about this, especially if you really care about the job. I think most people are convinced it's just some weird HR stuff. I can imagine having it any...beneficial...or positive effect. On the contrary, making people nervous... And annoyed.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you... or did the company evaluate the recruitment process?

Cecilia:

What do you mean exactly?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Have they looked at the process from time to time and thought about what worked well and what did not? Perhaps even on a regular basis?

Cecilia:

No, none of the companies I was part of did that. They had their procedures and as long as they would function at least somewhat, they would keep it the way it is. In the internal recruitment, they wanted us to come up with some suggestions, but they never did anything. Never changed anything. No, no evaluation at all. But I was. In the interviews I led. I was thinking about what worked well, which... What things the good candidates had in common. Which questions yielded more interesting answers, or how to get to know certain things. So, I evaluated my interviews.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Ok. Do you think there are any types of jobs where these questions would be more useful, or appropriate to use?

Cecilia:

Ehh. Maybe if you were looking for an executive or something really important high-up there. Because if you had let's say even only three candidates, who all had lot of experience, years of experience, great results, big companies and brands... they worked for big companies and brands... How would you choose between them? Maybe I would look at how they would fit with my culture, or if they dealt with similar issues we face now in the past, or something along side these lines of a fit with where the company currently is or is going to. But what if you could not find anything... And these people must be very used to the hiring processes and are probably better than most at putting a mask. So maybe if you have candidates who are very hard to judge based on the qualifications... And it's very important the decision... And the personality really matters... Or the likeability... Or the fit with the team.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

You don't think that the personality matters?

Cecilia:

It does of course to the people you will be really working with. But not to the management. As long as there is not too much trouble, the team functions, and delivers... I don't believe they care. Only if the problems are too big that they would have to step-in. But as long as the team functions and has the results it's supposed to have on one cares if the person is

introvert, extrovert, and has great abstract thinking. Nothing that directly influences the job performance interests them. ...

It's different with executives perhaps. If the person stirred conflicts in the C-suite, the impact would be too big. Even the Board could see that something's up and it could seriously affect even the global performance. But not some regional team.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Who do you think put these questions into use? The recruiter, senior management, HR department, C-suite...?

Cecilia:

Who decides how the process will look like? The selection process?

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Yes.

Cecilia:

I think that depends on each company. How big they are. How specialised it's employees are. But I would say the management together with the HR. But I would think that maybe the management decides on the number and type of the rounds, rather than on the precise content. I don't think management decides too often for the HR what they are supposed to ask. I would think they'd say what they want to know, ask the HR to check the basis. But I wonder if they know what kind of questions the HR asks. If... But can you imagine the management telling the HR to ask the person what kind of animal they want to be? Or colour? Or who'd they go to dinner with? Ohh, we will never know if he's a good manager until we know which historic figure he would take for a dinner... *(Laughter)*. So, I think it's up to the individual HR, at least on the interview level. If these questions are part of some more sophisticated application process than the management could be involved. But I still doubt it.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

How do you think these questions allow organisations to select the right employees?

Cecilia:

I think that only companies who have too many applicants waste time with this. ... Or... I think that if you have way more applicants than... you can reasonably process, you need to... You need to... Reduce the number easily, divide them... If you have fifty or more applicants for a student role... You'll ask for experience, probably not gonna be that impressive at this level. So, let's say you have thirty with some somewhat interesting experience. Then you can take a look at grades. Twenty of them have decent grades. Then you read the cover letters. Fifteen of them are ok. But no one wants to invite fifteen people for an interview. Then you can make them solve some games, answer weird questions, shoot a video of themselves. They probably don't even read the cover letter, too much work. They'd rather look at a two-minute video. Less work. So, I think it comes to how many applicants you need to deselect. The more applicants, the more rounds in an attempt to... to find that one, while spending as little effort and time on your side. If you have only couple applicants, you need to treat them better and you also have motivation to dig deeper. Take longer time talking to them. So, it's a tool how to easily see who can answer weird questions the best, and maybe sometimes you see an interesting answer. And when you decide between who to invite for an interview and who not, this could decide as the last resort, how you've handled the test and if you sound likeable and honest and motivated and what not through your answers.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

You mentioned treating the applicants better. Do you think that candidates have a good experience on the job market?

