

SCIENTIFIC PAPERS  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE  
Series A  
Faculty of Chemical Technology  
18 (2012)

**STAFFING METHODS FOR POSITIONS OF SALES  
REPRESENTATIVES IN SELECTED COMPANIES**

Marie BEDNAŘÍKOVÁ<sup>1</sup>, Ivana NOŽIČKOVÁ and Jan VÁVRA  
Department of Economics and Management of Chemical and Food Industry,  
The University of Pardubice, CZ-532 10 Pardubice

Received September 30, 2012

*It is necessary for every company to find and to keep qualified and motivated employees for meeting the company goals. Recruitment and selection processes of appropriate sales representatives should be carried out extremely carefully. This paper deals with problem issues of recruitment and selection of sales representatives and is accompanied with a research having taken place in early 2012 and being focused on the methods of selecting them.*

**Introduction**

The objective of this article is to describe recruitment and selection process for sales representative position. There are a lot of average sales representatives but only very few excellent ones. The difference between an average and the best sales representative can be significant. The sales representative is expected not to be only a good employee of the company but an acceptable partner for a client, too.

---

<sup>1</sup> To whom correspondence should be addressed.

The article includes the basic results of research relating to employee's recruitment and selection for a position of a sales representative with special emphasis on the methods of their selection.

## Theory

*Staff recruitment* should ensure that company vacancies would attract a sufficient number of relevant candidates for these positions to a desired deadline and at minimum costs. It is a process of recognizing and searching suitable labour resources, informing about vacancies in a company, advertising and offering these positions, dealing with candidates, acquiring relevant information about the candidates, and also organisational and administrative support of these activities [1]. Acquiring and selection of staff are a key stage of a forming company labour force, as it predetermines what staffs are available for the company and whether the company goals are met by necessary staff. Thus it determines success, prosperity and competitiveness of a company [2].

Following the staff recruitment, there is a second stage, a personal anamnesis, which means sorting candidates' documents to keep the most suitable ones in files. The documents might be as follows: job application, motivation letter, education certificates, and other documents proving relevant competences of the candidates. These documents are used by candidates to address a potential employer and are a source of information about completed education, skills and track record. Criteria, upon which a company can refuse a candidate, must be fair and ensure equal opportunities for all persons expressing interests in working for the company [3]. No candidate can be rejected based on discrimination.

The general aim of the *staff selection* process is to acquire amount and quality of staff desired for meeting company need in terms of labour resources at minimum costs. Staff selection draws on the stage of staff acquisition, it involves considering candidates profiles and then selecting the most suitable one for the required position. Staff selection is usually demanding both financially and timewise, however, for ensuring qualified labour force it is inevitable. In the selection procedure two parties encounter each other with their offers; on one side it is a company choosing an employee, and on the other side, a candidate choosing a job. Consequently, the selection process and dealing with candidates should reflect this partnership [4,5].

A good staff selection is important for a company to avoid typical risks that might appear during the selection. In working reality the following problems are most often encountered:

- *unrealistic job description* (the requirements are exaggerated and the labour market might not offer a suitable candidate; or the job description seems to be more attractive than the reality),

- *evaluation of people in real operating conditions* (selection procedure finds it difficult to reveal under what conditions the candidates are fully able to use their potential),
- *admitting people based on their pretending* (candidates may not tell the truth, thus case study history, interviews or testing itself cannot be always trusted; experienced candidates are able to adapt their responses to expectations),
- *trust in references* (they may be trusted only to a limited degree, especially when contacts are provided solely by the candidate),
- *keeping the track of prejudices and preconceptions* (one of the widely spread mistakes rests in favouring candidates significantly resembling the selecting managers),
- *unstructured interview* (a set of well-structured questions provides substantial information about a candidate, their knowledge, skills and general abilities; the interview must be well prepared, if it is not so, a qualified candidate, who, unfortunately, is not a gifted speaker, may be lost),
- *ignoring emotional intelligence* (it is recommended to measure emotional intelligence as a complementary selection criterion as this method may reveal a degree of a candidate's empathy, motivation and social competence; measuring candidate's emotional intelligence reduces the risk of hiring a candidate, who is predisposed professionally, however, not in terms of personality),
- *nepotism, power of coercion* (hiring of friends or acquaintances coerced by top managers or a company owner may negatively influence not only the working performance but also company ethics and associated prosperity).

