

DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR HIGH POTENTIALS

Fenestra, Inc.

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- The goal
 - A developmental experience for diverse second level managers to help prepare for promotion opportunities and enhance the talent pool
- What SH&A/Fenestra did
 - Delivered a hybrid assessment center with local face to face interactions and web-based content delivery and assessor participation



FENESTRA

A DIVISION OF SANDRA HARTOG & ASSOCIATES

The Business Opportunity

Assessment centers are considered by many to be the top-shelf solution for assessing, selecting, and developing organizational talent. However, while acknowledging the benefits of the methodology, organizations have begun to push back on the time commitments, cost, and resources required to implement and administer assessment centers. In addition, it is difficult to maintain the reliability of the application when implementing traditional centers across multiple locations.

In the telecommunications industry, where assessment centers have their deepest roots, there was a call to respect the foundation of traditional assessment centers and provide a forward look toward the future of leadership development. The goal was to maintain the benefits and scientific rigor of traditional centers, but to deliver an assessment center to Verizon Managers using state of the art technology, in a way that met the following objectives:

- **Increase Scalability.** Assess 200 managers within a nine-month period.
- **Afford distributed delivery.** Conduct assessments at over 20 locations.
- **Decrease cycle time.** Complete an assessment cycle, including candidate scheduling, assessment, decision-making, and feedback, within a two-week period.
- **Offer standardization and control.** Maintain centralized control, standardization, and consistency.
- **Increase role fidelity.** Provide an assessment experience that closely resembles the responsibilities, challenges, and the modes of communication commonly used at Verizon.
- **Lower cost.** Deliver assessments at a fraction of the cost of a traditional assessment center.
- **Increase stakeholder Involvement.** Provide controlled but readily available access to organizational stakeholders to 'observe' activities, and access assessment-related data and feedback.
- **Enhance evaluation and developmental guidance.** The goal was to assess and provide individuals with tailored feedback on 10 leadership competencies to help them better prepare for promotion opportunities.

Fenestra's Business Solution

Verizon Telecom partnered with Fenestra and implemented a virtual assessment center to identify outstanding talent and provide guided development for second-level managers. Web technology was used to create scalable, cost-effective, engaging, and highly realistic 'day-in-the-life' job tryouts that were locally delivered, while assessors and clients participated and fulfilled their roles from multiple locations in the U.S. as well as in India.

In 2007, a leadership assessment program for second level managers who were the bench for Director-level titles was administered to 200 high potential managers across the United States and India. The program was comprised of multiple steps including prework, assessment, and coach feedback with developmental guidance.

Prework. Nominees received a computer generated invitation and completed pre-work online during the two weeks leading up to the Assessment Program. Each nominee was asked to complete an on-line career accomplishment record (CAR) which included self-ratings on each of the measured assessment competencies critical for success in the targeted role of Director and reflections on their career aspirations and goals. The CAR was another tool used to facilitate

coaching and developmental planning discussions. Participants also had an opportunity to review background information about the Director role, the Simulated Region, personnel, and other important background information prior to the assessment.

Simulation. Participants engaged in a four-hour simulation of the Director position. Stimuli material and exercises were developed based on interviews and evaluated to ensure representation of the targeted Director position. During the job simulation, participants engaged in an interactive, in-box environment, reviewing provided information, responding to email, and providing business recommendations. Participants also had scheduled and unexpected meetings with simulated peers, direct reports, administrative support, and supervisors.

Evaluation. Assessors evaluated and provided competency ratings for each exercise. The competencies evaluated were identified through a thorough job analyses and Subject Matter Expert input regarding exercise-competency linkages.

Debrief and integration. At the end of the simulation, the participant met with an assessor-coach to discuss the rationale for and perceived outcomes of his/her decisions. Later in the day, three assessors reviewed the day's activities and evaluations and provided individual ratings for each critical competency. An integration discussion among the assessors was facilitated by a lead assessor to reach consensus on competency ratings and overall readiness. This process was also supported using internet based flipcharts and conference calling.

