

Niche Update

Special points of interest:

- Reactions to Feedback and Defensive-ness
- Caution around using assessments in redundancy
- Setting meaningful goals

Feedback Reactions – Implications for Leadership Development



Sheldon, Dunning and Ames (2013) did a study on reactions to feedback and found something many of us in the HR and psychology field have noticed but had no empirical research to back-up our observations. They found that most people had an overly optimistic view of their expertise and the prevalence of inflated view was higher in those who were least skilled. This added to previous research that had shown there are low correlations between actual and perceived managerial skill. Many managers overrate their competence and seem to lack an accurate self-perception of their skills. However, this new research shows us another phenomenon - the most unskilled are also the most unaware of their actual performance level. In addition, they found those who were “unskilled and unaware” were also the least likely to take on board the feedback provided. Low performers on the assessment of skills were also less likely to do any self-improvement following feedback.

It appears the low performers tended to discount the feedback accuracy or relevance thereby enabling them to decide to do little about the feedback. On the other hand, top performers who had less developmental areas still had a stronger desire to improve their performance through self-improvement activities such as reading or being coached. The intentions to improve performance were correlated positively with actual performance. Unfortunately those who need the least improvement tend to work on themselves more and yet those who need the most improvement tend to be defensive about the feedback and less interested in self-development activities.

So what can be done to overcome the feedback defensiveness? The study’s authors’ suggestions are in line with best practice on giving coaching feedback, where the feedback should focus on specific behaviours and avoid making more general statements about competence or character. Ideally the feedback should be more frequent and given in smaller chunks so the feedback is less of a monumental event for the individual. By doing so you may reduce defensiveness and make it easier for the individual to take on board feedback which should also allow them to more openly consider self-development activities.

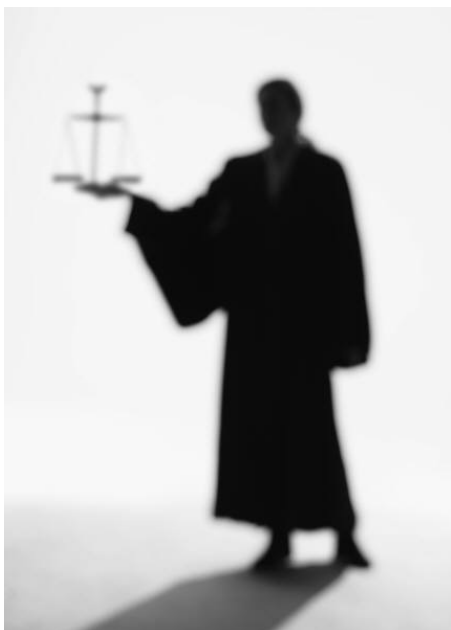


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Using Psychometric Assessments in Redundancy Situations

A recent employment court decision (2013 NZEmpC 71 CRC 46/10) shows that companies need



to be very cautious about using psychometrics to assist in making decisions about who should stay and who should go in redundancy situations. This is a quote from the court decision *“In relation to psychometric tests, the Court held that the company's refusal to disclose the test scores, combined with its inability to have access to the proprietorial intellectual property of the testing organisation (such as questions asked and answers given) was not consistent with the duty of good faith under s 4(1A) of the Employment Relations Act 2000. This was one illustration of the dubious value of using a psychometric testing tool, designed for recruitment and managerial promotion, to determine which employees should be made redundant. The Court observed that employers who use testing procedures that they do not fully understand and are not permitted to know about, will have difficulties when challenged to justify a dismissal effected in reliance on such systems.”* The court found the plaintiff was

unjustifiably dismissed by the defendant even though the company had quite an elaborate and in-depth process to make decisions about who would be given the remaining positions.

