APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY IN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

FOURTH EDITION

WAYNE F. CASCIO

Fourth Edition

Applied Psychology in Personnel Management

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PRENTICE HALL
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cascio, Wayne F.
Applied psychology in personnel management / Wayne F. Cascio. --
4th ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-13-041062-4
1. Personnel management. 2. Psychology, Industrial. 3. Personnel
management--United States. 4. Psychology, Industrial--United
States. I. Title.
HF5549.C297 1991
658.3'001'9--dc20 90-35808
CIP

Editorial/production supervision: Mary McDonald
Interior design: Karen Buck
Cover design: Bruce Kenselaar
Prepress buyer: Trudy Pisciotti
Manufacturing buyer: Robert Anderson

© 1991, 1987, 1982, 1978 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.
A Division of Simon & Schuster
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

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Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 0-13-041062-4

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*
Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*
Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., *Toronto*
Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S. A., *Mexico*
Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*
Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*
Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*
Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

Preface to the Fourth Edition

As in the first three editions of *Applied Psychology in Personnel Management,* I have tried to create an interdisciplinary-oriented, psychologically based personnel text. My subject matter is personnel psychology—the application of psychological research and theory to human resource problems in organizations. As an applied area of psychology, personnel psychology seeks to make organizations more effective and more satisfying as places to work.

Personnel psychology represents the overlap between psychology and human resource management (HRM). It is a subfield within HRM, excluding, for example, such topics as labor law, organization planning, industrial medicine, and labor relations. Personnel psychology is also a subfield within industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology—the study of human behavior in the work setting. Today, with the tremendous growth of I/O psychology in a variety of directions, personnel is appropriately considered only one of many areas to which I/O psychologists have turned their attention.

To be sure, the personnel function has changed drastically in the last decade. No longer is it concerned only with housekeeping, file maintenance, and organizational firefighting. Today's personnel manager (often known as Director of Human Resources) is in on the initial stages of important policy decisions and frequently carries a vice-presidential rank. Civil rights legislation, close scrutiny of personnel practices of public and private sector organizations by compliance agencies of the federal government, the specter of civil suits or loss of government contracts, the growing administrative complexity of numerous HRM programs—for all of these reasons and many more, the responsibility of today's personnel manager has increased dramatically. Personnel professionals must, therefore, have a sound understanding of the theory, assumptions, and implications of their policies and procedures, for blatant mistakes in this area can be *very* expensive. The cost in dollars, efficiency, and employee frustration simply cannot be tolerated.

As in the first three editions, therefore, I have included material of a decidedly theoretical, statistical, or psychometric nature where relevant. No doubt some readers will criticize the book on these grounds and charge that "things just aren't done that way in the real world." Perhaps not, for I agree that some of the ideas and techniques in this book (e.g., decision-theory and integrated human resource planning systems) are probably used by very few organizations. Nevertheless, having consulted with (and having testified either for or against) both public and private sector organizations, I firmly believe that these newer ideas should be adopted more widely. The book is designed to be forward-looking and progressive, and even though some of the material is presented in a conventional manner with a dose of statistical, psychometric, or psychological theory thrown in, I believe that in the last analysis nothing is more practical.

In writing this book, I have made two assumptions about my readers: (1) that they are familiar with the general problems of human resource management and/or industrial psychology, and (2) that they have some background in fundamental statistics—at least enough to understand statistical procedures on a conceptual level, and preferably enough to compute and interpret tests of significance. As in the earlier editions, my goals are: (1) to challenge the field to advance rather than simply to document past practice, (2) to present a model toward which human resource specialists should aim, and (3) to present scientific procedure and fundamental theory so that the serious student can develop a solid foundation upon which to build a broad base of knowledge.

My overall objective is to integrate psychological theory with tools and methods that will enable the student or professional to translate theory into practice effectively. I realize that in the complex and dynamic environment in which we live and work, scientific and technological advances are occurring faster than ever before. Hence, education must be a lifelong affair if one is to avoid what Armer (1970) calls the "Paul Principle": Over time individuals often become uneducated and therefore incompetent at a level at which they once performed quite adequately. If the book projects this one message, then the personnel profession will be enriched immeasurably.