Every mistake occurred during the selection procedure means redundant costs expended on hiring an unsuitable candidate.

## Methods of Testing Candidates

The recruiting process leads to finding the most suitable candidate for the position. The process of acquiring and selecting staff should reflect the „3E“ principles: efficient, ethical and economical. An efficient selection ensures the company an employee who is an asset and stays for a long-term. Ethical selection complies with good manners, laws, directives and economic selection provides a quality employee for adequate expenses in turn [6].

Choice of the right method depends on the position in question. Hroník [6] states ten different methods for different posts — personal anamnesis, specific tests, psychological questionnaires, projection tests, performance tests, assessment centre, testing in authentic environment, selection interview, reference, trial period, astrology and graphology. Personal anamnesis, selection interview and reference are suitable almost for every position. The author does not recommend specific

tests and testing in authentic environment for positions of sales representatives and sellers, as less appropriate he also considers performance tests.

Some of the methods used abroad may seem strange to a certain degree (e.g., phrenologic methods, astrologic methods, *etc.*), they do not belong to modern human resource management methods. Research carried abroad, e.g., by M. Smith in the UK or F. Schmidt in the US proves the highest validity of methods as a structured interview, sample job or a test of competences. In contrast, zero validity is ascribed to methods of astrology and graphology; also references possess very low validity level. Medium validity is possessed by methods of unstructured interviews, personality tests, and CV data and assessment centres [1]. Validity is measured by a correlation index between scores achieved by employees in a particular method and scores achieved by measuring their working performances. Methods with validity lower than 0.40 are considered insufficiently valid and thus little appropriate.

Among the most often used selection criteria there are level of education, working experience; technical, communication and managerial competence, quantitative knowledge, team work abilities, orientation to customers [5].

## Classical Testing Methods

They are traditional testing methods of staff selection. Predominantly they involve selection interviews, selection tests which are further divided into several other types.

### Selection Interviews

Selection interview is the most widely used, and according to the opinion of most theoreticians and practitioners, also the most appropriate and key method of selecting employees. However, the prerequisite is a good preparation of the interview. The main goal rests in acquiring further and deeper information about a candidate, provide a candidate with information on a company and the job, and also assessment of the candidate's personality. There are several types of a selection interview:

- Selection interviews can be divided according to the *content and process* into *structured* (standardized) interview, where the content, questions order and also time schedule are planned in advance and all the candidates are treated equally, however, it is more time demanding in terms of preparation. Another type is an *unstructured* (freely running) interview, in which its content, procedure and time schedule are created in the course of the interview and may not be pre-set or may be set only roughly. The candidates are not given the same opportunity

and that is why this way is not highly recommended. The last type is a *semi-structured* interview which combines advantages and eliminates disadvantages of both the preceding types of interviews.

- Interviews may also be divided according to the *number and structure of participants* into the following types: interviews *of 1+1*, meaning the interview is conducted by one company representative (as a rule an executive with managerial power to the interviewed position). The atmosphere is more open; however, the view of an interviewer may be rather subjective. Another one is an interview before a *panel of interviewers* (body), when the body consists of a manager, personnel manager and also an experienced psychologist. This type of an interview provides a more objective view; however, the candidate may feel more stressed. The last type is a *gradual interview*, which comprises a series of interviews 1+1 with various interviewers. Again it offers a combination of advantages and elimination of disadvantages of the two preceding types of interviews, as it is the case with the semi-structured interview [1].
- Use of selection interview methods has certain advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is, first of all, an opportunity to check and ask in depth, the interviewer may characterize the job and thus provide a better insight into the merit of the job; the interviewee has an opportunity to ask in detail. Furthermore, it involves a face-to-face encounter — appointment in person is beneficial for both the parties, in terms of getting to know each other better. The disadvantages may be insufficient validity of the testing method, and the fact that the manager may be insufficient to conduct the interview in terms of abilities and unbiased approach — the interviewer assesses a candidate only according to his/her own preferences, which might not be always objective [1].

## Selection Tests

These are tests of working competence used to obtain valid and reliable information on the level of intelligence, personality traits, abilities, predispositions and acquired knowledge, and skills, which cannot be elicited from selection interviews.

