measured, however, should not take precedence over testing for those that are relatively more critical to job performance.

A work sample was used to good effect in the selection of forklift operators in a packing shed. Each applicant was asked to stack and then unstack five large bins. The test was administered under conditions consistent across applicants, and performance was measured by the number of errors and the time taken to complete the task. An extensive list of references on personnel testing and assessment is at *AgHelpWanted.org*.

Interviews

The interview is the single most commonly used source of information in employee selection, and it has multiple functions. As a two-way communication vehicle, it provides information to employer and applicant. The savvy applicant understands that the conduct of the interview reflects management attitudes and organizational practices that will affect her worklife if she comes aboard. But wanting to make a good impression on prospective employees is certainly not the main reason for being organized in selection interviews.

Despite its widespread use, the traditional interview is notoriously invalid and unreliable as a predictor of performance, so reliance on it results in the wrong person getting selected. Problems with interviews mostly boil down to interviewer subjectivity and bias.

Specifically, research shows that casual interviewers tend to: (1) make premature summary judgments in the first two to three minutes of the interview; (2) search more for negative than positive information as the interview progresses (thus, an initial good impression is more likely to change for the worse than an initial bad one for the better); (3) possess an understanding of job duties insufficient to adequately judge applicants; (4) assess applicants very leniently when under time pressure to fill a job; (5) contrast interviewees against previous applicants rather than a consistent standard; (6) hold stereotyped notions of "ideal applicants," more consistent with characteristics of the interviewer than successful job incumbents; (7) attribute "halos" to applicants who have one key quality that the interviewer particularly values; and (8) vary questions, opportunities to respond, and other interview conditions from applicant to applicant (discussion of rater biases in performance evaluation is in Chapter 5).

These problems not only reduce the objectivity of the information but also put the employer at some legal jeopardy. The interview, like other assessment tools, is legally a *type of test*, subject to the same scrutiny given to hands-on or written tests. Interview results are vulnerable to legal challenge, and litigation brought by applicants who feel unjustly treated after interviews has been on the increase.