

## HRM AT WORK EXERCISE

### CULTURE MISFITS

*REFERENCE:* 'Culture misfits', Therese Waters, *Sydney Morning Herald, Radar Magazine*, 16 March 2005, p.4.

**CHAPTERS RELEVANT TO THIS EXERCISE:** 4, 7 and 19.

#### Summary

The evidence and opinions on the culture fit approach to staff selection contained in the article contrast starkly with those in the accompanying article entitled 'Hiring a cultural misfit can be a costly mistake' (*Australian Financial Review*, 29 March 2006, p.53). In doing so, raises a number of legal and ethical concerns concerning value and trait-based approaches to staff selection for recruitment, retention and retrenchment.

While presenting opinions from several recruitment consultants and HR managers supportive of the culture fit approach, the present article also raises serious concerns about the manner in which this approach is applied in practice – and about the motives for its use (or should that be 'abuse'?). It appears that many recruiters emphasising culture fit fail to offer unsuccessful candidates an adequate explanation for their cultural inappropriateness. Citing the experiences of several applicants, as well as one case of a woman's short-lived appointment as a trade mechanic, the piece suggests that non-selection or dismissal ostensibly on the grounds of cultural incompatibility may mask quite discriminatory and unlawful decision-making to do with age, gender, and other invalid and illegal selection grounds. For this reason, some government agencies have ceased using recruitment consultants who specialize in personality profiling for cultural fit purposes. However, one consultant cited in the piece is quite unapologetic in claiming that 85 per cent of staff terminations are now based on cultural grounds rather than on merit in relation to the job held. The piece advises that under the New South Wales Privacy Act, job candidates who have been subjected to any form of psychometric testing are entitled to view the results of any such tests.

## Questions

1. What are the legal and ethical issues involved here and how should HR managers respond?
2. What are the possible disadvantages of basing selection decisions primarily on personality and values profiling?
3. Why should we not accept the observations of the recruitment consultants cited here at face value?