The selection tests may involve [1,4,7]:

- *psychological tests* enable to get to know better with an individual so that a prediction of their success in a particular job can be made,
- *intelligence tests* help to evaluate cogitation abilities and capability to meet mental requirements (e.g., memory, verbal ability, spatial vision, numerical reasoning, speed perception, judgment, *etc.*),
- *personality tests* attempt to assess candidates' personalities in terms of their probable future behaviour in certain roles. They are to reveal varied aspects of

candidate's personality and essential features of their nature (the tested person is, e.g., expected to mark activities, objects, people, *etc.*, who they accept and who they reject, or as the case may be, interpret a certain figure or diagram. This way candidate's interests, stance and values (i.e., personality features) are explored),

- *capability tests* measure characteristics associated with work, such as numerical reasoning, verbal and mechanical abilities or perception ability; they can be divided into *tests of potential capabilities* (performance potential) and *tests of acquired abilities* (through education or work experience),
- *knowledge and skills tests* are to check how thorough knowledge and expert skills are, especially those acquired during studies or training for a job.

### Other Selection Methods

Besides the above mentioned and in working reality used methods, there is an option to utilize the following alternative methods:

- *reference checking* — the reference from previous jobs, from school or from persons acquainted with the candidate are considered. It is a relatively often used method, popular especially in the U.S.A. where references are seen as a reliable source of information about a candidate. It may be, however, controversial in the Czech Republic — if an employee quits the job and the employer does not want to lose them, the employer may try to harm the employee's image.
- *medical examination* — it is mainly used in cases when health of other people may be endangered or, when the candidate's health may be impaired. This method is more and more considered discriminating.
- *taking on the best candidates for a trial period* — it is one of the most effective methods of employees selection, even if it is rather demanding in terms of organisation and finance. For a limited trial period a company hires more suitable candidates who have been shortlisted through other preceding selection methods and their working performance and working behaviour are to be continuously monitored. The best one is then offered a job and the others are dismissed during the trial period [1].
- *graphology* — rather a widely discussed method which is often described as a method of zero validity, however, certain experts see it as a method capable of revealing miscellaneous traits of candidates. According to them handwriting can show whether the candidate is an introvert or extrovert and their type of temperament. Also their emotional and intelligence quotients can be assessed. Numerous developed countries relatively often use graphology as a complementary method in selection procedures despite the relatively high costs of graphology reviews and controversial nature of its conclusions.

## Modern Testing Method — Assessment Centre

Assessment Centre (hereinafter referred to as AC) is a special diagnostic method used for selecting from numerous candidates. AC can be perceived as an assessment centre or a diagnostic-training programme. The chosen methods, their complexity and number should comply with criteria set for candidates' evaluation. The candidates are evaluated in situations simulating real problems, are assessed by a board from various aspects according to various criteria, and this enables them to get a complex picture of the candidate. This method may be used in testing candidates for highly specialized positions (traffic controllers, pilots), top management and positions, where employees get in direct contact with clients (sales, call centres).

The AC essentially consists of numerous testing methods, e.g., interviews, questionnaires, psychological-diagnostic tests, various types of situation awareness modelling (group discussions, individual presentations, role plays). Another element rests in involvement of a considerable number of experienced interviewers, which is important in terms of a variety of opinions, more exact evaluation, and perception of a larger number of behavioural manifestations. The body assessors may be divided into internal assessors (the contract owner's employees), external observers (psychologists). The last element concerns the way the candidates are assessed — it draws on the ORCE model (Observing, Recording, Classifying, Evaluating). The assessors observe regardless the other assessors and the assessments are based on integration of individual observations [8].

The results from the AC are at disposal primarily to people in charge of the selection procedure. They are informed about the overall evaluation of the AC, assets, potentials and risks of candidates for the position in question. Thus it should issue in choosing a candidate suitable for the particular position. The resulting decision is made based on psychological tests, evaluation of practical tasks, candidate's self-presentation and also an agreement of the contract owner. The outcome may be best a form, agreed in advance by both the parties, i.e., a contract owner and an external contractor. This form may be precisely structured and thus well-arranged, which is beneficial especially with assessing numerous candidate [8].

### Job Description of Sales Representative Position

The research focused on recruiting candidates for a post of a sales representative. This position is specific in terms of the candidate selection procedure. Personal selling is a part of marketing mix and is used primarily by companies operating in relatively small markets or in thoroughly defined small marketing segments. Personal selling sets its aims at searching for customers, communication with customers, selling products to customers, providing services, gathering market

information, company presenting and company image building. Personal selling may be carried *via* a direct contact with a customer, *via* phone, or customized correspondence [9,10].