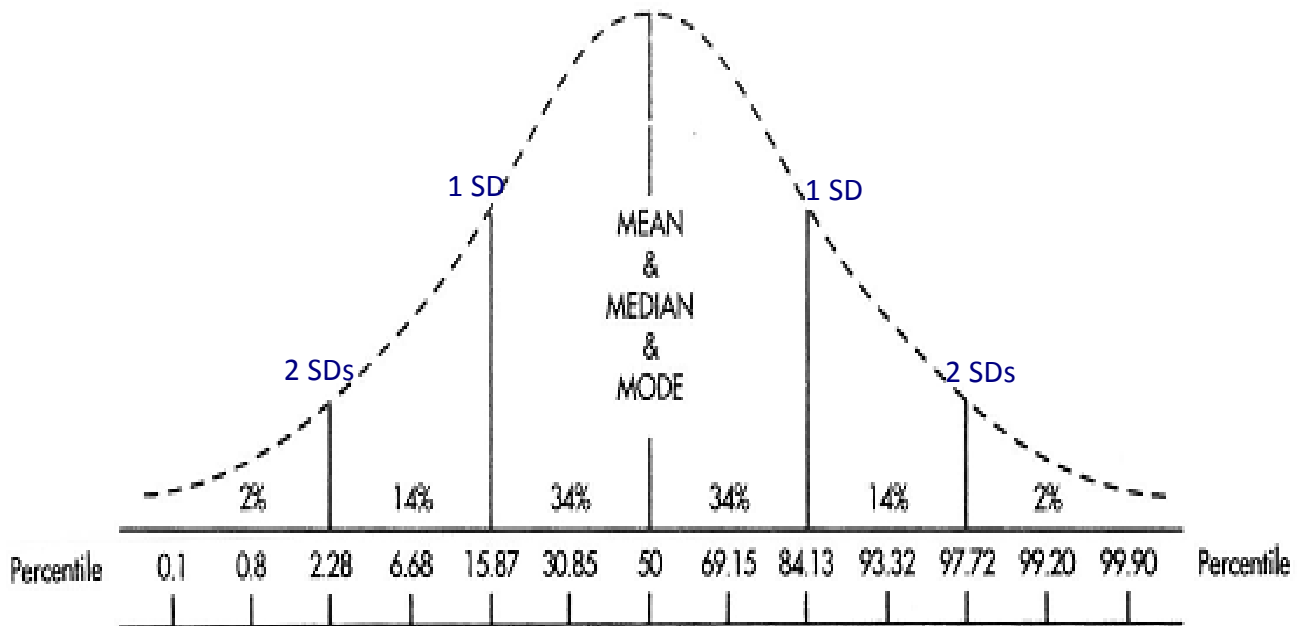
In the redundancy process the company utilised interviews and ability and personality assessments, however the court judged the company failed to take into account technical skills and past experience as part of the reviews criteria. The court found the company failed to act in good faith as it used assessment tools that the company could not explain to the affected employees and were not weighted appropriately against other criteria. The company had used internal staff to administer and interpret the tools, however their competence was questioned by the judge as they could not appropriately explain what the test measured and how it measured it to the plaintiff.

In summary the court said *“That is not to say that the defendant did not go to considerable trouble and expense to establish a process to determine which employees would be dismissed, nor to say that in some respects it did not meet the statutory test. But adopting complex, lengthy and expensive processes is no substitute for doing, and getting, it right when it comes to redundancy dismissals.”* This case highlights the need for psychometric tests to be used appropriately by trained personnel, as well as giving past experience weighting in the decision making, otherwise a company can leave itself open to being legally challenged in redundancy situations.



Change to the Range descriptors used for Ability Test Norms

For continuity reasons, Neisha and her team have used the same ranges for describing the ability test score results as were used by Hudson (formerly Morgan & Banks) when she worked there. However, we feel these need revision as they are a bit misleading of how far away from the norm a score is in percentiles.



You can see from the above graph all scores that are above 30th and below 70th percentile are within ½ a standard deviation (SD) of the mean and therefore are within the average. All scores that are between 16-30th or 70-84th percentile are one standard deviation away from the mean and all scores below 16 or above 84th percentile are more than one standard deviation away from the mean. In most cases, the interpretations for the tests will not change, only the labels used to describe the range the result falls into. This change will take place from 23rd September 2013. You will see below how the new ranges will impact on the descriptors that are used for the ability test results:

Percentile Results	Old Range Descriptors	Percentile Results	New Range Descriptors
0 - 29 th	Low	0 - 15 th	Low
30 - 39 th	Below Average	16 - 30 th	Below Average
40 - 49 th	Lower Average	31 - 69 th	Average
50 - 59 th	Average	70 - 84 th	Above Average
60 - 69 th	Above Average	85 - 100 th	Superior
70 - 79 th	Superior		
80 - 89 th	Very Superior		
90 - 100 th	Outstanding		

How to Set Meaningful Goals

Goal setting is something many of us forget to do and it is both an easy and rewarding process. When we set our mind on something, by making it a goal, we unleash our creative subconscious to assist us in getting the things we want. For instance, think of a time you last went to buy a car. Once you have decided on the make and model you are interested in, have you noticed something happens? You suddenly see lots of this make and model on the road when you are out and about. This is your subconscious assisting you in achieving your goal—it looks for things that will facilitate the attainment of the goal.

So think through all the things you want from life and write these down on paper. Once you have lots of ideas try to get them down to 6 things you really want and are passionate about. Now you have the goal you want you need to put some structure around it. We recommend you write the goal in the following format:

“By (date), I’ll (verb) (goal).”



For example, “By **January 2014**, I will have **saved \$10,000**” or “By **2015**, I will be **promoted** to a **senior management role**”. Now go and share your goal with others or keep a list on your wall or fridge, you will be amazed at how things seem to happen that are instrumental in assisting in your goal achievement.

For those who worry that setting goals may restrict them — don’t worry you can always change your goals or the dates you want to achieve them by — they are after all your goals. Go for it.

Spring is finally here - Christmas is just around the corner



When this newsletter went to print there only just over 100 days until Christmas, but the good news is spring is finally here. Enjoy....

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.

~ Anne Bradstreet