Definition

An Assessment Center (AC) is a comprehensive, systematic procedure in which

• the efforts of several candidates
• are observed and evaluated
• at the same time
• by several experts
• with the help of multiple assessment techniques
• according to specific criteria
• for various purposes

By Mag. Brigitte Heffeter, AC
ASSESSMENT CENTER

*The candidates*
- get to know about their strengths and weaknesses
- get information about possibilities how to improve their personality

*The assessors*
- observe
- judge the candidates

*The moderator*
- designs the AC
- trains the assessors
- organizes and presents

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Purposes

• AC as a *selection and evaluation* instrument for future management positions

• AC as a *training* instrument for the candidates and their assessors

• AC as an instrument to assist and achieve the development of a specific *organizational identity*
Selection and evaluation

4 information for personnel management and personnel development

4 selection of potential managers

4 building a cadre of top managers

4 basical information for various decisions such as selection, training, rotation...

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Development

- for candidates:
  promotion and development of staff

- for line managers:
  awareness of personnel management tasks
  transparency of appraisal criteria
  development of ability in giving feedback

- for assessors:
  awareness of personal qualifications and abilities

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Organizational development

→increasing social competences of managers who have been assessors

→change in managers’ attitudes towards staff and organizational influence on staff

→knowledge about training needs
Methods for finding profile criteria

• interviews, expert opinions
• observations
• CIT (Critical Incident Technique)
• Rep-Test (Role Construct Repertory Test)
Quality/ personality profile

! definition of position/ job
! main tasks
! hierarchical position
! demands
   - physically
   - mentally
   - socially
! key qualifications
   - competences as an expert
   - in social affairs
   - self-competence

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Exercises and simulations
(examples)

• self-presentation
• presentation
• group discussion
• case study
• conceptual tasks
• appraisal interview
• dispute
• role play
• in-basket task
• tests
• ...

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Observation sheet

- purpose: helps the assessor to structure and record his observations, opinions, ideas, ...

- structure:
  - one observation sheet for each exercise
  - name of exercise
  - name of candidate
  - 5-7 dimensions
  - explanation text and examples of behavior for each dimension
  - space for rating
  - space for additional observations

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Observing vs. judging

Observations *during* exercises, judgment *after* exercises!

An observation is each perception that can be:
- seen
- smelled
- heard
- touched

Judgments are interpretations based on the assessor’s observations.

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Errors of observation

• First impression
• Stereotypes ("logical" mistakes)
• Tendency (towards the middle, strictness, extremes,...)
• Self-fulfilling prophecy
• Similarity
• "Halo" effect
• Primacy and recency effect
• Bias (because of hierarchy, attractivity, closeness,...)
• ...

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Report of AC results
(given by the assessors)

- immediately after each exercise (= consensus meeting!)
- comprehensive report after the AC is completed

Feedback
(given by the moderator)

- information about strengths and weaknesses
- recommendations regarding the management potential and development needs

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“Problem zones”

• expensive
• time consuming
• involvement of many people
• often not accepted
• no extern assessors
• exercises do not mirror reality
• assessors are future line managers
• ...

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An AC will be successful and effective if it is:

• specific
• with a well known purpose
• accepted
• transparent
• following rules
• with well trained assessors
• differing observation from judgment
• simulating the reality in various exercises
• ...
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Characteristics

• face validity
• job relatedness
• multiple assessment techniques
• group of assessors

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Persons involved in an AC:

• candidates
• assessors
• moderator