The most common place for personal selling are B2B markets. Drawing on detailed knowledge of customer's wishes and needs, the sales representative is expected to become a reliable problem trouble-shooter and advisor for the customer in a certain area, and to build this way a long-term relation with the customer based on mutual trust. Customers in B2B markets often trust a time-proven sales representative, less tend to opt for a new supplier and are loyal to the current salesperson. The loyalty is based on the sales representative's ability to accommodate customer's needs, wishes and requirements in an appropriate way, and also deal with trouble-shooting promptly, if any problem occurs in the course of the contract relationship. The sales representative thus creates a specific added value for a customer [11].

An advantage of personal selling rests in a direct contact between a company and a customer, where there is an instant feedback and customized communication which issues in a higher level of loyalty. This form of communication also considerably reduces misunderstanding between a sales person and a customer [9]. The immediate feedback enables the sales representative to select a convenient communication strategy that may be in any moment adjusted according to the response and reaction of the customer. Nowadays, the most urgent task of a sales representative, in respect to high costs of a new customer acquisition and continuing customers' decrease in loyalty, is to keep the current customers. Only then comes the task of acquiring new customers. This concept of a sales representative's role should be reflected in a system of sales representative's training and motivation, and also a strategy of sales team management [11].

In the labour market there are not enough sales representatives complying with the requirements in terms of qualification, competence to maintain direct customer communication and ability to provide them with an appropriate care. In reality personal selling is limited by the number of sales representatives whom a company can recruit, train and pay. The success of personal selling is largely influenced by a person in the position. Therefore, the sales representatives' selection, motivation, and training must be paid supreme attention in a company [11].

The sales representative should possess the following traits and skills that are inevitable for successful performance of the job and for building long-term relationships with customers; on whose loyalty companies more and more depend [11]. A quality sales person can empathize with customer's needs and problems; they can work on them and resolve them. They can create an ideal condition without a hard or soft push approach, but rather create a strategic position with the client by prioritizing long-term goals before the short-term ones. The best sales representatives are perfectly informed about their company and products, are positive, with sound self-esteem and feel motivated and supported by their



companies [12].

Recruiting and selecting employees for a sales representative's position should use methods capable of revealing which candidate does possess the desired traits and which does not. It is advisable to consider candidate's empathy to find out about their ability to listen to and comprehend a client. It is desirable to find out if they are sufficiently self-confident, communicative, and of presentable manners to be capable of contributing to a company image. Also an expert profundity in a respective line of business should be considered.

## Results and Discussion

### Research into Specifics of Recruiting and Selection of Candidates for Sales Representative Positions

From the above it is apparent that a sales representative position is very specific, especially in terms of performance requirements. Therefore, a research was conducted into a way of recruiting and selection of employees for this position in seven selected companies further referred as 1-7. The companies represent various areas of the trade and we wanted to check the using of methods in this type of companies. Respondents 1- 3 represent chemical area, therefore are separated from others. Characteristics of respondents are as follows:

*Respondent 1* — A traditional company dealing with chemical production; a large enterprise by its size. Its production portfolio comprises three specific areas of industrial chemistry. Production distribution is carried out by the company sales representatives.

*Respondent 2* — The company has been a member of an international petrochemical group and comes in a large enterprise category. The production portfolio involves refinery and asphalt products. A by-product is the processing of semi-finished products for special oil production. The company also deals in selling its products and products of other group members. The sales are carried out by company sales representatives.

*Respondent 3* — The company is a subsidiary of an international chemical group focusing on research & development into basic mixtures for plastics; a middle-sized enterprise by its size. The company has its sales representatives.

*Respondent 4* — It is a banking institution enjoying a significant position in the Czech banking market. It has several thousand employees. It is a subsidiary of a large-size foreign banking institution. The bank provides a complete portfolio of banking products and services *via* its subsidiaries, in which the products are sold by the employees in sales representative positions.

*Respondent 5* — The company comes in a large-size category. It specializes in providing ICT services and provides outsourcing of a wide-spectrum of IT

services, ranging from applications to service and maintenance of telecommunication and railway communication infrastructure. The company employs its sales representatives.

*Respondent 6* — The company comes in a small enterprise category. The main company activities rest in consultation and counselling services in ecology, chemistry and chemical engineering. The most important employees are their sales representatives with expertise in chemistry, ecology and environmental legislation.

