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Project managers or agency officials who select leaders for technical assistance teams can do so more effectively through an understanding of the material presented in this report. The essential elements of effective team leader performance are clearly described; both skills and personal characteristics are discussed. Examples of positive and negative behaviors point out the impact of team leader performance on the success of a project. Also included are guidelines for using appraisal techniques when considering potential leaders, and a trial procedure which lists specific selection criteria.

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SELECTING EFFECTIVE LEADERS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAMS

March 1973



**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
GUIDANCE SERIES**

**Bureau for Technical Assistance
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The Technical Assistance Guidance Series presents generic methods and techniques which have been found to make technical assistance processes and relationships more effective. TAGS issuances are advisory, not mandatory. Each represents guidance to be applied by TA planners, advisors and practitioners as they find it advantageous to do so. TA personnel are encouraged to make available to host country officials issuances of relevance to their concerns. Correspondence concerning TAGS should be addressed to the Technical Assistance Methodology Division, T.A. Bureau, A.I.D., Washington, D.C. 20523.

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(Prepared by Dr. Paul Schwarz, consultant, with the collaboration of the Chief of the T.A. Methodology Division.)

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE:

This guidance is issued for the purpose of presenting (1) the results of a field study of the skills and personal characteristics required of leaders of technical assistance (TA) teams (Part I), and (2) a suggested procedure based upon the field study results for the selection of more effective team leaders, (Part II).

Those expected to benefit most from an understanding of the study results and selection procedures are (1) contractors and participating agency officials responsible for the selection of TA team leaders, (2) potential team leaders themselves, (3) AID Mission personnel responsible for designing, monitoring, and evaluating TA projects, (4) members of TA teams, and (5) host country officials collaborating with TA teams.

NEED FOR GUIDANCE IN SELECTING LEADERS:

Post-mortems of completed or terminated TA projects very frequently cite the team leader's performance as one of the prime determinants of project results. Although many decisions go into the design and management of a TA project, the choice of the person who will serve as the team leader is unquestionably one of the most critical.

Yet, only the sparsest of guidelines have been available to the contractors and participating agencies who have faced these decisions, and to the project managers who have had to approve them. That a team leader should be able to cope with both the technical and the administrative demands of the job and that he should be able to work effectively with host country nationals is not an unfair summary of the total guidance that has been provided. Only recently have efforts been made to reduce these generalities to a profile of specific skills and personal characteristics, and to look systematically for additional requirements of perhaps equal importance. This TAGS describes the results of these efforts to date, and offers suggestions for their practical use.

HOW TO USE THIS TAGS:

Most of this TAGS is devoted to a detailed description of the essential elements of effective team leader performance, as derived from the field data. Included in the description of each of these elements are specific examples of both positive and negative behaviors drawn from the real worlds of actual team leaders. Reviewing this material, presented in Part I, should help project managers and future team leaders to understand the importance of these performance requirements, the specific job situations in which they occur, and the impact of such team leader behavior on the success of the project. Such understanding is necessary for appropriate use of the selection guidelines presented in Part II, in which the specific performance requirements are referred to only by short titles, which do not convey the exact behaviors involved. It is suggested that users of this TAGS read the Part I material for background and orientation, then refer back to the appropriate sections of Part I in trying to apply the Part II selection procedures.

PART I. CHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIORS OF EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE TEAM LEADERS

DATA COLLECTION:

The data base that underlies these suggestions was assembled in a special study, carried out for this express purpose in 1970-71. Its objective was to identify the situations that arise during the course of a technical assistance project that can significantly advance or retard it, depending *solely or primarily* on the team leader's action. For, performance in these high-impact situations is the primary payoff at which selection should be directed; and the exact nature of the team leader's impact was not at all clear. Given the many constraints on his authority and freedom of action—the wishes of local officials and institutions, the terms of the ProAg and contract, the input of USAID and his supervisors back home, and the vagaries of the many uncontrollable events that continually impinge on a project—precisely what is it that this one individual does do to affect the results as profoundly as has been reported?

The approach that was followed (which is commonly termed the “critical incident technique”) was the straightforward one of collecting data on the kinds of things team leaders have done in the past that had a significant effect, positive or negative, on the attainment of their project objectives. Each datum consisted of a report that described

- a) a positive or negative outcome that was actually observed in a certain project, and that was directly attributable to the team leader's own decision or action; and
- b) the specific decision or action that had this effect, and the circumstances under which it was taken.

The reporter was the A.I.D. technician responsible for the project who had observed (and usually participated in) the event.

Reports were assembled by interviewing A.I.D. technicians who had had recent experience as project managers in the field. Each technician was asked to recall specific events in which the team leader did something that had clearly positive or negative results—events that stuck in the technician's mind because they were so rewarding or so unpleasant. A variety of probing questions was used (e.g., “Do you recall ever wishing you could undo something that he had done?” or “What do you consider his strong points . . . can you give me a specific example?”), but great care was taken to avoid saying anything that would slant the answer toward a particular kind of situation or behavior. To obtain as comprehensive and representative a sample of team leader impacts as possible, the interviews proceeded entirely through open-ended unstructured questions.

In all, a total of 337 reports was collected from 38 technicians. The initial set of interviews was conducted (by Mr. Robert Powers) at AID/W, with a sample of 17 technicians recently returned from the field. These interviews generated 66 reports, based on experiences in a variety of different countries. The remaining 271 reports were collected (by Dr. Paul Schwarz of the American Institute for Research) in “live” field situations in India, Thailand, Afghanistan, and from staff of the Southeast Asia regional development (RED) program.

DATA ANALYSIS:

As the first step in the analysis of these data, each report was reduced to a single sentence, describing the "critical action" by the team leader that was responsible for the positive or negative result. Then, these one-sentence descriptions were sorted into groups, by putting all those that described essentially the same action together. And then these actions were categorized, in accordance with the type of personal strength or weakness that each reflected, to produce an inductively developed list of the critical requirements for the team leader position.