Coaching and feedback. Participants were sent flash reports summarizing the consensus ratings. The flash reports were followed by feedback and coaching discussions with assessor/coaches. After the feedback coaching sessions, detailed written feedback reports with specific behavioral examples summarizing the evidence for the ratings as well as specific developmental activity recommendations were sent.

The Solution Benefits

The outcomes resulted in:

- **Scalability, centralized control and distributed delivery.** The key factor impacting the scalability of traditional assessment centers is the need to bring numerous assessors and candidates to a single location to conduct the assessment. In this technology enhanced assessment center model, both internal and external assessors were able to perform their roles virtually, with no travel involved, and limited facilities to coordinate. Required facilities consist only of an empty office with a computer, a phone, and a printer.
- **Cycle time.** The weeks or months of planning typically needed for traditional centers are reduced to just a few day due to the benefits of all participants working from their own locations in a virtual environment. Additionally, scheduling constraints are greatly reduced as is the time spent in the actual assessment.
- **Fidelity.** Job-related behavioral simulations were a cornerstone of the project. Jobs in global, technology-enabled organizations feature a reliance on phone and email communication and web-based tools and resources. Assessments that consist of email and phone based interactions have a high degree of content and face validity. Technology also provided opportunities to personalize the materials and enhance realism.
- **Cost.** The technology solution offered significant cost savings over traditional centers.
 - No Center needed for assessment. Local delivery utilizing Verizon facilities eliminated the need for event planning costs and associated T&E expenses which has been estimated at \$2,500 per participant.

- Less administration. The administrative cost burden was also reduced as huge printing requests and other paraphernalia did not need to be produced nor shipped.
- Economy of action. An economy of action for assessors was a welcome by-product. Assessors found themselves with extra time and more availability to participate in assessments.
- Stakeholder Involvement. Technology also allowed for easy access and permission-based security to ensure only the relevant people have access when and where necessary.
- Impact. Survey information from both participants and supervisors was collected in an effort to track and evaluate the impact of the program. Some highlights from the data include:
 - 94% of the Participants would recommend the assessment to others
 - 97% of the Participants report receiving useful and helpful feedback
 - 100% of the Participants report improvement in at least one competency area as a result of the assessment and development program
 - 95% of Supervisors found the program helpful in developing their direct reports
 - 100% of the supervisors report that the assessment was accurate in identifying strengths and development opportunities for their direct reports

The success of the virtual assessment center program has led to additional assessments in 2008 as well as the potential launch of a new program for VP level assessment.

More Information

Contact Us

Fenestra, Inc., a division of Sandra Hartog & Associates
280 First Street
Brooklyn, NY
11215
USA
Email: info@fenestrainc.net
Website: www.fenestrainc.net
Tel: 718-832-2118
Fax: 718-832-2889

About Fenestra, Inc.

Fenestra, Inc. is a provider of premier HR technology solutions, employing products and services to manage selection and development of employees in multiple industries, including financial services, telecommunication, manufacturing, consumer goods, marketing, retail, hospitality, and others.

Fenestra specializes in technology-enhanced assessment centers that provide scalable, relatively low-cost methods to select and develop the highest-quality employees.

Fenestra is a division of Sandra Hartog & Associates, a talent management consulting firm headquartered in New York City. Sandra Hartog & Associates and Fenestra, Inc. are certified Women-Owned Business Enterprises. For more information visit www.fenestrainc.net.

Appendices

Technical Specifications

E-evaluation™ is a fully-hosted web application designed using Microsoft's .Net platform and supported by a SQL-server database and Windows 2003 Server. The site is 128-bit encrypted with an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificate. It is permission based, allowing only those with appropriate permissions to access relevant areas of the site.

Computer System Requirements

Suggested minimum hardware and software requirements to effectively use the Fenestra E-evaluation™ application:

Supported client hardware/operating systems:

PC:	Minimum Requirements
CPU	AMD/Intel 1 GHz
Operating System	Windows 2000 and Windows XP with latest critical security updates and Service Pack installed
RAM	256 MB
Mac:	
CPU	Power Mac G4, Power Macintosh G3, PowerBook G4, PowerBook G3 (except the original PowerBook G3), iMac, eMac, iBook.
Operating System	Mac OS X Jaguar
RAM	256 MB

Older, slower hardware may work but the user experience may suffer.