*Respondent 7* — The company comes in a small-size enterprise category, established in 1992. It provides marketing services and counselling for Czech and foreign enterprises, organizes conferences and fairs. The company's own sales representatives have direct contact with customers.

### Recruiting Sales Representatives

Three out of the interviewed enterprises recruit for the sales representative position their own employees (1, 3 and 4). The reason rests primarily in their competence in terms of the company products and services. On the contrary, Respondent 2 seeks candidates outside the enterprise and searches talented individuals to train them for the positions. The remaining three companies opt for external resources, as they expect bringing new contacts (with their own customer portfolio). Reasons for external recruiting of the Respondent 6 and Respondent 7 rest in their small sizes which do not allow them to recruit candidates from their own resources.

Interviewing about methods of recruiting for the sales representative position is summarised in Table I (x = it is used).

According to the respondents, the studied enterprises use most of the methods as they are explained in expert literature. However, all the respondents agreed only on a personal application for a job of a particular candidate and refe-

Table I Methods of acquiring candidates for sales representative positions [13]

Methods/Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Individual candidate offer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
References of a trustworthy person	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Direct addressing of a desired candidate	x	x	x		x	x	x
Collaboration with job offices	x		x		x	x	
Personal agencies	x	x	x				
Informing potential candidates	x		x	x		x	

rences of a trustworthy person. Acquiring candidates *via* personnel agencies is used only by chemical companies out of the studied respondents.

As regards information and documents required from candidates, all the respondents state they require candidates' CV. During shortlisting Respondent 2 requires candidates to create presentations of their sales strategies. Respondent 3 requires their candidates also to present certificates of education and completed training. CVs are received by email, and then they are sorted according to pre-set criteria. Respondent 4 processes the obtained CVs in their internal system.

The most important respondents' requirement in terms of a sales representative position is a competence to communicate and present, which complies with expert literature considering this a key feature. The second ranks a requirement of candidate's experience and then comes another important requirement of customer orientation. Respondent 6 added that loyalty to a company is considered another important criterion. Qualification and expertise are not perceived as too important by respondents as they can be learned on the job. All the respondents considered the requirements difficult to order in terms of importance because certain requirement groups enjoy the same degree of importance.

### Selecting Candidates for Sales Representative Position

The research dealt with an issue of discrimination in staff selection. The respondents agreed that the discriminating aspects are primarily age, gender and marital status. Respondent 6 mentions hiding facts about language competence, driving competence or plans for starting a family. None of the respondents takes any steps to reduce risks of allegations of discriminatory behaviour. Only Respondents 2 and 6 organize interviews with interviewers' bodies, in which 2-3 company executives participate and Respondent 4 interviews several interviewees at a time.

The respondents were further asked about an order of actions they take during staff selection for the position of a sales representative — who arranges and carries the actions, who participates in them, who has the decision-making power about selection of the employee for the position. The respondents stated that first comes a requirement to create a job placement for the position of a sales representative. Further requirements are defined and advertisements are placed, then a personal anamnesis is carried out based on obtained documents and selected (appropriate) candidates are invited to participate in an interview and chosen method of testing (may be organised in several rounds). The respective actions are organised, depending on the enterprise size, by a personnel department, head of a section or company management, and this is valid also for participation in the respective steps. The decision-making power belongs to the head that the to-be-employee will report to, or company management, or, as the case may be, the Chair

of the Board of Directors.

There are numerous risks reducing the quality of staff selection processes. The following table states the most frequent ones. The respondents ranked the elements according their importance; 1 being the most important element, non-ranked risks are not important for the respondents.

Table II Risks reducing the staff selection process quality [13]

Risks/Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unrealistic job descriptions	3			1	3		
Staff appraisal in actual conditions							
People accepting by playing			1	2	4		
Trust in references			2				1
Keeping prejudices	2		3			1	2
Non-structured interviews		2				3	
Ignore of emotional intelligence			4				1
Intriguing		2		3	1	3	
Incomplete selection board		1			6		
Rushing the process for a lack of time	1	1			2	2	2
Selection in disturbing or otherwise inappropriate environment		1			5		

According to the respondents' opinions the quality of staff selection process is primarily endangered by a lack of time devoted to the process. Other risk factors claimed by the respondents may be keeping prejudices, intriguing and unrealistic job descriptions.