The result was a set of eleven factors or "dimensions" to be considered in team leader selection, and a breakdown within each of these eleven dimensions of the specific skills and characteristics that differentiate effective from ineffective performance. The eleven dimensions are listed in Figure 1, which also shows the percentage of the total incidents that was reported on each.

Because of the inductive nature of the classification process, the data could have been grouped differently, with equal justification. But it is thought that these eleven groupings fairly convey the main thrust of the reports, and are useful composites for practical use at the time of selection.

The major utility of the critical incident data does *not* lie in the identification of broad job dimensions, however. Rather, it comes from the *specific behavior-oriented criteria* that the data suggest as the appropriate questions to ask about each candidate to evaluate him on these dimensions. These criteria are developed in the following discussion, in which the basis for and the implications of each requirement are reviewed in detail.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS	% of Reports
Requirement 1: Technical Qualifications	7
Requirement 2: Administrative Ability	6
Requirement 3: Interpersonal Relations	8
JOB ORIENTATION	
Requirement 4: Motivation and Drive	8
Requirement 5: Acceptance of Constraints	10
Requirement 6: Development Commitment	6
EMOTIONAL MATURITY	
Requirement 7: Character	6
Requirement 8: Personal Security	11
LEADERSHIP	
Requirement 9: Poise	11
Requirement 10: Backbone	14
Requirement 11: Political Finesse	13

Figure 1: Requirements of the Team Leader Position
as Derived from the Analysis of 337 Critical Incident Reports.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS: (Requirements 1-3)

The requirements in this first group may be regarded as minimum qualifications. They raise the very familiar questions of

- 1) Is he technically qualified for the job?
- 2) Can he administer the project? and
- 3) Does he get along well with people?

which would normally be the first questions asked in screening a candidate for a team leader position.

The critical incident study elaborates these more or less standard selection criteria in two ways. The first is in adding detail—in calling attention to specific aspects of technical competence, administrative ability, and interpersonal relations that are known to be important because of their documented impact on past project operations. The second is in providing a perspective on the role of these three standard criteria in the total selection process. Though they are undeniably important, they account for only one-fifth of the critical actions reported, indicating that there are many other factors also to be considered.

Requirement 1. Technical Qualifications

The requirements for skill in a technical specialty vary widely among team leaders' assignments. Some team leaders are assigned mainly as managers, and are not expected to have competencies equal to those of the specialists who comprise the team. Some double-hat as the team specialist in a certain field in addition to their supervisory functions. Some are a "one-man band." Depending on the nature of the assignment, different standards of competency must be applied in selecting the man for the job. But the four elements of technical expertise that emerge from the critical incident data would seem, in varying proportions, to apply to all team leaders' assignments; and each of them can serve as a useful selection criterion, when interpreting in light of the specific job to be done.

Requirement 1a: Technical Qualifications— "Goodness-of-Fit" to Position

The first critical component of this requirement is the "goodness-of-fit" of the team leader's technical specialty to the exact kinds of technical inputs that he will have to provide. Apart from his overall competence, stature, and reputation, can he do the specific things that this particular project requires?

Examples: Problems in this respect have arisen when the team leader was *selected from a field other than that most central* to the project objectives, as in the following report:

USAID project manager had to intervene to stop subcontractors on this road-building contract from cheating on specifications, because the team leader's background was in physics rather than civil engineering;

or when he was a *generalist* who had not the in-depth expertise that periodically may be required, as in the following report:

He was lost when it became necessary to design a research project to solve a production problem because he did not have detailed knowledge of all of the factors involved;

or when he had *not kept up* with his field, as in the following report:

He did not spot the deficiencies in the work because he had been in a management capacity for many years, and was no longer up on technical procedures.

In each of these instances, the team leader was unable to provide the specific technical inputs that had to come from the individual in this position, and reasonably serious difficulties resulted.

The reports of effective action in a technical specialty by a team leader all involved some element of *ingenuity or problem-solving*, as in the following examples:

Designed a make-shift hoist when none was available, and thereby provided a cheap solution to a problem that would have stopped the entire operation.

Made detailed time and cost calculations, and came up with an innovative approach to the problem of administering training to meet the ProAg objectives.

These team leaders obviously were very much "on top" of the technical aspects of their operations, and could provide direct personal assistance in problem situations.

Selection Implications: To some extent, the extreme contrast between the negative and the positive reports in this area (i.e., gross misfits vs. imaginative problem-solvers) almost certainly reflects the less than intimate knowledge of internal project operations of the AID program managers who provided these data. Less dramatic events would not normally have come to the program manager's attention; and, even if they had, he may well not have been enough of a specialist himself to make fine technical discriminations. The shadings of goodness-of-fit that actually exist among team leaders now in the field no doubt go far beyond the gross differences picked up in this limited sample.

From the point of view of selection, however, these findings do suggest an approach to evaluating a candidate's technical "fit" that should provide a meaningful frame of reference for the people who must make this assessment. The basic question the evaluators should ask themselves is

- Can this candidate trouble-shoot and solve technical problems in the specialty that is the nub of this project?

If the answer is "Certainly," the candidate should be given top marks on this aspect of technical qualifications. Any less confident answer would indicate a possible limitation.

Requirement 1b: Technical Qualifications— Practical Application of Expertise

The second aspect of technical performance that emerged from the data was the ability of the team leader to *apply his expertise to practical and sometimes elementary problems*. Can he adapt to needs more modest than those he usually addresses, or is he apt to overkill them with super-sophistication?

Examples: The reports in this area consisted of ineffective actions of the following type:

Produced a philosophical essay rather than the practical report the host government had requested.

Would not deviate from the academic approach to teaching The Queen's English to develop the courses in basic communication skills that were required.

Unlike the team leaders whose areas of specialization were inappropriate to the task, these individuals did not lack technical power. They simply could not break out of the mold of their accustomed ways of doing things to be responsive to changed situations.

