Chapter 1
Determining the Requirements for E-Selection in a Small Recruitment Company:
Using the Regulative Cycle

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ABSTRACT

The requirements for e-selection technology to be of practical use for Company T have been investigated. Company T's main business is in identifying and seconding personnel, especially in the technical sector, and it had been anticipating a shortage in the supply of candidates. This served as the initial problem definition for this research. In order to cope with the expected situation, speed and accuracy were seen as of major importance in adopting e-selection. Using interviews, eleven issues were identified across two topics: namely, the use of web-based technologies, i.e., speed, and the use of personal characteristics, i.e., accuracy. These eleven potential problems were ranked using a focus group. Then, based on contemporary literature, solutions were proposed to counter these problems. Combining these solutions has led to a design in which it is proposed that valid psychological instruments should be applied and interpreted by skilled professionals. Further, extensive knowledge sharing is seen as vital when dealing with the large amount of tacit knowledge associated with the work at Company T. Finally, it was concluded that the web-based technologies should primarily support the core day-to-day work activities rather than be user-friendly or provide additional functionality.

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INTRODUCTION

The application of new technologies to aspects of human resource management (HRM) has shown an increasing trend, and HRM is expected to continue to be affected by continuing technological changes (Ruël, et al, 2004; Strohmeier, 2007). However, most of such new technologies are applied to basic HRM practices (Lepak and Snell, 1998; Ruël, et al, 2004; Wright and Dyer, 2000). The reasons seen for implementing new technologies were mainly related to reducing costs, by improving efficiency and effectiveness, and to removing recruiter bias through far-reaching automation (Chapman and Webster, 2003; McManus and Ferguson, 2003).

These trends were being experienced at a small recruitment company in the eastern part of the Netherlands, referred to here as Company T. Their main business is in the secondment of personnel, especially in the technical sector (especially mechanical and electrical engineers). In addition, they offer a wide range of HRM consultancy activities to organizations, again mainly in the technical sector. With five full-time employees and two part-time employees they were considered a rather small player in the secondment business. However, by being small, they do not suffer from excessive bureaucracy. This allows them to react quickly to changes in the market, as well as being able to quickly adopt new technologies and apply them to their business processes (Anderson, 2003).

Indeed, they had already applied various web-based technologies to enhance their business processes. The first of such technologies was the use of an extensive database, and database management tools, alongside a customer relations management tool. Next, they expanded their armory to include the use of e-recruitment and web portals. However, the founder of the company was expecting difficulties in the near future; a significant shortage of appropriately educated employees, or candidates, with technical skills. Furthermore, Company T did not believe that their current set of instruments would be sufficient to cope with the expected difficulties. As such, Company T was trying to find a way to adapt and to survive.

Essentially, Company T needs to be more flexible to secure a steady supply of candidates in order to be able to stay alive and thrive (Bartram, 2000; Spector, 2008) while, at the same time, it needs to work more efficiently and effectively. It is possible that new HRM technologies could be deployed in order to assist Company T in these times of change. Secondly, an increased emphasis on the other personal characteristics (O) of candidates, beyond their technical skills, such as personality and ambition might also be beneficial. The effects of personality, and other latent individual qualities, on work-related aspects, e.g. performance, have been mapped quite extensively over recent years (Gellatly, 1996; Gevers, et al, 2006; McAdams, 2009). In addition, two work-related trends have put a greater emphasis on the softer aspects of an individual: working in teams (Keller, 2001; O'Leary-Kelly, et al, 1994); and assertive employees taking charge of their own careers (Baruch, 2004). Thus, greater emphasis is put on 'other' personal characteristics (O) in addition to the more traditional components of a candidate: their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) (Spector, 2008).

These other personal characteristics were not yet being applied in the selection process in a mature way at Company T. Further, web-based technologies were not being deployed to the full extent possible to support the measurement of other personal characteristics, i.e. through psychological testing. As such, it was crucial to select technologies that would fit with the applications already running as well as with the current business process (Kehoe, et al, 2004). Here, attention was placed on e-selection. This concept was defined as the application of (web-based) information technology for the execution and support of the personnel selection process by the employee and/or the organization (Chapman and Webster, 2003; Ruël, et al, 2004; Strohmeier, 2007). The goal of this research was to explore *the requirements*