The response to the first three editions of this book in psychology departments and in business and professional schools was particularly gratifying. However, new ideas and research findings in all the areas covered by the book made a fourth edition necessary in order to reflect the state of the art in personnel psychology. In fact, over 50 percent of the more than 1200 references in the fourth edition are new! Year by year the field continues to advance rapidly. Here is a sample of what is new in the fourth edition:

- On a general level, many practical examples of company HRM practices have been added to each chapter of the text, while the research-based character of the text material has been retained.
- There is extensive treatment of coming demographic changes, tight labor markets, cultural diversity at work, and what organizations can do to prepare for coming changes.
- Provisions and implications of two new employment laws are examined—the Immigration Reform and Control Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The rulings and implications of recent civil rights cases decided by the Supreme Court in the areas of affirmative action, preferential selection, seniority, and performance appraisal are featured prominently.
- The debate over static versus dynamic changes in validity over time is explored; also examined are the latest meta-analytic results regarding the relations of objective and subjective criteria and predictive and concurrent validities. More attention is devoted to research designs that will promote the development of criterion theory.
- Updated information on the political and interpersonal issues in performance appraisal has been included, along with new research findings on rater training, the impact of rating formats, and characteristics of raters and ratees on appraisal outcomes.

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- The debate over the relative impact of dispositions versus organizational environments on employee attitudes and behaviors is examined in light of cumulative research findings, as is the impact of quality circles, work rescheduling, ESOPs, team systems, and other forms of worker participation on productivity and quality of work life.
- New information on synthetic validity, range restriction, construct-oriented evidence of validity, and validity generalization is incorporated into this edition.
- Revised or updated information on the validity of alternative models of fairness in personnel decisions is included, along with expanded commentary on this important topic.
- Research results on new multimethod approaches to job analysis, on the interrelationships among jobs, and on the management of panels of subject matter experts, are presented in Chapter 10.
- The inextricable links between human resource strategy, training design, compensation strategy, and general business strategy are discussed more thoroughly. Also, the effect of mergers, acquisitions, and downsizing on career management systems is explored.
- The impact of computers on recruitment, new research on the effect of employee referrals, realistic job previews, letters of recommendation, and the use of alternative recruitment sources for affirmative action hiring is included in Chapter 12.
- The latest legal and scientific developments in the use of drug screening, honesty tests, evaluations of training and experience, pre-employment interviews, and the new legal constraints on the use of pre-employment polygraphs are discussed thoroughly. The practical implications of these developments are also highlighted.
- New developments in the theory and application of cutoff scores are evaluated in Chapter 13, as are advances in utility theory and the application of capital budgeting methods to personnel programs.
- Recent findings regarding personal characteristics that predict success for both males and females as managers, along with novel approaches to the assessement of personality characteristics required for managerial success, are considered in Chapter 14. Another topic, long ignored in the field, is the conduct of and predictive validity of individual assessments of managerial candidates. The available literature on this issue is examined, as are the most recent findings on the operation of assessment centers and their long-term validity.
- New findings regarding classification strategies for team jobs are presented in Chapter 15.
- Characteristics of effective training practice and new approaches to training-needs identification are discussed in Chapter 16, as are new findings regarding the application of goal setting and principles of learning to training programs. Field research on the self-regulation of training behaviors to facilitate positive transfer of training is also included.
- The new emphasis in Chapter 18 is on the strategic choices of compensation and reward systems available to managers. The distinction between managing such systems, instead of merely administering them, is a general theme in the chapter. Recent legal constraints, such as COBRA and the Tax Reform Act, are also presented. Process issues in compensation, such as pay secrecy versus openness and criteria managers use to make pay raise decisions, receive expanded treatment in this chapter.
- The coverage of ethical issues in HRM, including computer monitoring of employees, employee privacy, and whistle-blowing, includes new and updated information.

I would be remiss is I did not acknowledge the moral support and the encouragement (and many times the patience!) of my wife, Dorothy, and son, Joey, throughout the project. Their love and devotion make good times better and bad times a little easier to take.

WAYNE F. CASCIO
Denver, Colorado

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1

Organizations, Work, and Applied Psychology

AT A GLANCE

Human organizations are all around—businesses, hospitals, political parties, military organizations, men's and women's social clubs, churches, Boy and Girl Scouts, and Little Leagues, just to name a few. Each organization has its own particular set of objectives, and, in order to function effectively, each organization must subdivide its overall task into various jobs. Jobs differ in their requirements. Likewise, people differ in aptitudes, abilities, and interests, and along many other dimensions. Faced with such variability in people and jobs, programs for the efficient use of human resources are essential.

