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I f you’re a large organisation and would like to assess 700 employees to see if they are fit for a promotion, how long would it take if you used a traditional assessment centre (AC)?

Six months, said long-time human resources (HR) professional and CEO of Accendo, Sharma KSK Lachu.

If you’re looking at managing the logistics for a very large group and putting together 700 reports manually, this process is just not viable, he added.

“A big challenge is that by the time the senior management team or board members request for the results, it would be a few months after the assessments were conducted and the data—by then—would have become outdated.”

In the previous article, we mentioned that traditional ACs fall short in terms of generating forward-looking data and in meeting an organisation’s need for speed, scale and analytics.

The virtual assessment centre (VAC) is a good example of a platform that leverages technology to resolve this.

A VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

The VAC is similar to a traditional AC in that it comes equipped with multiple tools which are mapped to behavioural competencies. It has game-based assessments, cognitive assessments, psychometric tests, and case studies, to name a few. One obvious difference is that these tools are administered online and reports are generated automatically.

With the VAC, assessing and generating reports for 700 employees would take just two weeks, according to Sharma.

IMPACT ON DECISIONS

How do you know if your employees are competent enough to meet the organisation’s new strategy?

Predictive analytics is able to tell you. The VAC by Accendo for instance, comes with a predictive analytics solution—the IBM Watson Talent insight.

With the VAC, said HR professionals now get “to see the decisions that you need to eventually make.”

“You get to see how many [employees] are ready for a promotion, how many require development and what sort of development is needed.”

Through the use of such a tool, Hewitt gave an example that organisations in ASEAN have discovered that younger hires tend to perform better. “They found that people aged under 29 were 33% less likely to be promoted than those above 30, yet they performed up to 32% better.”

DO WE STILL NEED TRADITIONAL ACs?

One might ask, how can machines accurately study facial expressions, tonality, vocabulary and body language?

Through the use of facial recognition technology, machine learning and behavioural science of course.

Take negotiation skills as an example. “An individual goes through an online simulation. The machine is constantly learning from the way he/she responds, and constantly gives them challenges based on their skills,” Sharma shared.

In fact, according to Accendo’s head of product design, Danny Too, the system is able to do things like measure one’s pupil dilation, the number of times they mention certain key terms and even detect their emotions.

However, the team at Accendo believes that no matter how engaging and convenient the technology is, a real-life, face-to-face interaction is still necessary, especially when it comes to measuring nuanced behaviours and assessing candidates for more senior or critical roles.

A blended approach is something Accendo and IBM would recommend.

Accendo’s strategic account manager Ashvin Nair suggested that for the first phase, candidates can be evaluated using the VAC. In the next phase, once the cream of the crop have been selected, they can be further evaluated using a blend of tools, both virtual and physical.

Ultimately, it boils down to the needs and goals of the organisation. From there, HR technology experts such as Accendo can come in to help determine what sort of assessment and tools are the best fit for your organisation.