



**Employability:**  
The Good, The Bad  
and the Employment Challenge

Patrick Reid  
Nov 2008

# A Disclaimer...



My personal views, not those of my employer



The presentation is based on personal observation and public domain data

# My background:

- 1986 BSc Biochemistry, UMIST
- 1990 PhD Biochemistry, Manchester
- 1990 – 04, Systems Analyst, ICI
- 1994 – 99, Medical Affairs Manager, Zeneca
- June 1999 <= Completed Exec MBA
- 1999 – 01, eComm Inter Ops Mgr, PS&L, AstraZeneca
- 2001 - 05, Dir Global eMarketing, PS&L
- 2005 – 07, Reg Dir Emerging Technologies, GSMIS
- 2007 – Present, Regional Engagement Director, SP&I



## And in a University setting...

- Post graduate demonstrator, 3 years
- Senior Tutor Hall of Residence, 7 years
- Alumni Board Member, 3 years
- Moderator Greenwich School of Mgmt, 8 years
- External Hull & Plymouth University, 3 years
- Council Member Univ of Liverpool, 3 years



# Agenda

- Purpose
- Globalisation, what it means
- Changing employment market
- Employers challenge
- Observations on recruitment
- Behavioural challenge
- Differentiation
- Increasing the chances of success...

# Purpose

- To understand some of the changes occurring in employment and their drivers
- To explore some of the methods used in selection and how candidates may differentiate themselves
- To recommend some approaches to improve employability

# Globalisation

- Offshore sourcing driving costs down, developer in India 44 000 USD a year, similar skills in China 15 000 USD
- International teams in technology roles very much the norm, requires specific skills
  - Flexibility, no longer a 9 – 5
  - Cultural Awareness, probing and directive
  - Ability to assess cost and quality

# The old psychological contract

CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

- Stability, short term focus

PROMOTION BASIS

- Expected, time-served, technical competence

REDUNDANCY/TENURE

- Job for life

CULTURE

- Paternalism, exchange security for commitment

MOBILITY

- Never, or on own terms

RESPONSIBILITY

- Instrumental, then progressive levels linked to promotion

STATUS

- Very important

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Companies' responsibility

TRUST

- High trust possible



# The **new** psychological contract

CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

PROMOTION BASIS

REDUNDANCY/TENURE

CULTURE

MOBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

STATUS

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

TRUST

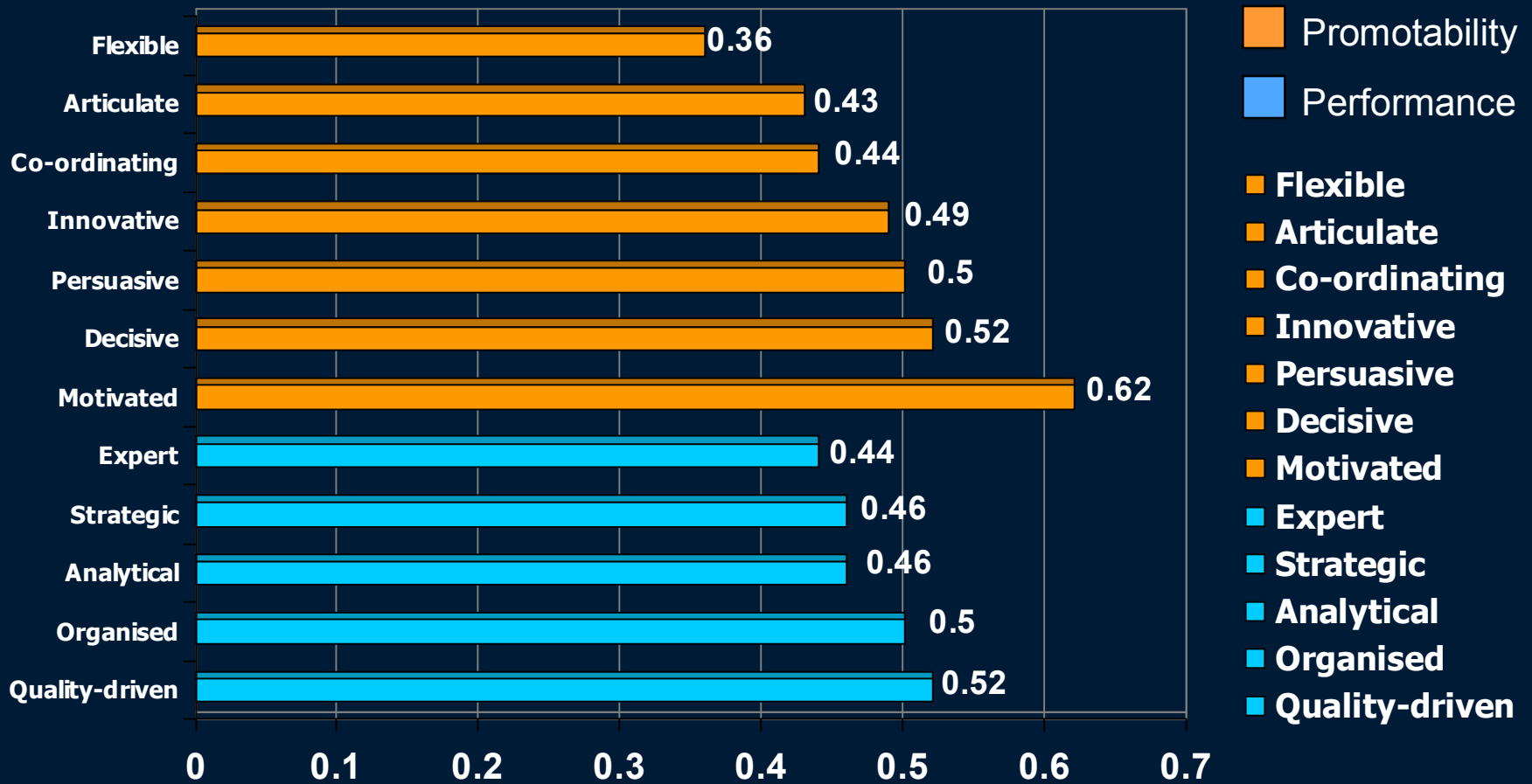
- Change is continuous
- Less opportunity, new criteria, for those who deserve it
- Lucky to have a job
- Those who perform get rewarded, contract is developed
- Horizontal, rejuvenation, managed
- To be encouraged, balanced by accountability
- Competence and credibility
- Individuals' responsibility
- Desirable, but commitment to project or profession