Selection Implications: For selection purposes, the implication of this requirement is *not* that the evaluators should try to identify the candidates who will be the most flexible, which would not only call for quite difficult judgments, but also go a good bit beyond the conclusion that can be drawn from the data. That being ultra-flexible is a plus that merits positive marks has not been determined.

Rather, this requirement should be used to *screen out* candidates who are not sufficiently adaptive. An appropriate question would be

- Is he too locked into high-powered and sophisticated approaches to relate to his counterparts on practical down-to-earth problems?

Stated this way, the answer would not affect the selection decision, unless there are specific reasons for thinking that this is likely to be a problem. Flagging individuals with a history of rigidity—which histories are usually well known to colleagues and employers—would be the function served by this second question.

Requirement 1c: Technical Qualifications— Institution Building

The third major component of technical qualifications does not apply to all AID projects, but is becoming increasingly pervasive. This is the team leader's experience in *designing the institutional delivery system* that is necessary to make use of the technical services that the project is to provide. Can he, in addition to his specialized technical inputs, also assist with the institution-building activities that will be required?

Examples: The incidents reported range from such highly effective performance as

Recognized need for a structural change in the host government organization, and did the leg work on behalf of the United States Government (USG) to help bring this about, or

Helped the institution set up a committee structure for making decisions to facilitate the process of phasing his team out of their decision-making roles to simply being advisers,

to the failures cited in the following examples:

He was unable to assist with the administrative and organizational decisions that had to be made about the new institution because he was a technical specialist with no background in these kinds of functions.

He could not help get the charter creating the university pushed through because he knew nothing about the role of a Board or of a Controller or of the other central components.

Apparently, the team leaders selected for past AID projects have spanned a broad spectrum of experience in the mechanics of institution-building, leading to correspondingly large differences in the quality of their performance.

Selection Implications: For the projects that require it, this type of experience would seem to be an especially important criterion for the selection of the team leader (i.e., vis-a-vis the other team members), since it is normally he who would operate at the levels at which institutional decisions are made. An appropriate question to ask about a candidate for the position in this type of project is

- Has he been active in the institutional as well as the strictly technical aspects of this kind of activity, and has he been effective in performing these kinds of functions?

The most highly qualified candidate on this dimension would of course be the one who has had such experience in an institutional context similar in nature and level to the one that will house the project.

Requirement 1d: Technical Qualifications— “Paper” Credentials

The fourth component of technical skill is the purely pragmatic factor of the candidate's *paper qualifications*. Apart from his capabilities for making important technical contributions, is his perceived stature such that the host government will trust him enough to give him the chance?

Examples: The importance of paper qualifications varies widely among countries and projects. But they can be crucial, as in the following examples:

Could not develop close working relationship with high official because he did not have the stature to gain the official's respect.

Counterpart would not invite the team leader to meetings because he lacked experience and paper qualifications.

In these settings, the adequacy of the candidate's credentials clearly should have been more carefully considered.

Selection Implications: The fourth question to be asked about a candidate team leader's technical qualifications is

- Will his credentials carry enough weight in this country to gain him the respect and high-level access the position requires?

And the best way to answer this question no doubt is to get advance reactions from the local officials with whom he would be working.

Requirement 2: Administrative Ability

In addition to his basic responsibility for managing his team and all project operations, the team leader must also attend to the many liaison and reporting requirements that are imposed by the three bureaucracies within which he is working—the counterpart local establishment, the AID Mission and his own home office. Sometimes, he is provided with an administrative officer or other staff assistance, but a sizeable administrative burden remains an intrinsic part of the team leader's position. And the candidate's skill in these kinds of functions has therefore been a second major criterion for team leader selection.

The critical incident data support the inclusion of this requirement among the basic job qualifications. Four separate aspects of administrative ability emerged from the reports as demonstrably important.

Requirement 2a: Administrative Ability— Attention to Detail

The first and most elementary of the administrative requirements is the candidate's *willingness to give time and attention to administrative detail*. Will he personally see to it that important routines are handled correctly, or is he likely to be indifferent or cavalier about these kinds of functions?

Examples: The individual differences in this respect among the team leaders covered in the survey were large, as shown by the contrasts in the following paired examples:

Effective: Initiated personal correspondence with each of the group of lecturers coming out for a short-term assignment, rather than assuming that the home campus staff would give them adequate orientation, *vs.*

Ineffective: Made no effort to control or coordinate his team members' travel arrangements, resulting in a number of them showing up at the wrong times and places; or

Effective: Visits Ministry every two weeks with a detailed checklist of items pending, and goes through it item by item to make sure each is on track, *vs.*

Ineffective: Did not follow up or check on the printing of the report, resulting in delivery 22 days after it was required.

Two of these team leaders took extra pains to avoid slip-ups or problems; the other two failed to take even the most obvious precautions.

Selection Implications: The relative skills of the above team leaders cannot account for these kinds of differences in performance, since no special skills are required. Rather, the factor that emerges is one of attitude and working habits as pertain to administrative detail.

- Does he take care of the administrative details that are part of his present job punctually and effortlessly, without slip-ups, flurries, or special reminders?

is the type of question that should be asked to evaluate a candidate on this dimension.

**Requirement 2b: Administrative Ability-
Anticipating Contingencies**

The second component of administrative ability differs from the above in that it depends on not only willingness but also substantive skills. These are the skills associated with planning, anticipating contingencies, and generally *keeping one step ahead of the game*. Is he an alert and methodical planner, or does he tend to scramble from crisis to crisis as they arise?

Examples: Again, the individual differences among past team leaders have been substantial. The range extends from such highly effective behavior as

Realized far in advance that the host government could not deliver the needed manpower on schedule, and worked out an alternative approach that was more realistic

to such inept management practice as

Pulled entire team away from their responsibilities to mount crash effort on curriculum development, which could and should have been planned in advance.

The latter incident, the respondent noted, was just one of the continuing crises that this team leader precipitated by his lack of rational planning.

Selection Implications: A second question to be asked about a candidate's administrative ability, therefore, is

- Has he shown himself to be skillful in planning, and to be sufficiently well-organized to stay on top of a number of ongoing activities at the same time?