As we move from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, work is no longer the center of life for many people, particularly for younger managers. These people are committed to work and are ambitious for status and financial gain, but they will not give up other interests for work. They are striving to achieve balance in their lives between work and non-work activities. The challenge for organizations is to turn this ambition to motivation.

Guided by the fundamental assumption that in a free society every individual has a basic and inalienable right to compete for any job for which he or she is qualified, we turn to a consideration of how personnel psychology can contribute to a wiser, more humane use of our human resources. If present legal, social, political, and economic indicators predict future concerns, personnel psychology will play an increasingly significant role in the world of work during the 1990s and into the 21st century.

THE PERVASIVENESS OF ORGANIZATIONS

Throughout the course of our lives each of us is deeply touched by organizations of one form or another. In the normal course of events, a child will be exposed to a school organization, a church or religious organization, perhaps a Little League or a Boy or Girl Scout organization, as well as the social organization of the local community. After leaving the school organization the young person may choose to join a military, business, or service organization, but in order to qualify for membership he or she may have to join a union organization. The point is simply that our everyday lives are inseparably intertwined with organizational memberships of one form or another.

What common characteristics unite these various activities under the collective label "organization"? The question is not an easy one to answer. Many different definitions of organization have been suggested and each definition reflects the background and theoretical point of view of its author with respect to what is relevant and/or important. Yet certain fundamental elements recur in these definitions.

In general, an organization is a social unit deliberately designed to achieve some specific goal or goals (Reitz, 1987). Another useful concept views an organization as a system of inputs, throughputs, and outputs. Inputs (raw materials) are imported from the outside environment, transformed or modified (e.g., every day tons of steel are molded into automobile bodies), and finally exported or sold back into the environment as outputs (finished products). Although there are a bewildering variety of inputs to organizations (energy, raw materials, information, etc.), people are the basic ingredients of *all* organizations, and social relationships are the cohesive bonds that tie them together.

This book is about people as members and resources of organizations and about what personnel psychology can contribute toward helping organizations make the wisest, most humane use of human resources. *Personnel psychology is concerned with individual differences in behavior and job performance and with measuring and predicting such differences.* In the following sections we will consider some of the sources of these differences.

Differences in Jobs

In examining the world of work, one is immediately awed by the vast array of goods and services that have been and are being produced as a result of organized effort. This great variety ranges from the manufacture of tangible products, such as food, automobiles, plastics, paper, textiles, and glassware, to the provision of less tangible services, such as legal counsel, medical care, police and fire protection, and education. Thousands of jobs are part of our workaday world, and the variety of task and human requirements necessary to carry out this work is staggering. Faced with such variability in jobs and their requirements on the one hand, and with people and their individual patterns of values, aspirations, interests, and abilities on the other, programs for the efficient use of human resources are essential.

Differences in Performance

People represent substantial investments by firms—as is immediately evident when one stops to consider the costs of recruiting, selecting, placing, and training as many people as there are organizational roles to fill. But psychology's first law is that people are different. People differ in size, weight, and other physical dimensions, as well as in aptitudes, abilities, temperaments, interests, and a myriad of other psychological dimensions. People also differ greatly in the extent to which they are willing and able to commit their energies and resources to the attainment of organizational objectives.

If we observe a group of individuals doing the same kind of work, it will soon be evident that some are more effective workers than others. For example, if we observe a group of carpenters building cabinets, we will notice that some work faster than others, make fewer mistakes than others, and seem to enjoy their work more than others. These observations pose a question of psychological interest. Why? What "people differences" cause these "work differences"? Perhaps these variations in effectiveness are due to differences in abilities. Some of the carpenters may be stronger, have keener eyesight, and have more finely developed motor coordination than others. Perhaps another reason for the observed differences in behavior is motivation. At any given point in time, the strength of forces impelling an individual to put forth effort on a given task, or to reach a certain goal, may vary drastically. In other words, differences in individual performance on any task, or on any job, could be due to differences in ability, or to differences in motivation, or to both. A more basic issue, however, is the nature of work itself.

