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**"I don't want people
who want to dance,
I want people who
'have' to dance."**

-- George Balanchine



Employer's *Advantage*

Edited by John W. Howard, Ph.D.

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- The Music Teacher
- Background Checks
- Interrupted Process Experiments
- Call Center Hiring Success
- Manufacturing Hiring Success

OK, OK, the article in the box on the lower right can be read as an ad for one of our specific Profiles products, something we usually avoid in these pages. Frankly, though, the problem is so pervasive and the solution so elusive in most businesses, that I couldn't resist. Sooner or later, there will be other, similar, and equally affordable approaches to the problem. I just haven't seen them yet. —Editor

BEWARE THE FAULTY BACKGROUND CHECK!

The National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NABPS) has issued a warning to employers: **Do not rely on the FBI Criminal Database.** Their study found nearly 12 percent of screenings using this database missed criminal records, and just under six percent returned false positives! They warn of possible litigation for employers using this source. Full results can be found on the NABPS website.

THE MUSIC TEACHER WAS RIGHT!—OPINION BY TIM BRENNAN

The music teacher was right - practice **does** make perfect when it comes to improving performance. Do you remember piano lessons when you were a child? The music teacher had an important understanding: you cannot teach a child everything they need to know about playing the piano in a three-day training session. The piano teacher spent time with you each week, over a number of weeks. Isn't it interesting that we think the "three-day approach" will work for adults? Successful music lessons include three key questions:

What are your goals?

(Remember your notebook?)

How are you doing?

(Playing the pieces you were practicing), and

What are we doing to improve performance?

(Your new assignment.) Why does this process work? The secret?

The real key to the music teacher's success is an incredibly simple system, well understood in other areas of life. It is this adaptation of a routine:

- Setting time-specific goals
- Deciding what needs to be done to fulfill these goals, and
- Constantly updating your plan of action as you grow comfortable with new skills.

Studies show that within a few short weeks of being taught a new concept, most people have forgotten nearly 98 percent of the original idea. While most business training sessions send attendees home with ma-

terials intended to reinforce and re-learn the initial idea, there is nothing in place to give these new skills **real-life practice**. Like any skill we do not use (algebra, the second language we learned in school), once we stop using a skill, our enthusiasm fades, it loses its real-life relevance — and we forget it.

Imagine if all business training sessions were like music lessons? What would it mean to the results of your business if you started every day by asking yourself those three key questions? The only thing standing in the way of getting improved results is the fact that most of us fall back on old, familiar habits — habits leading us to lose the things we worked so hard to learn. Habits that keep us from making permanent, positive, **profitable** change.

MANAGERS/TRAINERS COULD LEARN FROM THE MUSIC TEACHER

Have you ever attended a management training workshop?

Look at your bookshelf, your credenza, that pile of three-ring binders in the corner, or the box in your basement. How many pages of training supplements, exercises, guides and follow up material are in those places? When was the last time you looked at one? How many hours have you spent in trying to reinforce, apply and utilize

the things you learned in the training? How much real benefit have you received in the process? Quit hanging your head: you are hardly alone. Despite our best intentions, we return from training excited, energized and full of things we intend to change — and then the world crashes in around us, and the books and binders go on the bookshelf, potential unrealized. If you are a trainer

charged with the difficult task of improving managers, or if you are a manager dedicated to improvement: **You must insure practice of changed behaviors following training or your efforts will be wasted.**

Train, practice, reinforce, measure change, train... If this mantra makes sense to you, manager or trainer, investigate the process involved in the Profiles' Checkpoint 360™ and Skill Builder™ systems.