Even when an individual has not had extensive administrative responsibilities, such judgments can usually be made quite readily by those who have worked with him in any type of goal-oriented endeavor.

**Requirement 2c: Administrative Ability--
Using Team Members Effectively**

The third element is concerned with the personnel aspect of project administration. Does the team leader *make effective use of his team members*, taking account of their individual talents and limitations, or is he insensitive to these kinds of factors?

Examples: Only a few incidents of personnel management were reported, probably because of the limited opportunity of the A.I.D. program manager to observe internal team operations. But the essential characteristics of the requisite skill can be seen quite clearly in the following reports:

Effective: Turned over important task to his most knowledgeable team member and let him carry forward without interference, resulting in a good job and a highly motivated team member;

Ineffective: Failed to recognize the emotional instability of one of his team members, and appointed him Acting Chief-of-Party during his absence, leading to serious problems while he was gone.

The need for these kinds of judgments probably comes up quite often in the team leader position.

Selection Implications: Picking out the candidates who are skillful in this respect will prove difficult in many cases, because the details of effective personnel utilization will seldom come to the evaluators' attention. But mistakes normally receive wide coverage, as a favorite topic of staff conversation. And a question such as

- Has he shown himself to be relatively free of "blind spots" in judging the capabilities of his staff and assigning them suitable functions?

may be the most realistic approach to assessment on this dimension.

Requirement 2d: Administrative Ability— Experience With Government

The fourth element is of perhaps less general importance than the above three, but can be a highly useful asset in project administration. This is the team leader's *experience in working with the government*, as a contractor or as an insider. Can he deal with contractual and procedural matters, or is he apt to get lost in these kinds of issues?

Examples: The team leader's adroitness in dealing with red tape can have highly important payoffs, as in the following example:

Figured out that USAID could eliminate the inequities in the education allowance at one project site by simply declaring that city an official post, which avoided the difficulties of pushing through a new policy directive.

Though the details of the team leader's idea are not spelled out in the report, it was clear that a highly emotional situation had been defused as a direct result of his suggestion.

Selection Implications: Incidents of serious problems resulting from a team leader's lack of knowledge about such matters were not reported. This may be at least partly attributable to the help that the A.I.D. program manager provides in these aspects of project administration.

Accordingly, it would seem appropriate to treat the question of

- Has he experience in working with the legal and quasi-legal aspects of contract administration?

as a definite plus for the candidates who have such background, but as only a minor deficit for those who have not.

Requirement 3: Interpersonal Relations

One of the job characteristics that is strikingly apparent from the critical incident data is the overwhelming importance of the team leader's "personality" as the prime determinant of his success. Attitudinal and temperamental factors dominate more than three-fourths of the reports, and appear as at least contributory elements in numerous others. In this and the remaining requirements, the emphasis is much more on personal characteristics than substantive skills.

The portion of this large personality component that has been included among the "basic" requirements as a third major component is simple *decency and sensibility* in interacting with people. To be at all effective in the complex interpersonal relationships that are central to his position (and that a number of the subsequent requirements will define in detail), a team leader must first of all be a reasonably decent human being in his everyday dealings with others; and this is the elementary level of personal interactions that this requirement addresses. It is comprised of three types of behavior.

Requirement 3a: Interpersonal Relations— Empathy

The most general of the requirements on this dimension focuses on the team leader's *typical response to the problems and hardships of others*. Is he inclined to be warm and sympathetic, or does he tend toward the cold-blooded and callous?

Examples: The range of responses described in the critical incident data is somewhat surprising. At the positive extreme, there are instances of going considerably beyond the call of duty, as in the following examples:

When one of his team members got into trouble in another country, he traveled there at his own expense to help straighten it out.

He provided extensive personal assistance to his counterpart when one of his children died.

At the negative extreme, there are cases of almost inexplicable behavior, as in the following examples:

Refused to reduce work-load of team member who had cardiac problems until USAID forced him to do it.

Took no responsibility for helping with the arrangements when one of his team members was killed upcountry; insisted that USAID handle it all.

As might be expected, a variety of other ineffective incidents was also reported on the latter two team leaders.

Selection Implications: Predicting a candidate's behavior accurately on this dimension is difficult, especially in light of the unknown impact of the stresses of overseas living. But extreme aberrations of the type illustrated above can and should be detected, and used as another criterion for screening out the unfit.

- Is he too self-centered or callous to be attentive to the needs of the people who will be dependent on him for assistance?

is a question on which the candidate's colleagues should have strong feelings, if an extreme problem exists.

**Requirement 3b: Interpersonal Relations-
Proper Treatment of Colleagues**

The second of the basic interpersonal components is more specific to the job situation. It is the degree to which the candidate *treats his colleagues as mature and responsible adults*, and develops working relationships that are based on mutual respect. Is he facile or awkward in working with others?

Examples: The importance of developing sound working relationships is especially noticeable in situations of crisis or tension, as in the following reports:

He was able to maintain the productivity of his team throughout a lengthy period of uncertainty about the project's renewal by being totally honest with them and keeping them up to date.

He told his counterparts they were taking the wrong position and got away with it because he had been equally candid and honest on all things in the past.

Effectiveness in such situations clearly depends on the nature of the relationship that has developed as the result of past interactions.

Most of the reports of behavior that interfered with productive working relationships related incidents of autocratic "mickey-mouse," as in the following example:

Insisted that team member who had been partnered with a USAID technician while the preceding team leader was there communicate with USAID personnel only through him, which severely handicapped the operation.

But there were also other examples of a team leader's basic inability to interact naturally with people that were equally detrimental:

Tried to make points with his counterpart through gifts and favors, causing them both to lose respect.

Worked so hard at getting along with his counterparts that it was impossible for them to interact with him in a natural manner.

However effective these team leaders may have been as technical specialists, they had not found the key to working smoothly with others.