### Candidate Testing Methods

There are numerous above mentioned candidate testing and selection methods used for the position of a sales representative. The following table provides their overview accompanied with the respondents' opinions on their use (1 – very appropriate, 2 – appropriate, 3 – inappropriate, 4 – very inappropriate):

The table provides particular respondents' answers regarding the issue of appropriateness of respective candidate testing and selection methods for the sales representative positions. As appropriate and very appropriate are considered the following methods: personal anamnesis, psychological questionnaires, assessment centres, testing behaviour in authentic environment and trial period. As appropriate

Table III Appropriateness of selected testing and selection methods for positions of sales representatives [13]

Methods/ Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal anamnesis	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Professional knowledge tests	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Psychological questionnaires	2	2	1	4	2	2	2
Projective tests	2	2	1	2	3	2	2
Performance tests	2	3	1	2	3	2	1
Assessment centres	1	2	1	1	3	2	2
Testing behaviour in authentic environment	1	2	2	1	2	2	1
Structured interviews	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Non-structured interviews	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
References	3	1	2	2	1	2	2
Trial period	1	3	1	1	1	3	1
Astrology	3	4	4	4	4	4	3
Graphology	2	3	3	4	3	4	3

candidate testing and selection methods for the sales representative positions are viewed professional knowledge tests, projective tests, performance tests, structured interviews, non-structured interviews and references. Astrology is considered inappropriate and graphology inappropriate to very inappropriate by the respondents.

Respondent 6 claimed the basic knowledge tests (e.g., the rule of three, calculation item identification, unit conversion) often seem to be difficult for candidates and that is why the respondents had to lower their testing requirements almost to minimum. As to psychological tests, they integrate them in psychological

part of the interview. Tests reveal some facts, however, they should be taken into account to a limited degree (being stress affected) and are not seen as “almighty”. Current university graduates have learned them by heart, so they can hardly be taken as a valid source of information. That is why approximately two questions from each test type are asked in various combinations. As the questions are mixed, the probability to learn them by heart is eliminated.

In the sales representatives selection process certain common testing methods are used. A brief overview of them and corresponding respondents’ opinions are stated in the following table (x = it is used):

Table IV Candidate testing methods and their utilization by respondents [13]

Testing method/Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Non-structured interviews							
Structured interviews	x	x					x
Semi-structured interviews	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Psychological tests		x				x	
Intelligence tests						x	
Personality tests	x					x	
Abilities (competence) tests				x		x	x
Knowledge and skills tests			x	x	x	x	x
Analysing references	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

In the sales representative selection process all the respondents use methods of a semi-structured questionnaire and analysing references. The companies very often use candidate’s knowledge and skills testing.

Other testing methods are only seldom used by the respondents. Non-structured interviews are not used at all by the respondents. None of the respondents uses Assessment Centre services. Respondents 4 and 7 carry out this type of service by themselves. Furthermore, Respondent 7 claims they are better in this service as the AC is not able to choose the right candidate for this type of enterprise.

## Conclusion

Only two respondents prefer *staff recruitment* from external resources. They are Respondents 2 and 5, both large enterprises, Respondent 2 being a chemical industry company and Respondent 5 an IT company. Others prefer internal

resources, which is even treated by an internal collective bargaining agreement with Respondent 4. *All candidates* are informed *via* notice boards of Labour Offices. Informing through the Internet is also frequently used. Respondent 3 is exceptional in terms of preferring candidates from internal resources, and that is why advertising on the Internet is of little relevance. Chemical companies are specific in informing candidates as they are the only ones to use company notice boards. The large and well-known enterprises participate at trade fairs, such as Career days, which distinguishes them from the smaller ones. The studied chemical enterprises, regardless of their size, are the only ones to use personnel agencies to recruit candidates.

All the contacted respondents *require candidate's CV*, Respondent 2 in addition requires candidates to prepare a presentation on their selling strategy in shortlisting procedure for the second round. According to most respondents *the most important requirements* on sales representative candidates are capabilities to communicate and present, experience and customer orientation. All the respondents considered the requirements difficult to order in terms of importance because certain requirement groups enjoy the same degree of importance.

