

CODESP NEWS

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LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

CODESP staff has spent much of the last two months traveling throughout California. Recent visits include districts in the Hanford, Visalia, Fresno, McFarland, Delano, Sanger, Turlock, Atwater, Chico and Red Bluff areas. These visits not only provided training to district staff regarding CODESP services, but it also provided us with valuable information about the concerns and needs of some of our members.

One common misconception that was discovered during these travels was that CODESP is a private corporation, which is far from the truth. We are a self supporting public agency with a staff consisting of classified employees, each with prior school district experience.

The Cooperative Organization for the Development of Employee Selection Procedures (CODESP) is a joint powers agency currently made up of 162 public school districts primarily in California. It began in early 1973 with the purpose of agencies sharing resources and working together to develop job-related selection procedures for classified positions. This initial project proved to be successful and has evolved in response to the needs of a growing membership.

Today training opportunities are still offered on a regular basis through general membership training meetings, support staff meetings, and individual meetings with CODESP staff.

CODESP has also has proven to be extremely helpful to small districts where the director or assistant superintendent has neither a background in psychometrics nor trained staff support to properly conduct job analyses and administer employment tests.

Large districts have also realized the cost effectiveness that membership provides by elimination of the need to hire additional staff members to develop job related test materials.

If you have further questions regarding CODESP services, visit our website at: www.codesp.com.

San Diego Area MTM

The **March 23rd** Membership Training Meeting will be held at the **Vista Unified School District** from 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon. The speaker will be Mike Wheeler, who will be discussing *Improving Your Interview Reliability*.

Interviews can be a reliable testing method to evaluate communication skills and can be effective in gathering detailed information about a candidate's experience, if they are used effectively. Mike will provide participants with valuable suggestions on getting the most out of the interview process. CODESP staff will also be presenting new interviews that are available to members.

Mike has been a frequent speaker at CODESP, WRIPAC and CSPCA meetings. He is a Personnel Research Analyst with the City of Los Angeles and teaches at local community colleges.

Vista USD is located at 1234 Arcadia Ave., Vista.

HIGH DESERT MTM

CODESP staff will be presenting *Effective Test Administration Planning*, on **April 27**, at the **Victor Valley Union High School District** from 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon.

The meeting will include topics such as:

- Recruitment essentials
- How to conduct a simple job review
- Components of a well developed test
- Practical uses of supplemental applications
- Getting the most out of your interview
- Performance test administration basics
- Analyzing test results

Victor Valley Union High School District is located at 16350 Mojave Drive, Victorville.

PASS POINT CONSIDERATIONS

When a cutoff score on a written examination is set the assumptions are made that those above a particular score are qualified and those below the score are not qualified. Generally the cutoff score determines whether an applicant will proceed in the selection process. Unfortunately, no matter how much effort we put in the examination planning and development process, tests are imperfect and some qualified candidates will have lower test scores than some less qualified candidates. To be practical, unless score banding is used, a single score must be chosen as the pass point.

Historically many agencies have used the 70% pass point which has no bearing on any job-related, technical, or administrative, considerations. It has been accepted by tradition and does play a psychological role in some candidates minds as the point they want to achieve to pass the test. Although test scores in the range of 55% and 75% can be considered passing, depending on the job classification and difficulty of the examination, passing points outside these ranges, even though sometimes appropriate, suggest that the test was too difficult or too easy.

Many public agencies use a floating pass point to determine the cutoff score. Some look for a point where there is a gap in the range of scores, but like the 70% pass point it should only be considered if the gap falls in a spot in the range where there were job-related and technical reasons for setting the pass point.

Administrative concerns, although not as important as those that are job-related and technical, cannot be ignored. One of the most important administrative concerns is the number needed to fill vacancies. It is important to consider the number of applicants that you will need to have on the final eligible (or hiring) list. If your agency has rules as to the time a list must be kept viable, then consider the anticipated life of the list. If you anticipate a long list life and few candidates, you probably don't want to be as strict with your pass points. If you are anticipating a short list life and a lot of candidates and you feel that knowledges and skills can be easily determined and candidates can be ranked from scores received through the written test format, you may want to be more strict with your pass point. Sometimes there are only a few openings and it may project false hope for those individuals who have passed, but will never be considered. If the position is one where there are frequent openings, or where the individuals on the list are highly employable and will not wait long before finding other employment, a long list may be needed.

Another administrative consideration is minimizing adverse impact on women and ethnic minorities when setting pass points. It would not be in the organization's best interest to lower pass points to the point where candidates will not possess the minimum qualifications necessary to perform the job just to increase the likelihood of passing candidates in protected groups, but sometimes by adjusting the pass points by a few points will decrease potential adverse impact.

