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# That's Not the Only Problem

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Highhouse (2008) argues forcefully as to the naiveté of managers with regard to selection procedures and stresses their faith in the fact that if a person is properly selected, s/he will undoubtedly succeed. I wholeheartedly agree. As to the latter, my experience of over 50 years has been that managers always want better selection and have relatively little belief in the importance of training. In 21 years at the Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association, I never had a manager or executive ask for better training; the demand was for better selection.

Unfortunately, managers seem to harbor another belief that by our behavior we seem to share: the criteria that managers use to judge performance are valid and reliable. In my article on construct validation (Thayer, 1992), I reviewed work done by Benning and Barrett, Wallace, Peterson, Guion, Komaki, Kraut and colleagues, McHenry, Hough and colleagues, Sparks, Meyer, and others, all pointing to the fact that the criteria we use are the ones that are handy and that we know little about their makeup or the nature of the shared variance with predictors. When Wallace and Peterson showed executives that their measures of success were strongly correlated with the size of the sales territory and had little to do with the competence of managers of those territories, they lost cred-

ibility, as the executives' measures were the only ones they had. They said, "This is how we've always measured success. You don't know what you are talking about." We know a good deal about the variables making up our predictors. With the notable exception of Project A, we know almost nothing about our criteria.

Highhouse closes his remarks by pointing to two managerial blinders as to selection: "the belief that it is possible to achieve near-perfect precision in predicting performance on the job, and the belief that intuitive prediction can be improved by experience." I would add that managers (and we?) seem to wear those same blinders when it comes to criteria.

We have wrung our hands over "the criterion problem" for over 80 years. As we pursue Highhouse's dream of better understanding of selection biases, I hope we will simultaneously attack criterion biases. Unless we do them together, we will not get very far.

## References

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