



# A historical approach to realistic job previews

## An exploration into their origins, evolution, and recommendations for the future

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this paper is to provide some historical understanding of a popular recruitment procedure called a Realistic Job Preview (RJP). As long as individuals have worked for others there has been a need to exchange information about a focal job. Information can be exchanged through myriad channels. The aim here is to trace the origins of RJP's and discuss the initial studies that generated attention and interest in what has become known as "realistic recruitment".

**Design/methodology/approach** – Along with a historical account, this paper provides a summary of the limitations associated with this method, proposed psychological processes mediating effectiveness of RJP's, and issues with development, mode of presentation, implementation of RJP's, and an important alternative/accompanying technique (ELP).

**Findings** – While this technique has been used for many years, it will continue to be a quality addition to any worker socialization program.

**Originality/value** – The value of this paper is that it places this technique in an historical context.

**Keywords** Recruitment, Human resources management, Realistic job previews

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

Throughout the history of organizations there has been a need to exchange information about the content of the work that needed to be performed. This information has been essential in helping workers to be able to successfully prepare for both the organization and the specific duties of the employment position. In order to help ensure a better fit between the organization and the employees, this exchange of information should be conducted during the recruitment process and prior to a mutual selection by the organization and employee into an employment contract.

The study of employee recruitment has been central to the human resource literature and has markedly increased in recent years (Billsberry, 2007; Breaugh *et al.*, 2008; Breaugh and Starke, 2000) leading to numerous reviews of the literature (e.g. Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 1992, 2008; Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1991; Wanous, 1992). Recruitment has been defined as the practices and tasks by an organization to identify and attract potential employees (Barber, 1998). However, as Barber (1998) noted, the recruitment process continues after the mere attraction of job candidates. Because candidates are able to self-select out of the hiring process when