All the respondents draw a list of candidates with an exception of Respondent 3. Respondent 3 claims there are few candidates as the requirements on them are high, and that is why also the internal resources are preferred. Only one respondent states they use an option to send a questionnaire or a cover letter to complete. Other methods are marked as widely used by the respondents. The respondents agree that a *discriminating element* is primarily age, gender a marital status of the candidates. None of the respondents takes any measures to reduce risks of allegations of discriminatory behaviour. Only with Respondents 2 and 6 the interview is conducted by 2 to 3 executives of the company, and Respondent 4 holds an interview with more interviewees at a time.

The activities associated with selecting a candidate for a sales representative position are the same in principal, also in terms of arranging respective steps. The respective companies' procedures differ only in their size, irrespective of their line of business. The respondents *state that the quality of staff selection procedure* is mainly endangered by hurrying and lack of time devoted to the process. Other risk factors claimed by most of the respondents are keeping prejudices, intriguing and unrealistic job descriptions.

As appropriate and very appropriate *candidate testing and selection methods* for the sales representative positions are seen by the respondents the following ones: personal anamnesis, psychological questionnaires, assessment centres, testing in authentic environment, and trial periods. As appropriate testing and selection methods the respondents see: expert knowledge tests, projective tests, performance tests, structured interviews and references. Astrology is considered by the respondents very inappropriate and graphology inappropriate to very inappropriate. *Via* graphology, certain specific traits defining talents for social contact can be

revealed. The respondents' ranking it into the category of inappropriate to very inappropriate methods may issue from their ignorance about this method and the fact how cost demanding it is.

In the selection process of a sales representative all the respondents use *semi-structured interview methods* and *reference checking*. The companies very often *test knowledge and skills* of the candidates. The respondents rarely use other testing methods. Not even one of the respondents applies a non-structured interview. All the respondents use *interviews*. Generally speaking, the enterprise size and the line of business do not influence individual steps and organization of the interviews. None of the respondents uses *Assessment Centre* services for testing sales representative candidates.

To conclude the research results, the chemical enterprises distinguish only partial specifics in terms of the sales representative positions. The chemical enterprises are the only to use company notice boards to inform candidates and in recruiting they collaborate with personnel agencies. Significantly more differences might be caused by an enterprises size than by a line of business. Smaller enterprises need fewer employees and do not possess so many resources as the larger ones.

## Acknowledgement

*The article is a part of the Partnership for Chemistry project; registration number: CZ.1.07/2.4.00/31.0062. University of Pardubice, Faculty of chemical technology, Studentská 95, 532 10 Pardubice, IČ 00216275*

## References

- [1] Koubek J.: *Human Resource Management: Fundamentals of Modern Personnel Management* (in Czech), Management Press, Prague, 2007.
- [2] Koubek J.: *Personnel Function in Small and Middle Firms* (in Czech), 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Grada Publishing, Prague, 2011.
- [3] Chládková A., Bukovan P.: *Personnel Management: 12 Recommendations for Keeping of Personnel Administration* (in Czech), ASPI, Prague, 2007.
- [4] Armstrong M.: *Human Resource Management: The New Trends and Advances* (in Czech), 10<sup>th</sup> ed., Grada Publishing, Prague, 2007.
- [5] Kocianová R.: *Personnel Management and Methods of Personnel Function* (in Czech), Grada Publishing, Prague, 2012.
- [6] Hroník F.: *How to Be Successful in Employees Selection: Detailed Guide by Selection Process* (in Czech), Computer Press, Prague, 1999.
- [7] Hodgson S.: *Psychological and Another Selection Tests: How to Prepare*



- and Successful Past Various Type of Tests* (in Czech), Grada Publishing, Prague, 2007.
- [8] Vaculík M.: *Assessment centrum: Psychology in selection and people development* (in Czech), 1<sup>st</sup> NC Publishing, Brno, 2010.
  - [9] Bednaříková M., Ehlová Z., Kerlesová V., Vávra J., Pražáková T. : *Sci. Pap. Univ. Pardubice, Ser. A* **17**, 347 (2011).
  - [10] Jakubíková D.: *Strategic Management: Strategy and Trends* (in Czech), Grada, Prague, 2008.
  - [11] Karlíček M., Král P.: *Marketing Communication: How to Communicate on Our Market* (in Czech), Grada, Prague, 2011.
  - [12] Přikrylová J., Jahodová H.: *Modern Marketing Communication* (in Czech), Grada, Prague, 2012.
  - [13] Nožičková I.: *Employees Selection Methods in Selected Enterprises* (in Czech), Diploma thesis, University of Pardubice, Pardubice, 2012.