Supported client software:

The application is accessed using an Internet browser. The following lists supported browsers and oldest/recommended versions.

PC:	Oldest Version	Recommended Version
Firefox/Mozilla	2.0	2.0
Internet Explorer	6.0 SP1	7.0
Mac:		
Firefox	2.0	2.0
Safari	1.2	1.2

Required internet browser settings:

- First party cookies must be allowed.
- First party images must be allowed.
- Pop-up blockers, if used, must allow this site launch pop-ups.
- SSL must be allowed (**https://**).
- JavaScript enabled and the running of active scripts allowed.
- IFrames must be allowed.

Internet browser add-ons and toolbars:

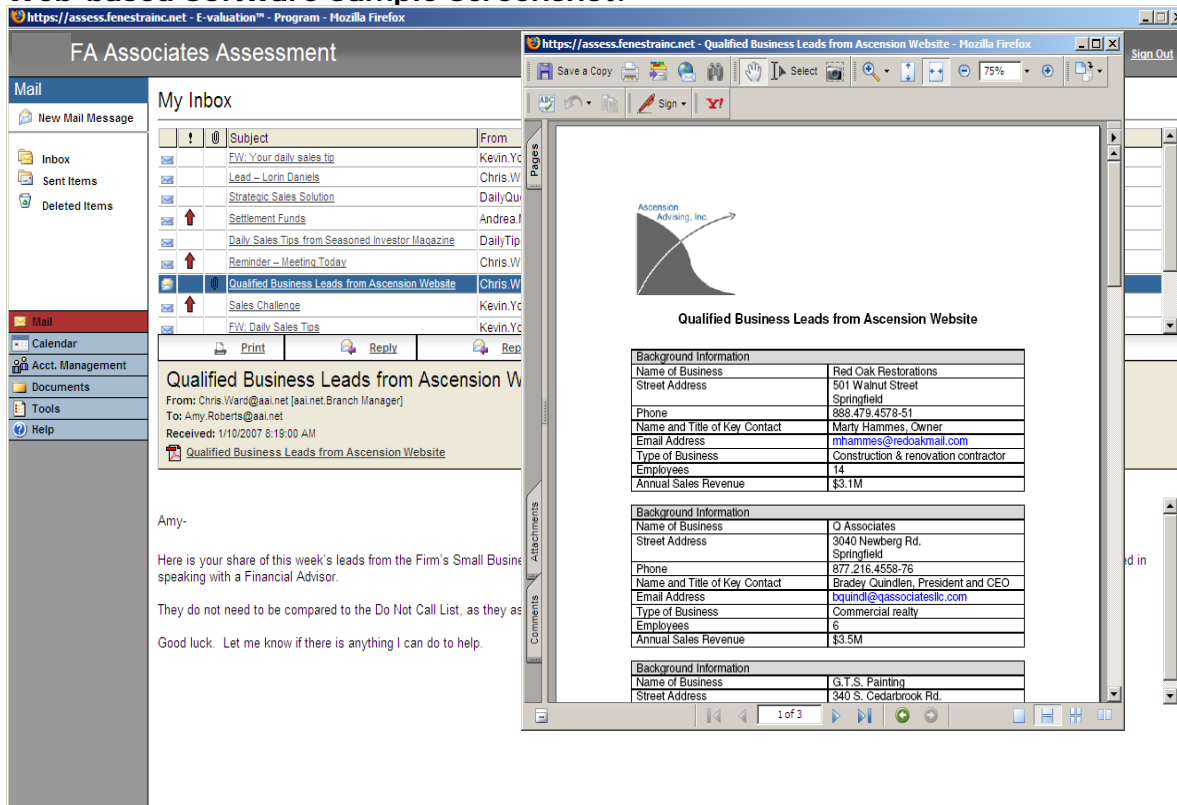
It may become necessary to disable add-ons and toolbars. The functions of these add-ons, such as pop-up blockers, blacklisting, cookie management, and the like, may compound, obscure, or be the cause of the particular problem a user is having.

