

# Work experience poor predictor of future job performance

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A common hiring philosophy used for generations is being flipped on its head by new research from Florida State University.

Screening [job applicants](#) based on their prior work experience is often a mistake among employers, according to Chad Van Iddekinge, FSU's Bank of America Professor of Management and an expert on human resources management.

"Previous work experience generally is not a good indicator of how well employees perform in a new organization," Van Iddekinge said. "Our research found a very small relationship between the amount or type of experience that employees possessed when they came into a new [organization](#) and how they ultimately performed in that job. There's almost no relationship in most cases."

In a paper published in the journal *Personnel Psychology*, Van Iddekinge and his colleagues reported the results of a five-year research project that examined more than 80 workplace studies conducted over the past 60 years.

The meta-analysis contained a rich repository of data about people's pre-hire experience, including details about years of work experience, number of [jobs](#) held and how previous experience lined up with new jobs.

Van Iddekinge's research clearly showed that organizations prefer applicants with similar experience.

"That approach is very intuitive," he said. "You would think prior experience would be really important. Employers always ask, 'Does the candidate have experience?' The idea is that experience helps people develop knowledge and skills relevant for work. But the types of experiential metrics used by many organizations generally are not valid indicators of someone's potential and whether that person will perform well if hired."

The research team also looked at whether a person's work experience had any impact on future job turnover. Losing employees is a big concern for many organizations because they've invested time and money training employees, and turnover can diminish stability.

As a result, employers often consider how many jobs an applicant has held, and how long the person stayed in that role. Organizations tend to downgrade applicants if they have jumped from job to job, Van Iddekinge said, and that's another common hiring mistake.

"We found literally zero correlation between people's pre-hire experience and whether they would stay with their future [employer](#) or leave," he said.

Van Iddekinge concluded many organizations have focused on prior [work](#) experience without considering the best way to measure it or whether experience is even critical to the job.

He hopes this study will encourage employers to rethink how they use experience to assess job applicants.

"We're not saying experience is not important in every situation," Van Iddekinge said. "But we think there are better ways to measure pre-hire experience that may be more productive. Don't ignore experience, but the way employers measure it now does not appear to be very effective."

**More information:** Chad H. Iddekinge et al. A meta-analysis of the criterion-related validity of prehire work experience, *Personnel Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/peps.12335](https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12335)

Provided by Florida State University

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