

The PAQ

Dunnette and Borman (1979) described the PAQ (McCormick, Jeanneret & Mecham, 1972) as one of 15 scientific "milestones in personnel selection and placement in a chapter they wrote on personnel selection and classification systems in the *Annual Review of Psychology*. In E.J. McCormick's obituary, Naylor (1991) recognized that the PAQ had become:

"...the most respected and widely-used instrument for job analysis in use today. The PAQ boasts a database of more than 150,000 cases and has been translated into six languages. From a theoretical perspective, the PAQ and its resulting database made it possible to generalize successfully, the usefulness of the "synthetic validity" construct for jobs across a variety of psychological constructs, permitting generalizability of validity from a single job to a job family or from a job at one location to a similar job in another location."

In their 1994 *Annual Review of Psychology* chapter on personnel selection and placement, Landy and his colleagues began their review of developments in job analysis by recognizing E.J. McCormick's work on the PAQ.

"First, it should be noted that Ernest J. McCormick, who died in 1990, did unique and valuable work on the theory and practice of job analysis and on the development of the PAQ, standardized instrument for job analysis."

Job elements listed on the PAQ are sometimes considered to be worker-oriented, since they are stated in terms of generic work activities. PAQ items (job elements) apply to virtually all jobs across-the-board, as contrasted with job tasks (e.g., repairing automobile generators, serving food to patrons in a restaurant, taking samples of blood from patients) or with worker-oriented traits (e.g., general learning ability, verbal aptitude, numerical aptitude, manual dexterity, finger dexterity, stamina, reaction time, etc.). Job-oriented task statements can be useful because they are highly specific and have demonstrated higher reliability than PAQ variables (Dierdorff & Wilson, 2003); but it is possible to formulate a nearly infinite number of tasks, and their clarity and utility in job analysis depends largely upon job analysts' oral and written communication skills, which vary considerably from one analyst to another.

References

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