Display resolution:

The application was designed to use an internet browser that is maximized (fills the entire screen) on a color display with a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels. On higher resolution monitors the browser does not need to be maximized but the viewable pane of the browser will need to be at least 980 x 650 pixels. Though the site is visible with 8 bit (256) color it is better viewed with at least 16 bit (65,536) color.

The E-evaluation™ technology is designed to replicate a variety of work environments and the tasks and activities that are encountered on a typical work day in a variety of professions, roles, and levels. The cutting-edge technology allows the input of customizable content to create proprietary Simulation and development programs. This content is delivered to users in a multitude of roles, including program Participants, client and vendor stakeholders and administrators, and assessors/coaches/feedback providers.

Web-based Software Sample Screenshot:



FAQ's

What is an Assessment Center?

Assessment centers are considered the top-shelf solution for selecting and developing employees. They consist of activities designed to bring out behavior relevant to the most important aspects of the position or level for which the employee is being assessed. Trained assessors observe a group of employees using diagnostic processes to obtain information about the employee's abilities or potential. Traditional assessment centers take place on site at a conference facility and all role plays are held face-to-face. For additional information, click [here](#)

What are *E-valuation*™ Technology-enhanced Assessment Centers?

E-valuation™ technology-enhanced assessment centers utilize a web-based software application combined with best practices in assessment centers to provide a highly realistic simulation that parallels "a day in the life" of a busy professional, gathering information on Candidates/Participants' likelihood of success in a new role. It is scalable, cost-effective, highly realistic, and engaging, and highlights strengths and development needs that can be used to inform selection, individual development plans, and career management. It can provide more accurate information than traditional assessment centers about a participant's strengths and development needs and readiness for a new role, through a scalable, standardized process that can be implemented globally, ensuring consistently high-quality assessments for all Candidates/Participants.

What are they used for?

They are used for a variety of human resource processes, including external selection, high-potential identification, assessment of strengths and development as a prelude to development planning and/or coaching, or as a stand-alone developmental experience.

Why is a standardized process for selection and development so critical? Why is it particularly critical right now?

The cost of a wrong hire is estimated between two and four times an employee's salary.

The single leading cause of turnover in American corporations is a lack of employee/job fit.

The baby-boomer generation is leaving the workforce - increased departures will drive the need for more promotions or hires.

Companies with stronger leadership benches are four times as likely to outperform their peers in revenue growth over a 36 month period. (CLC, 2005)

What are some of the benefits of using *E-valuation*™ technology-enhanced assessment centers?

In tracking results of *E-valuation*™ technology-enhanced assessment centers, we have found

- A significant increase in the percentage of employees regarded by our clients as top-tier performers
- A significant reduction in turnover -- more than 40% -- in areas using our assessment centers

How long does it take to implement *E-valuation*™ technology-enhanced assessment centers?

The creation of the simulated organization and its challenges, the role plays, and all associated materials generally takes about 8-12 weeks. If a client already has simulation materials (e.g., that they have been using in a traditional assessment center) and wants to move to a technology-enhanced assessment center process, it can take as little as 2-3 days, providing the materials do not need to be substantially altered to fit the new paradigm. Using one of our off-the-shelf products can take as little as one day to implement.

Are there dimensions/competencies that lend themselves more or less to this type of assessment?

Organization/Prioritization, Learning Agility, Drive/Action Orientation/Motivation/Persistence, Work Standards, and phone-based selling-related competencies, such as Persuasiveness, Impact, Client/Customer Focus, and Relationship Building are all readily assessable using a technology-enhanced assessment center. The addition of face-to-face role plays can of course accommodate any competencies/exercises.

While it may seem that it could be more difficult to assess leadership skills, we believe that competencies such as influence, coaching, negotiation and collaboration are all rather readily assessed using *E-valuation*™

technology-enhanced assessment centers. This type of assessment is particularly useful for the roles of member or leader of a virtual team. We can even hold leaderless group discussions via teleconference and use web-based cameras to facilitate the face-to-face component.