Selection Implications: Again, more reliable assessments are likely to be obtained by focusing on the negative extreme than by trying to evaluate the effectiveness of an individual's working "style," for which no clear-cut criteria exist. The appropriate question for screening purposes is

- Does he turn off the people who work with or for him by being aloof or autocratic, or otherwise trying in his working relations?

And this question also can be answered quite readily by those who have worked with the candidate in the past.

Requirement 3c: Interpersonal Relations— Courtesy and Good Taste

The third interpersonal component is closely related to the characteristic that has been termed "overseasmanship," or at least to one aspect of this behavior. It emerges from the incident data as *common courtesy and good taste* in observing accepted social conventions. Is he perceptive about the sensibilities of others, or (put bluntly) is he a boor?

Examples: As would be expected, the incidents related to this behavior are all negative, describing transgressions. The observance of common courtesies is taken for granted by most people, and would not normally be cited as a "critical" incident by an observer.

The following three examples span the range of the ineffective behaviors reported, from the least to the most blatant transgressions:

Presented idea at the staff meeting that he had not discussed with his counterpart in advance, making the latter feel foolish for not being prepared to pursue it.

Would not stand by and wait when the Minister was late in arriving for an official facility inspection.

Told the governor at a public function that the project was difficult to manage because the locals knew nothing about anything and were totally useless.

Violations of esoteric culture-based conventions were *not* reported. All of the behaviors reported were, like the above, quite inexcusable in any cultural setting.

Selection Implications: For selection purposes, this factor provides yet another basis for screening out the clearly unfit. An appropriate question would be

- Does he frequently offend others by ignoring common courtesies and conventions, or showing poor taste?

Only when there is some cause for concern—as a result of the candidate's past behavior—should this factor be a major consideration in the appraisal.

JOB ORIENTATION: (Requirements 4-6)

This group of requirements focuses on the compatibility of the candidate's attitudes toward certain key aspects of the team leader's assignment, and the posture that a team leader must take on these aspects to be effective. Successes or failures attributable strictly to these fundamental job attitudes are apparently common, accounting for 24 percent of the data collected.

Interestingly, moreover, the "stock" attitudes associated with most job assignments (such as the willingness to work hard) appear in only a minority of these reports. The majority deal with elements that are specific to the field of technical assistance; and that, in some instances, call for responses precisely opposite to those that are appropriate to the job environment from which the team leader was drawn. Insuring that the candidate understands and accepts the different ground rules that go with the team leader assignment may be the essential prerequisite to effective selection on these dimensions.

Requirement 4: Motivation and Drive

One of the most important requirements of a successful development project is for one or more key individuals who are personally committed to it, and who will serve as the ever-igniting "spark plugs" that are needed to maintain its momentum. The team leader can seldom fulfill this role single-handedly, but he must share it. For much of what happens (or fails to happen) will be the result of his own drive and dedication.

The differences in this respect among the team leaders surveyed seemed to be attributable to three major factors. Each has direct implications for team leader selection.

Requirement 4a: Motivation and Drive— Responsibility for Attaining Objectives

The first and most fundamental of the motivational requirements is that the team leader *understands and accepts his personal responsibility for the attainment of the stated project objectives*. Does he realize that the job goes beyond that of a technical resource person to that of a goal-oriented project director?

Examples: Many illustrations of the aggressive pursuit of project objectives are presented in other sections of this report and are not repeated here. The failures in meeting this responsibility that were reported centered on two kinds of problems. The first of these lay in an overly literal interpretation of the functions of an "adviser," as in the following examples:

Limited his activities to sitting around and being available to answer questions; did nothing productive and eventually was shipped home.

Refused to pitch in to help get things done on the grounds that this was inappropriate for an adviser.

The AID definition of the advisory role was apparently not understood by these team leaders; or, if understood, found to be less congenial than a strictly literal definition.

The second problem was one of trying to manage a technical assistance project like a university department. A number of team leaders gave higher priority to "academic freedom" than to project outcomes, as in the following example:

Left it to each team member to decide what he could be doing that would be helpful, without considering the host government's expressed needs and wants.

That professionals should have this right of self-determination was the reasoning ascribed to the team leaders in these reports.

Selection Implications: For selection purposes, the evaluators should see to it that the candidate has a clear picture of the outcomes expected from this project and of his responsibility for achieving them; and then ask

- Does he realize how much personal direction and push he will have to give to the project, and does he seem comfortable about playing so active a role?

On motivational factors, such "self-selection" can be a highly useful screening procedure.

**Requirement 4b: Motivation and Drive—
Initiative**

The second requirement in this group is for *initiative* in getting things started and keeping them going. Is he a driver, or is he more apt to be passive?

Examples: As on many other dimensions, great variability is reported. The range extends from the following instance of actively seizing a target of opportunity,

Instead of simply meeting the host government's request for a training program for civil servants, he also got the private sector involved, meeting these needs as well;

through an inability to cope with an unstructured job situation, such as

Failed to carve out specific responsibilities for himself in the unit to which he was assigned, but just hung around waiting for someone to use him;

to total passivity in trying to overcome obstacles, such as

Was ready to sit around for two months waiting for a replacement part until the USAID manager told him to improvise, which he then did.

In each of these instances, the amount and rate of progress depended strictly on the initiative taken by the team leader.

Selection Implications: A second important question in this area is

- Is he an alert and reasonably aggressive self-starter?

Generally, the individual differences on this dimension are so evident that the candidate's supervisors and associates will have little difficulty in making a valid assessment.

**Requirement 4c: Motivation and Drive—
Energy and Effort**

The third requirement is for the level of *energy and effort* that doing the job requires. Does he put out or is he inclined to be lazy?

Examples: The extremes reported on this dimension are perhaps best illustrated by the following paired examples:

Effective: Went upcountry at the drop of a hat whenever his staff needed him, irrespective of personal inconvenience.

Ineffective: Refused to accompany locals to remote field locations; stayed at city hotel and waited for them to return.

Other gross differences, such as working extensive overtime vs. never putting in a full day, were also reported.