Cecilia:

No, definitely not. Based on my own experience and everyone I know. I have never heard anyone say: I am going to look for a job and I am so much looking forward to it. It's one of the most dreadful, unpleasant experiences. Stressful.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Why do you think is that?

Cecilia:

Because of all the waiting. Companies pressure people to start as soon as possible, but when it comes to them answering and moving the process forward, it can take even months

sometimes. Weeks when you're just hanging and waiting, even have to ask for the feedback or what's going to happen yourself! That you need to remind people you're still there. And I don't mean in cases that they are not interested. They might be and they still forget about you. And second, it's not transparent at all. You do not get any feedback. Or at least nothing honest. Or useful. I get that you chose another candidate, since you have not chosen me. But you are left hanging and wondering if you said something wrong, or if there was simply a more experienced person, or what... It's very much guessing what happened or not.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And do you think the candidate's experience is important?

Cecilia:

Yes. Because they will probably not collaborate with you again, if it wasn't pleasant. Unless again you are some big corporation who has so much prestige that people will just take it. But even then, there are people who might stay away next time. So I think you are losing candidates... shrinking your applicant's pool if you treat people poorly. And it's not a good marketing either. Or good presentation of the company. And sometimes the company that acts more pleasant could win the applicant over, if the offer is otherwise kind of similar, but one of the companies acts friendlier, it could be what decides. It's important, but it's not like companies are acting like it really.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

And how do you think it could be improved?

Cecilia:

Hm. Cut the wait. I mean, you have to know if you want the person to work for you or not. You don't need to wait two weeks or longer. I'd say that the two weeks are a maximum, unless you are waiting for a task... or to evaluate the task I mean. Or test. But people unable to decide if they are interested or not. Even if you have to discuss it with a colleague, you usually know right away if you want to continue with the person. And if you need to compare them to someone else, fine. But then say that you are going to have multiple interviews and give some time range. But anyway, I think they are prolonging the process unnecessary. And if they don't find time to decide about an applicant, then they should not be surprised the applicants are not that eager to work for them. Second, the amount of the

rounds and papers companies want. A CV, a cover letter, a transcript of grades, and two sets of interviews for a junior position. And maybe a test or something to solve. Why should I spend two hours or more writing an original cover letter, when... they will never maybe even read it because they will skim through my CV and just reject me. Why do I have to enclose a transcript of grades, because... maybe... no one even cares and will not take a look at it... Or... Sorry, this is maybe a bit of a rant, but it's so annoying. They ask for so much and in the end they maybe don't even look at half of the things you give them. Or you go through two rounds of interviews, answer weird questions and then they choose the person who has most years of experience anyway. I think they ask for way more than they really need or way more than what they really base their decisions on and it's unfair. To sum it up, cut the waiting time and... How to put it... Focus on the relevant and don't bother people... Or not like that. But focus on the things that are relevant. Streamline the process. Make it more transparent. What's gonna happen and when.

Barbora Hagemann Hontela:

Do you think new selection methods in recruitment are needed?

Cecilia:

Yes. Or not actually. I mean change is needed, but if it has to be something new... I don't know. Maybe. I would say... I think tasks are good. Let's not waste each other's time with an interview, when I don't have what it takes to do the job. Based on a task you can really evaluate a person. And it's fair as well. I think people would accept it more. Because they could understand why the decision was made. Nothing too long or complicated, but something that could easily show if the person has the basic skills, how they approach tasks, and maybe also how they deal with feedback. Because it's hard to give a feedback on... Something personal, like sympathies. Or I mean... It would be difficult to say you act arrogant or your CV looks like a mess... But telling that they did not solve the task right, that could be doable, and it would provide some learning for the people. And it would be great if interviews were more honest, more like a conversation. Not this forced learned sentences...answers. If you could actually talk about what you... seek in a job, and what's the environment like, and so on. Just to be a more honest, and not have to pretend or to guard

yourself too much. The applicant I mean. What's the point anyway? You know, if you... If you can't talk openly.