Have you found any adverse impact in using the tool or any performance differences based on age, gender, or ethnicity?

We have been tracking potential differences in performance and have found that none exist for any protected groups as defined by U.S. EEOC laws. While we were initially concerned that the technology might impact users of the tool less familiar with technology, we have found that Participants/Candidates over age 40 perform as well as those under age 40. We attribute this to the intuitive nature of the technology itself, and to an orientation that outlines the use of the technology and provides clear instructions and standards for success. While the tool is not intended to assess technological comfort or savvy, most roles for which a technology-enhanced assessment center are appropriate require some degree of facility with technology on the job. As a basic understanding of the office tools we use every day is required for the role, this technology is appropriate for the assessment of that role.

What metrics do you use to track performance?

For sales roles we track production and performance levels, as well as turnover. For managerial roles, the metrics in which our clients are most interested include percentage of internal promotion, turnover of both the manager and his or her team, and the percentage of assessed Candidates who are selected for high-potential talent pools.

How is data collected and maintained on the E-valuation™ platform?

All data is instantly archived and maintained on secure servers, making it available for anytime retrieval by those with proper data-access permissions. There is no longer a need to maintain paper files of assessment materials or results data. All data can be linked into an organization's HRIS system for easy performance management integration.

How can E-valuation™ be used for development?

- Consider the following points:
 - In a few short years, the largest generation in the history of the United States - the "baby boomers" - will begin their much-anticipated exit from the workforce, leaving a massive talent void in their wake. The migration of this cohort will create a skilled labor shortage so significant that it is forcing companies to propel their talent management processes into high gear.
 - Staffing and retention represent one of the two most significant costs confronting businesses (real estate being the second).
 - The eradication of many middle-management positions over the past two decades has left many companies with a shallow talent pool from which to replace retiring leaders.
 - Organizations with the most effective talent management systems are more likely to use simulations to identify and develop Candidates.
- The key to success in identifying high potentials and developing greater bench strength in your talent pipeline is in distinguishing those with the greatest aptitude and ability to leverage development opportunities.
With E-valuation™ technology-enhanced assessment centers:
 - You can observe Participant/Candidate operating style instead of only hearing them talk about what they have done in the past or would do in the future
 - Participants can test drive" a job or new skill set
 - You can significantly increase your effectiveness at identifying extraordinary talent
 - You can significantly increase retention and keep a ready stock of high potential talent
 - You can identify individual strengths and development needs to ready your people for the future and create actionable development plans

Does it slow down the hiring process?

It is critical to both our clients and to us that we implement our assessment centers in such a way that they do not impede the hiring process. Hiring the right Candidates requires a quality, streamlined process that prevents the best Candidates from slipping away. To that end, **E-valuation™** allows for on-demand setup, requires few resources, and is designed to minimize administrative burden. Some of our assessment centers

require Candidates to complete pre-work prior to the assessment, which may add 1-3 days of Candidate preparation time to the process.

What roles/levels are technology-enhanced assessment centers most appropriate for?

We initially expected that they would be more readily accepted at the individual contributor or first-line supervisor level. However, especially for development, our clients have begun requesting that we run technology-enhanced assessment centers at senior levels, including in the C-suite.

Technology-enhanced assessment centers are most appropriate for:

- Roles that utilize some degree of technology. This could include technology as common as email, word processing software, and the internet, or as new as instant messaging, computer-based voicemail, or video-mail.
- Organizations that are "technology-forward."

Are there differences in Candidates/Participants' perceptions of fairness and accuracy that increase or lower participants' resistance to the results?

Technology-enhanced assessments have greater fidelity than traditional assessment centers due to their ability to more closely mirror the job. The process therefore lends itself to increased perceptions of fairness among Candidates/Participants over traditional assessment center. As a result, we have greater Candidate/Participant engagement beginning earlier in the hiring process, we see greater behavioral distinction between effective and ineffective Candidates for a role, and the assessment is better able to define Candidate/Participant strengths and development needs.