Selection Implications: The appropriate question to ask for selection purposes is entirely straightforward:

- Can he be counted on to produce on an assignment, no matter how much time or energy may be required?

And also this question can usually be answered unambiguously by those who have worked with the candidate in the past.

Requirement 5: Acceptance of Constraints

Though initiative and activism of the type described in the preceding requirement is an important part of the job, the team leader cannot carry this to the extreme of operating as an entirely free agent. He is part of an "official American community", and his project is part of a negotiated assistance program, and both of these factors curb his freedom in making autonomous decisions. When a team leader refuses to accept these constraints, problems arise. The critical incident data identify three types of constraints that a fairly large number of past team leaders actively resisted.

Requirement 5a: Acceptance of Constraints-- Legitimacy of USG Inputs

The first of the constraints that impinge on the team leader is imposed by the local USG personnel, who will want to participate as partners in the activity, and who will try to make sure that it proceeds in accordance with the regulations that go with government funding. Does the team leader *accept the legitimacy of these USG inputs*, or does he regard them as intrusions into his private domain?

Examples: Some team leaders welcome a partnership arrangement, as in the following example:

Agreed to merge his team members with the direct-hire technicians going upcountry on a similar assignment, so as to maximize the efficiency of the operation.

But many more reports described active resistance, such as

Tried to keep USAID influence on project minimal by making contradictory inputs to the central project manager and the field liaison officer, so as to confuse them; or

Took the position that the Ambassador's wishes regarding his project would not be implemented unless they were in accord with his own opinion, creating an untenable situation; or

Instructed each new team member upon arrival to stay away from USAID personnel, since they would interfere with the project.

Incidents of refusal to provide the Mission with information, to observe channels, and to submit the required paperwork were among the other negative actions reported.

Selection Implications: The very large number of reports that was addressed to this kind of behavior is almost certainly attributable to the impact of such refusals on the project manager, who is the person most directly affected. He would be expected, when asked to recall significant incidents, to remember a perhaps disproportionate percentage of personal frustrations. But, however greatly this factor may have influenced the frequency of the reports, the facts remain that 1) such occurrences are common, and 2) a team leader who rejects USG involvement cannot be effective. And it seems highly important, therefore, to make the question of

- Is he willing to function in a quasi-official role, as a part of the U.S. Government structure?

a firm prerequisite for the team leader position. Again, the appropriate vehicle for assessment is that of a self-appraisal—to tell the candidate the score, and let him disqualify himself if he has serious reservations.

Requirement 5b: Acceptance of Constraints— Established Policies

A second constraint is imposed by the *policies and program directions* that already have been established. Is he prepared to abide by these earlier decisions and to support them?

Examples: Problems in this respect can range from issues internal to the project, such as

Gave only lip-service to stated project objectives; spent most of his time on a pet idea that he was sure would be a breakthrough but that finally flopped;

to more general confrontations, such as

Aggravated tension between local and U.S. officials by siding with locals on use of P.L. 480 funds, a use which would have been a statutory violation and which USAID could not permit.

Incidents of positive support for established policies were not reported, perhaps because this is taken for granted.

Selection Implications: Part of the requirement implicit in these reports—i.e., the acceptance in principle of the authority of the USG—is encompassed by the preceding question on the candidate's willingness to work in a quasi-official role. The other part is his acceptance of the specific objectives of the project and of the conditions under which it is to be done. An appropriate supplementary question, therefore, would be

- Does he fully understand the goals and mechanisms that have been established for this project, and is he willing to operate within them?

To provide a basis for a realistic appraisal, candidates may have to be given a more detailed orientation to the project than many past team leaders received; and, for maximum benefit to the selection process, be given this orientation *before* they are appointed.

**Requirement 5c: Acceptance of Constraints--
Dictates of Diplomacy**

The third of these constraints is apparently a sensitive point for many individuals with a scholarly or scientific orientation. This is the need to *temper one's right to "freedom of speech"* with the dictates of diplomacy and discretion. Can the team leader tolerate this limitation?

Examples: None of the incidents reported on this dimension raised the issue of classified information or entailed restrictions that were clearly excessive. The constraints were typical of those that arise in any job in which public relations is a relevant consideration:

Even though he personally disagreed with the criticisms of the local nationals his staff had put in a report, he refused to abridge their "academic freedom" by insisting on changes or adding a disclaimer.

He refused to restrain a team member who was writing controversial editorials for a local newspaper; USAID had to appeal to the president of the contractor firm to get this stopped.

In these and the other reports, the critical factor was an interpretation of "freedom of speech" that at least the respondents considered extreme.

Selection Implications: The question to be asked about a candidate on this dimension should be one that penalizes only extreme behavior, such as

- Does he realize that the exercise of "freedom of speech" in this assignment must stop short of pronouncements that his hosts would find offensive?

Only the most ultra-zealous of the candidates should be affected by this minimal qualification.

Requirement 6: Development Commitment

Although the development of local skills and resources is generally accepted to be the primary goal of technical assistance projects, there is no easy way to put teeth into this concept in the writing of a ProAg or contract. Unlike such visible project outcomes as a new road or increased agricultural exports, a gain in local capabilities is not readily measured, and can seldom be used as the main yardstick of progress or eventual project success. For milestones, audits, and other formal assessments, the less debatable criteria provided by the tangible outcomes must be applied; and this tends to make substantive rather than developmental achievement the de facto performance target.

As a result, the emphasis given to the project's developmental objectives depends largely on the priority that the contract team itself attaches to them. Unless the team (and notably the team leader) are *committed to development as the primary goal*, progress in this direction is likely to play second fiddle to the exigencies of day-to-day operations.

Examples: The critical incident data show quite clearly that a team leader who is committed to development will have numerous opportunities to translate this commitment into positive action. The following are typical examples:

Set up the design of a new supply system as a training exercise, so as to develop local skills as well as a product.

Stopped his predecessor's practice of maintaining control over minor commodities, but insisted that his counterparts take on this responsibility, which they could do and did.