Field notes

Half-an hour is too much

29th of July 2021, Brno, Czech Republic

I thought this would be easy. I was happy when I got the project assigned. I expected searching for HR person to be easy, at least compared to IT positions. Especially when the offered salary is much higher than the country average and this small town is only slightly bigger than Næstved.

Despite all that, another unsuccessful interview. The person liked everything about the company, except for the half-an hour drive to adjacent town. This is same reason for the fourth time, and I am starting to be desperate.

Another rejection

14th of September, Copenhagen, Denmark

Calling candidates to tell them they received a job offer was one of my favourite parts of the job. Not anymore. Now I am just afraid they will reject, I will have to tell my manager, we will have to resume the work and/or fear competition, and tell the client. The person received another offer, again.

Surprised I understood

12th of October 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark

In the end of the interview, the candidate said that I understood well what he was working on and that for an HR (he was a developer), I was well versed. He said it quite nice, it was actually a compliment. I was one of the best prepared HR he has ever met. It was definitely more pleasant than when I was asked if has to explain the difference between front-end and back-end a week ago or so.

Three rounds are too much

20th of October 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark

Another of my favourite clients. They do not want too much information from us and they offer very attractive benefits. The candidate agreed but complained that three rounds are too much and he is not sure whether he wants to undergo that. Two of the rounds were interviews, so just talking, and everything was going to take place online, he did not need to travel. But I do not think I convinced him.

Is hiring a priority?

5th of November 2021, Brno, Czech Republic

It has been almost two months, since XXX left. Finally, interviews with new candidates were scheduled to this week. I know that we did not receive as many applications, but still, it has been months.

Anne got excited about two of the candidates, I am not sure based on what, I do not see any similar experience. One of them even states in her CV that communication is her weakness. There is one candidate who worked previously as a head-hunter, and she had applied some months back as well. But Anne does not like her.

Anne tried to make sure the interviews will not exceed an hour. She did not include any of the tasks she mentioned during the interview. It was classic unstructured interview as always. I have a feeling she just wants this to be over.

The job and pay are interesting, but that is all

10th of November 2021, Brno, Czech Republic

The client was a company developing anti-fraud detection system for banks. I like interviewing for them, the company is very interesting, and I have lot of information about them. Not to mention, that it is one of the few companies candidates are interested in and we usually get positive reply, i.e. candidates want to apply for the position. As I was used to positive reactions, I was taken by surprise this time. *"Yes, the job sounds interesting. Security, machine learning, and all... The salary is also good. But other than that, they have nothing to offer..."* I understood shortly. The company was successful, but it was not a corporate. They did not offer multi-sport cards, or similar benefits outside of salary such as language courses, spa treatments etc. And this was the reason for rejection.

Candidate tired of the job hunt due to too many offers

19th of November 2021, Brno, Czech Republic

A candidate of mine received a job offer. I was not too excited, since in previous conversations he had not seemed overly excited about the company, and he mentioned interviewing at other companies as well. I called him to share the news. He was not surprised. *“I have two more interviews in the following week, so I need some time before I can give my final answer. After that I would very much like to conclude it and choose one of them. I am tired of the process, so these are the last interviews I am going to absolve and then I will let you know.”*

At this point, I was quite used to the lack of excitement at the candidates' side. This episode stood out to me, as this candidate sounded outright exhausted.

It is about the 10%

2nd of December 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark

I was actually quite hopeful. Three rounds, everyone seemed quite satisfied. But the final offer made by the company is 10% shorter than the minimum expectation stated in the beginning. I am angry with the client. They knew the salary range the candidate was expecting, we always share that information in the beginning. And this is less than his expected minimum. They say he is not that good. If he asked 10% less, then he would be good for this senior post? If he went 10% down, they would hire him though he is not that good? Can 10% make up for the quality of his work? This seems as if he was a cracked egg to be put on discount. It does not matter he did not accept.