# Validity of Schroeder competencies

## Prediction of Unit Performance in a Dynamic Environment

- Information search 0.35
- Conceptual complexity 0.40
- Charisma (presentation and self confidence) 0.28
- Proactive orientation 0.22

# What gets you paid doesn't get you promoted



Ivan Robertson et al, JOOP

# The employers challenge

- Need to remain financially competitive and source appropriately
- Full time employees represent a long term commitment
- Increasingly looking to recruit experienced hires
- Takes time to plan and execute a recruitment campaign, sometimes we don't find the right person !

# Observations on recruitment

- Difficult to place adverts and make the roles attractive to applicants
- Frequently get inappropriate applications
- <10% fill in the forms completely
- Undergraduates very sensitive to location
- <10% of interviewees have been interviewed before (placements)
- Majority struggle with competency interviews
- Sometimes we simply don't recruit if we can't find the right person !

# Common sense does differentiate...

- Prior experience
- Portfolio
- Relevant vocabulary
- Presentation
- Proactive orientation
- Background search
- Preparation
- Relevant referees
- Business context

- Email addresses
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Inactive
- Poor description
- Not reading the advert
- Not following instructions
- Not filling the form in
- Being unspecific

# Behavioural interviews

- Situation
  - Context and understanding of the broader environment
- Task
  - Scale and understanding of the problem
- Action
  - Assessing the approach and problem solving capability
- Result
  - Ability to reflect, learn and modify

Description of situation and context	Description of the task, its complexity and the outcomes desired	Description of what the candidate did to achieve or exceed the outcomes	Description of outcomes, impact of outcomes on interviewee and others
<b>Situation</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Result</b>
<p>Ability to articulate situation with suitable vocabulary and understanding of its complexity</p> <p>Evidence of information gathering and processing</p> <p>Ability to research and explore</p> <p>Ability to understand risk and contextualise it</p> <p><u>Reid (2008)</u></p>	<p>Clear understanding of scale of task, resources needed, measures and feedback which may be utilised</p> <p>Ability to estimate resources and skills required to complete and deliver</p> <p>Ability to identify improvements which might be made to enhance outcomes</p> <p>Ability to understand and articulate the impact on others</p>	<p>Evidence of proactive engagement</p> <p>Evidence of dealing with complex task in appropriate way, prioritising and building</p> <p>Ability to identify and utilise resources and information</p> <p>Ability to identify novel approaches, test and deploy if appropriate</p> <p>Ability to differentiate between own actions and accountabilities and those of others</p> <p>Ability to respond effectively to challenges encountered</p> <p>Ability to work across multiple levels of hierarchy</p> <p>Ability to influence or manage other resources with appropriate mitigations</p> <p>Ability to learn and acquire new skills / experience</p>	<p>Ability to reflect, diagnose and modify behaviour</p> <p>Ability to assess direct and indirect impacts of project</p> <p>Ability to deliver beyond expectation</p>



# The real differentiators

- Team Work
  - Group work
- Technical Skill
  - Clear tangible examples (no templates)
  - Portfolios
- Confidence
  - Presentations (individual & group)
- Problem Solving
  - Professional networks
  - Utilisation of primary research methods

# Building employability

- Take a long term view, placements, alumni, industry connections
- Proactively encourage placements
- Must offer and encourage interview training
- Be challenging of yourselves and your expectations, USE development plans
- Encourage portfolio development and extra curricula activities in community
- Develop presentation skills early, utilising PowerPoint and other visualisations of data
- Utilise multiple assessment methodologies

# Placements

- Opportunity to develop softer skills
- Allows exploration of skills in safe environment
- Deep interactions with practitioners
- Potential for exposure to vendors, consultants
- Exposure to the legal and regulatory realities of work
- Stretching feedback

# So what do I do...

- YOU have accountability for your own development...
- Use the careers service !
- Never too soon to start a portfolio, what examples do you have now...
- Build your professional network
- Don't be discouraged by rejection



**Any Questions ?**