Of course there are other considerations such as political and union considerations. Public agencies must consider the political environment in which personnel decisions are made, and the public and current employee scrutiny to which such decisions are viewed. No human resource staff member looks forward to protests over pass points. Union contracts and personnel policy manuals must also be reviewed to make sure that current rules don't already dictate pass points. It is always better to be up front with employees, the union, and the public when setting pass points.

Remember that even the best tests are not perfect and there are going to be times when you will pass a candidate who really should not pass, and fail a candidate who really should pass. By careful job review or analysis, choosing job-related examination materials, and post-test item analysis this problem will be greatly reduced.

EXAM SCORING & ANALYSIS

CODESP members are encouraged to take advantage of our scoring and test analysis services. After generating an exam using our computerized item bank, C-CIB, we have the ability to produce a detailed item analysis and candidate test report. The roster report breaks down candidate scores from highest to lowest. The analysis also provides details on each test question which can be very helpful in planning your next administration of the exam. In order to expedite the exam scoring process we can fax you test results the day we score them. *Requirements for this service are that your district uses one of the following compatible Scantron forms: F-288-ERL-L; F-289-ERI-L; F-1712-ERI-L; F-11852-ERI-L; and X-101864-L. To order forms directly from Scantron call: 800-722-6876 x2645.*

DETECTING DECEPTION

When interviewing job applicants or conducting harassment investigations, it is often necessary for HR professionals to determine if a person is telling the truth. Detecting deception is usually done by observing nonverbal cues or by listening to stories that don't make sense. A recent study found that detecting deception is harder when a person is trying to make other types of judgments (e.g., job qualifications) than when the person's sole task is to look for signs of deception. This study suggests that if HR professionals are concerned about possible deception, it might be a good idea for two people to be present in an interview: one to ask the questions and evaluate credentials and the other to observe signs of possible deception.

James A. Forrest and Robert S. Feldman. (2000). "Detecting Deception and Judge's Involvement: Lower Task Involvement Leads to Better Lie Detection." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Volume 26, Number 1, 118-125.

Why is Experience Becoming Obsolete?

According to a recent article in the IPMAAC Newsletter, recruiters often complain there is a shortage of qualified candidates and that a good portion of the "shortage" comes from an over reliance on the number of years of experience a candidate has. It used to be that accumulated experience meant a great deal but in the 1990's that all began to change as a result of the growth of technology.

For example experience repairing typewriters might have no applicability in the computer age and experience doing 1040 tax forms for an accountant might now have zero value when all returns are calculated by a tax software package.

This means that we can no longer rely on the old belief that "more experience is better" in an applicant. As products and processes change at Internet speed, "the old way" loses value so fast that things done as little as 6 months ago can easily become "history" with no direct value.

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NEW TEST ITEMS

This past month CODESP staff added 150 new multiple choice test items to the Custodial; Carpenter (Facilities/Construction), Instructional Aide, Maintenance, and Word Processing item banks.

If your district has subject matter experts who are available to develop or review items, please contact us.

TEST SECURITY

Recently CODESP staff has received C-CIB Requests from individuals who are not listed on the security agreement. If we see a name we do not recognize, we will contact the Human Resource Department for verification. Just because a district is a CODESP member does not mean that ANY employee can have access to test materials. Please advise your district staff of the security agreement requirements.

NEW WEB FEATURES

In our constant quest to provide helpful web site features at www.codesp.com we have created a "members only" area. This area cannot be accessed unless you have a password. New features include sample **job descriptions** and the **CODESP Handbook**. If you do not receive a password, give us a call.

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As human resource professionals, we need to realize that candidates with 10 years of experience in a brand new field, such as web design, do not exist (because the field is so young). Experiences these candidates had 2 years ago using antiquated tools, materials, and processes may now have zero applicability in the world of work. The declining value of experience is even more pronounced in the IT world. Knowing Windows 95 or Lotus 123 may totally lose its value in as little as 3 years. The floppy disc is considered a dinosaur and fax machines are losing their popularity.

If the field is changing rapidly what people can do in the next few months or year is more important than what they did last year. Asking them how they can/would handle future problems might be a better exercise than counting the years on a resume.

If you cut out the "ancient history" experience (over 5 years old) you will find that you get a much larger applicant pool without sacrificing any skills or useful knowledge. To do this you should reduce (or eliminate) the number of years requirement in your job descriptions and replace them with "the demonstrated ability to solve problems with the required level of difficulty". Use simulations and ask candidates to solve actual problems in order to assess an applicant's ability rather than indirectly through their years of experience. Future oriented interview questions can be developed to assess a candidate's ability to forecast and solve "upcoming" problems. Managers need to be trained to put less weight on experience during interviews and more on the candidate's previous accomplishments and current abilities to solve actual problems they will encounter on the job.

Ability to perform is what matters most and haven't done it doesn't mean can't do it. Remember seniority may mean more years of experience but may not mean more performance.

Excerpts from: *Experience—it "ain't what it used to be"*, Dr. John Sullivan, IPMAAC/CAN, April, 2000.

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