Lack of feedback

13th of December 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark

As the year is slowly coming to an end, we need to make sure that matters are closed and settled. During this process it was noticed that we have not received feedback for several of our candidates and it has been up to three weeks in some cases. There is in particular one client who takes very long before inviting candidates for an interview and equally long to make a decision about them. Unfortunately, there are more such clients than just one. It is interesting how fast we must be when we search for the candidates, but there are quite a few clients who then lose the candidates due to lengthy internal decision-making.

Me as a candidate

31st of January 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark

Today the interview finally took place. She postponed it due to sickness and then forgot to schedule a new time with me. I know she is very busy, and that is why she is searching for someone to take over part of her responsibilities, but I cannot say I was pleased. During the interview she asked me on my stance on psychological testing. I answered that I research it as we speak. She said that she thinks it is a nonsense. But it is up to the new HR manager (the role I was interviewing for) to decide whether to use such thing or not. The budget is there, so it is up to the person.

One of the questions I asked was about the hiring process and how the other managers communicate their needs to her. She said they usually give her a list of requirements and she is the one who needs to chase them, make them to sit with her and discuss it. Just for fifteen minutes or so. She said she often then realises they do not need the person or not as a full-time employee and she advised me to make sure I press the managers to discuss the hire with me to make sure I know everything I need to make the right decision. I hoped and thought that internal HR worked differently. That I would not need to chase people to discuss their hiring requirements with me.

Reflection

I would suggest that project work is a hallmark of Danish education. As a person who would prefer to do everything on their own at any given chance, it was an important part of the education for me, since it is highly unlikely I will not have to face group work or project work in my future career. It helped to reduce my dislike for group work, since I came to strongly appreciate certain aspects/phases of it, especially: brainstorming or different ways to generate new ideas, the possibility to discuss the formal requirements of projects and make sure I understood them, and sharing the peer experience as we are faced with the same. I also came to appreciate the possibility to practice working in group: learning to handle the more difficult situations such as disagreements, learning to work with different types of people, and observing my own role and behaviour in the group.

While I experienced group work in two other educational institutions in Denmark as well, I would like to highlight that RUC offered high degree of freedom to pursue our interests. I was highly interested in HR and had the chance to discuss this area in all three of the semester projects I completed during my studies. I highly appreciate that, and I am convinced that it is very beneficial to be able to explore one's interests and build a future job profile. The projects contributed to my development in the following ways: my formal writing skills have increased, my ability to read and comprehend academic literature has increased, my ability to partake in research has dramatically increased, my knowledge of the topics of the projects has greatly increased, my ability to cooperate with others has increased, the projects sparked new interests and thoughts, and I gained understanding of philosophy of science which I never had before.

I have not participated in the thesis seminar. I was working full-time at the time and did not achieve the flexibility or balance I needed. This resulted in postponing the thesis and my decision to terminate the employment in order to finish my education.

Nevertheless, I could rely on the support structure created by RUC, materials provided, my supervisor, and my classmates, thus I did not feel too lost. I hold PBA degree in International Sales and Marketing from Copenhagen Business Academy. This master programme allowed me to get more in-depth understanding of broader topics as opposed to the narrow approach of the bachelor education. While the bachelor education's goal seemed to be to show us how it is done and give us some tools to go and do it, the master programme let me to explore why it is done in that way and if there could not be better ways to do it. After finishing my PBA degree, I was also worried that now I am doomed to a marketing or sales career as my profile seemed to be given by the education. The master's degree allowed me to reshape and reconsider my career choices. The first project allowed me to explore HR seriously for the first time, the internship allowed me to gain my first practical experience in HR, and now my master thesis will demonstrate my interest and knowledge within the field. While I have the opportunity to return to my former employer, I am not going to do so. Firstly, I am going to remain in Denmark. Secondly, I do not wish to continue to work in the external recruitment, instead I wish to work in internal HR and perhaps also to explore other areas of HR.