Persuaded the local university to let its own School of Technology do the architectural work on a new building rather than using a U.S. firm as had been planned.

In each of these instances, the team leader took the initiative in giving first priority to the project's developmental objectives.

When the team leader lacks such commitment, progress toward local self-sufficiency can be nil or even set back further, as in the following examples:

Let his team members do all of the work in setting out the trial plots, rather than waiting the extra time necessary to get local participation.

Insisted that USG continue to fund expendable supplies, even though the host institution could (and at USAID insistence did) assume this item within its own budget.

Set up census operation that would continue to require external assistance because he was convinced that the locals could never manage this operation alone.

These incidents are almost exact opposites of those above, showing the sharp differences that can exist in the development attitudes of individual team leaders.

Selection Implications: Gauging a candidate's commitment at the time of selection is apt to be difficult, especially when he has not worked on a technical assistance project before. Even he himself may not know how he will react in a situation in which getting the job done as well and as expeditiously as possible is not always the right thing to do. But some indications may be available from his past performance in working with people less expert than he. And such questions as

- Has he shown himself to be patient and skillful in developing more junior staff members?

may serve at least to identify those who have some deficiencies in this respect. Individuals who have given short shrift to the staff development aspects of their positions are not likely to attend to the all-pervasive needs for development to which a team leader must be responsive.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY: (Requirements 7-8)

These two requirements are perhaps the most sensitive of the entire set, in that they give explicit attention to a simple truth that is seldom faced squarely in selection at the "professional" level. This truth is that all people have needs for certain material and psychological gratifications, that these needs sometimes conflict with the dictates of a particular job assignment, and that some individuals will go much

further than others in compromising their personal needs for the sake of their professional obligations. The emphasis in both of these requirements is on the candidate's goal-orientation, which was the central dynamic in 17 percent of the reports.

Expecting a team leader to be completely selfless would, of course, be unrealistic; and this is *not* the quality that is required. Rather, the data call for a reasonable degree of maturity in the weight he gives to personal gain or aggrandizement in making project-related decisions. Requirement 7 focuses mainly on his integrity and code of ethics; Requirement 8 on a quality for which there are no good labels, but that consists of not being a prima donna.

Requirement 7: Character

A team leader has considerable latitude in making decisions about the use of the resources that have been committed to his project, and typically enjoys some additional leverage in local affairs as a function of his position. And there is no reason to doubt that most team leaders live up to this trust and the responsibility that it implies. But inherent in such authority is the ever present opportunity to meet more self-serving ends, and not all past team leaders have been able to resist this temptation.

Specifically, the incident data describe three kinds of improprieties in team leader's behavior. These are discussed below, from the point of view of their selection implications.

Requirement 7a: Character— Personal Integrity

The first of the requirements in this set pertains to the team leader's *integrity in matters that affect his own well-being*. Is he honest and ethical, or basically out to get what he can?

Examples: The examples of misconduct cited in the incident reports range from fairly petty violations, such as

Concocted project-related reasons to justify a field trip out of the country, but in fact did not work and just took a vacation,

to cases of reasonably serious interference with the project, as in the following example:

Met farmers' requests for assistance on a personal basis rather than calling on the local institution he was supposed to develop, because he hoped to qualify for a host government citation that would help him get another overseas tour.

The latter team leader was one of the growing number of "professional gypsies" who follow the overseas money by wandering from contractor to contractor, according to the respondent.

Selection Implications: Contractors who assign cadre rather than new hires to team leader positions probably avoid such extremes of self-serving behavior. But even among cadre there can be sizeable differences on this dimension, and it should be generally useful to ask

- Is he one of the people who can be counted on to support a decision that is for the good of the entire institution, without getting caught up in its impact on him?

The administrators of a contractor firm can usually answer such questions quite easily, on the basis of their experience in "selling" new policies to the staff.

**Requirement 7b: Character--
Chauvinism or Institution-Building?**

The second component is similar to this, in also raising the question of ethical behavior. But here it is *chauvinism in favor of the contractor institution* rather than direct personal gain that is at issue. Does he protect the best interests of his project, or does he look out for the interests of his employer, no matter what?

Examples: Improperities in this respect appear to have even greater negative impact on the project than the pursuit of purely personal ends. This is illustrated by the following examples:

Oriented the project toward studies that would contribute to campus prestige, even though they had little utility for local needs.

Pushed local workers too hard, in violation of labor regulations, so as to maximize profits, which was all that mattered to him.

Inflated training needs so as to insure a steady stream of participants, which would make points on the home office campus.

In addition to the direct effect of such actions on the progress of the project, the fact that outsiders were aware of what the team leader was doing probably reduced his effectiveness even further.

Selection Implications: More careful screening procedures can result in at best limited improvements in this respect because behavior of this type is not readily predicted, and because the actual culprit may (as a number of the respondents suggested) in fact be the contractor rather than the team leader. But one relevant aspect that can be checked at the time of selection is whether the candidate has sufficient status in his institution to champion the project effectively if he does try to do so. This will not guarantee more goal-oriented decisions, but should make their occurrence more likely. To take such positive action as

Decided that a wall of the school building his firm was constructing was substandard, and instructed his foreman to tear it down and rebuild it

the team leader must have sufficient status within his firm to feel that he can safely authorize these extra expenses.

Accordingly, a partial but appropriate question that AID should ask in connection with this aspect of ethical behavior is

- Does he lack the stature and influence in his own home office that he will need to look out for the best interests of the project?

Doing more on this requirement through the vehicle of team leader selection is probably unrealistic.

**Requirement 7c: Character—
Standards of Personal Conduct**

The third component was raised in only a few incidents, and needs little discussion. This is the team leader's *standards of personal conduct* regarding women, liquor, etc. The question of

- Is he prone to trouble via liquor or women or other intemperate behavior?

is fairly routine in selection for overseas assignments.