"INTERRUPTED PROCESS" STUDIES PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR NATURAL EXPERIMENTS

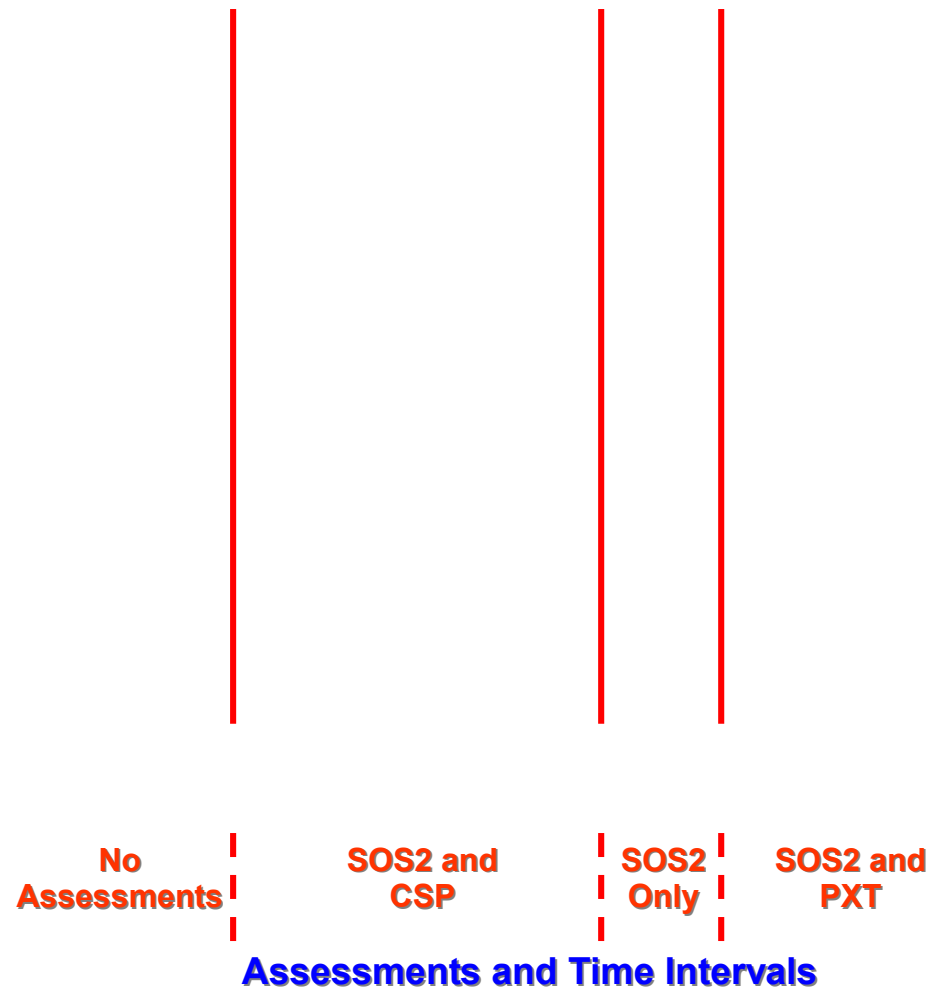
Occasionally, when a biologist or other scientist gets lucky, nature may provide a natural experiment, by temporarily changing conditions and then returning to the original state of affairs. This presents opportunities to test theories and notions of how things work, a "natural laboratory." This phenomenon may also occur in the business world, where conditions may force a temporary change in business practice, with a return to the original practice when the temporary condition abates. As in nature, these "interrupted process" events provide an opportunity to assess effects in a natural, real-world business setting. We report the outcome of two of these events in the two articles that follow.

A growing call center, represented in the graph below, presents the first "interrupted process" example. The call center, who was experiencing very high rates of turnover (mostly early failure of new hires), decided to test an assessment program in hiring. The graph is relatively complex, tracking cumulative hire failure rates at 30, 60, 90 and 180 days. If an employee failed in less than 30 days, they are included in all four categories. The first two sets of data points are quarterly,

before assessments began; the remainder are monthly. There is no data point for January, as no hires were made. In July 2004, a program of two assessments was initiated using the Step One Survey II™ (SOS2) prescreener to reduce the candidate pool, followed by the Customer Service Perspective™ (CSP) for finalist selection. As the graph shows, all four categories of early hire failure were substantially reduced with the use of the assessments.

In the first quarter of 2005, management was ordered to reduce expense, and eliminated the CSP from the assessment process. From the graph, it is easy to see that early hire failure immediately rebounded to levels experienced before assessments were introduced! In April of 2005, with the costly effects of turnover outweighing the cost of assessments, management introduced the more powerful Profile XT™ (PXT) instead of the CSP, and hire failure rates immediately plummeted.

Effects of an Interrupted Assessment Process in a Customer Service Call Center with 1,000 Employees



ABANDONING AN ASSESSMENT CRITERION PROVES COSTLY FOR MANUFACTURER

A manufacturer of recreational vehicles had been in business for over 30 years; its management team was seasoned and production lines were efficient. But the rate of failures in their new production hires was simply unacceptable. A worker hired today had a less than 50 percent chance of still being on the job after six months. The hiring process was a familiar one, with a candidate's application reviewed by HR, a preliminary interview by an experienced interviewer in the HR department, and a final interview and decision by the manager who would supervise the new hire. The company introduced the Step One Survey II™, administering it to every ap-

plicant who had been invited to participate in an interview. For the first 150 assessments, results were not provided to the hiring team. Data was collected on retention, firings and on-job injuries. Based on this data, a criterion was established for a recommendation to consider for employment. In the next year, the hiring team was provided with the assessment reports, used the structured interview questions and considered the information as a part of their overall hiring process. Candidates who did not meet the criterion on the assessment were not considered for hire. As the graph below illustrates, the new hire failure rate dropped dramatically, as

did involuntary terminations and injuries. In the next year, the company's sales skyrocketed, and production was geared up, requiring a wave of new hires. HR, faced with a limited pool of applicants and pressure to "fill the seats," abandoned the use of the criterion on the assessment. The "No Criterion" interval on the graph shows the results: all three measures rebounded to pre-assessment levels and above. Assessing the cost of this "natural experiment," management has directed HR to re-establish the criterion in the hiring process and is considering the addition of a job matching assessment to the selection process.



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