Individuals, Work, and Society

Two series of surveys, one done in the late 1970s and the other in the late 1980s, showed clearly the emergence of a new work psychology in our society. Three of its most prominent elements are: (1) the increasing importance of leisure (especially for men) as an outlet for self-fulfillment, (2) the symbolic significance of the paid job (especially for women) as a badge of membership in the larger society and an almost indispensable symbol of self-worth, and (3) the insistence that jobs become less depersonalized. In fact, "being recognized as an individual person" is seen as the most important aspect of work, followed by "the opportunity to be with pleasant people with whom I like to work." Significantly, for the majority of people these demands come ahead of the desire that the work itself be interesting and nonroutine (Yankelovich, 1978; Giese, 1987).

Study after study has reaffirmed these conclusions. In fact, the fundamental lesson learned from the business practices of the companies profiled in *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982) and *A Passion for Excellence* (Peters & Austin, 1985) can be summarized concisely:

> Treat people as adults. Treat them as partners; treat them with dignity; treat them with respect. Treat them—not capital spending and automation—as the primary source of productivity gains. . . . If you want productivity and the financial reward that goes with it, you must treat your workers as your most important asset. (Peters & Waterman, 1982)

A similar theme is echoed in recent studies on job satisfaction. Its most important determinant is "work autonomy," the degree to which employees feel they can make their own decisions and influence what happens on the job. This conclusion holds independently of a person's income level. That is, people earning high incomes typically enjoy the most autonomy on their jobs; hence their job satisfaction is high. But if one looks at individuals with equally autonomous jobs, they appear equally satisfied with those jobs, regardless of any income disparities between them (Boffey, 1985).

Why people work is a complex question requiring a multifaceted answer. Certainly success in life, sense of personal growth, accomplishment, security, and prestige will all be tied to the work an individual does. Likewise, one's standard of living is determined by occupation. It follows then that the psychological effects of work are not bound by nine-to-five time limits or by physical dimensions of the office. In particular, the problems of personnel recruitment, selection, placement, and training can not be divorced from their setting in the larger context of social forces, organizations, and society.

A Utopian Ideal

In an idealized existence our goal would be to assess each individual's aptitudes, abilities, personality, and interests, to profile these characteristics, and then to place all individuals in jobs perfectly suited to them and to society. Each individual would make the best and wisest possible use of his or her talents, while in the aggregate, society would be making maximal use of its most precious resource.

Alas, this ideal falls far short in practice. The many, and often gross, mismatches between individual capabilities and organizational roles are glaringly obvious even to the most casual observer—history Ph.D.'s driving taxicabs for lack of professional work, or young people full of enthusiasm, drive, and intelligence placed on monotonous, routine, dead-end jobs.

Point of View

In any presentation of issues it is well to make explicit underlying assumptions. The assumptions that have influenced the presentation of this book are:

1. In a free society every individual, regardless of race, age, sex, religion, or national origin, has a fundamental and inalienable right to compete for any job for which he or she is qualified.
2. Society can and should do a better job of making the wisest and most humane use of its human resources.
3. Individuals working in the personnel field and managers responsible for making personnel decisions must be as technically competent and well informed as possible, since their decisions will materially affect the course of individual livelihoods and lives.

Personnel psychology holds considerable potential for improving the caliber of personnel management in organizations. Several recent developments have combined to stimulate this growing awareness on the part of students, practitioners, and professionals. After first describing what personnel psychology is, we will consider the nature of some of these developments.

PERSONNEL PSYCHOLOGY IN PERSPECTIVE

People have always been subjects of inquiry by psychologists, and the behavior of people at work has been the particular subject matter of industrial and organizational psychology. Yet sciences and subdisciplines within sciences are distinguished not so much by the subject matter they study as by the questions they ask. Thus, both the social psychologist and the engineering psychologist are concerned with studying people. The engineering psychologist is concerned with the design of jobs, workplaces, information systems, and aspects of the work environment. The social psychologist studies power and influence, attitude change, communication in groups, and individual and group social behavior.

Personnel psychology is a subfield within industrial and organizational psychology. It is an applied discipline that focuses on individual differences in behavior and job performance and on methods of measuring and predicting such differences. Some of the major areas of interest of personnel psychologists include job analysis and job evaluation, personnel recruitment, screening, and selection, training and development, and performance appraisal.

Personnel psychology also represents the overlap between psychology and personnel management. Personnel management is the attraction, selection, retention, development, and utilization of human resources in order to achieve both individual and organizational objectives (Cascio, 1989b). As a sub-

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