Requirement 8: Personal Security

This requirement extends the preceding discussion of maturity vis-a-vis material benefits into the psychological domain. Though the data do *not* point to any single personality stereotype as "ideal" for the team leader position, they do suggest that certain kinds of psychological needs are sufficiently competitive with the needs of developmental assistance to be seriously disruptive if they exert undue influence on the team leader's decisions. And this has apparently happened with fair frequency in the past—perhaps because these particular needs are generally strong in the professions.

As a group, the three behaviors that comprise this requirement were the subject of more incidents than were any of the other requirements so far considered. In all three, the characteristic described with such jargon terms as "personal security" or "ego-strength" seems to be the central dynamic.

**Requirement 8a: Personal Security—
Open-Minded and Objective**

The first element of this group is the team leader's *responsiveness to advice*, and his willingness to consider views that conflict with his own. Is he open-minded and objective, or does he usually insist on having his way?

Examples: The sizeable differences among team leaders that were reported on this characteristic are illustrated by the following paired examples:

Effective: Changed mind about sending troublesome team member home, even though he had formal campus approval, after listening to the opposite point of view of USAID and deciding their reasons were better than his, vs.

Ineffective: Ignored USAID cautions against appointing a certain team member as his deputy; made the appointment, which didn't work out.

Effective: Freely admitted his doubts about an action he was about to take, and used USAID as a sounding board before making the final decision, vs.

Ineffective: Pushed through an idea on marketing without having it reviewed by anyone else, leading to a serious blunder for which his counterpart was blamed.

As in the earlier incidents of rejecting the Mission's role in the project, the hurt pride of the USAID project manager no doubt accounts in part for the frequency of these reports. But the fact remains that such willfulness is a severe personal limitation in so complex a field as developmental assistance.

Selection Implications: The appropriate question to ask at the time of selection is

- Does he take good advice when it is given, without regarding this as a threat or an affront?

The emphasis should be on the negative aspects of this question, since it is defensiveness that is likely to lead to the more serious problems.

**Requirement 8b: Personal Security—
Ability to Admit Mistakes**

The second element is closely related to the above, and may be no more than another manifestation of the same psychological needs. It is the team leader's *forthrightness in admitting to mistakes*, and his ability to take them in stride. Does he face up to mistakes, or go to great lengths to deny them?

Examples: The negative behaviors that were reported took a variety of forms. These included simply refusing to accept a mistake,

Would not replace a man who was obviously unfit because he had personally selected him; procrastinated for six months until he had no other choice;

or shifting the blame,

When the materials for the seminar were not finished in time, he blamed his counterparts for not doing the impossible, losing their respect;

or lying about it,

Fabricated monthly progress reports to show progress that in reality had not been made;

or even hiding from imagined criticism that did not really exist,

Interpreted the host government's request for information as the project proceeded as a sign of no confidence rather than an honest desire to learn, and refused to supply it.

The last of these in particular shows the extreme personal insecurities that underlie such behavior.

Selection Implications: Since everyone periodically errs, a candidate's typical response to mistakes should be well known to his associates. And a question such as

- Does he admit to mistakes candidly, without indulging in elaborate excuses or rationalizations?

should provide directly relevant information.

**Requirement 8c: Personal Security--
Relaxed Concerning Personal Status**

The third behavior is somewhat different from these, but is consistent with the same pattern of needs. This is the team leader's approach to matters of *personal status*, and to the trappings of his position. Is he a regular guy or inclined to be pompous and stuffy?

Examples: Many of the incidents in this group describe behaviors that are more in the nature of irritants than sources of serious problems. These include excessive complaints about housing; refusals to pitch in on menial tasks; and, somewhat incredibly,

Insisted that his team members come to see him only by appointment.

But a number of the incidents were more serious, such as the following examples:

Refused to resign the deanship as the local faculty wanted, but clung to the title even after all his authority had been taken away.

Would not permit the alliance of his institution with others in the region because he felt this would detract from its image of uniqueness and importance.

In these cases, the costs of self-aggrandizement were fairly substantial.

Selection Implications: The appropriate question to ask about a candidate in this regard is

- Is he reasonably relaxed about his dignity and status, and about exacting his just due in amenities and respect?

Any problems of this type that the candidate has had in his past job assignments are likely to be accentuated in the typical work setting abroad.

LEADERSHIP: (Requirements 9-11)

The simple term "leadership" does not do full justice to the requirements in this final set. For they call for qualities that are the hallmark of the skilled executive or diplomat, and that are much rarer than those described in the preceding discussions. Finding candidates who have the requisite technical background and also these executive qualities may pose a challenge of some magnitude to team leader recruitment.

Yet, the inclusion of these requirements among the selection criteria seems highly important on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative considerations. Qualitatively, the situations that call for these characteristics are invariably crucial, and at times represent make-or-break junctures. Quantitatively, these characteristics account for 38 percent of the incident data, making them by far the most frequently reported. For selection purposes, they emerge as the dividing point between acceptable and superior team leader's performance.

Requirement 9: Poise

In the course of a technical assistance project, as in most activities, things often go wrong. Unexpected crises arise; signals get changed; somebody goofs. And the team leader suddenly finds himself with a problem that is not of his own making, and that in a more rational world would not have come up at all.

This requirement is concerned with the team leader's response to such situations. It asks *not* that he necessarily be able to solve every problem which may come his way, but does expect him to field each one cleanly, with the poise and assuredness of a leader. For not only the outcome of the immediate difficulty but also the confidence of his team and the host government can hinge on the strength he shows under pressure.

In the incident data, this quality appears in three closely related kinds of behavior. Treating them separately is useful for purposes of selection, in providing the evaluators with a number of alternate channels for matching this requirement with specifics in the candidate's past performance.

Requirement 9a: Poise-- Resists Precipitous Action

The first requirement for coolness and poise is the team leader's ability to *resist the temptation of taking precipitous action* in what appears to be a crisis situation. Does he pause to analyze the actual requirements dispassionately, or is he quick to hit the panic-button?

Examples: The following examples illustrate the highly important contributions that can be made by a team leader who can exercise such restraint:

Restrained team from taking immediate action to free a fellow American from jail; asked them to wait for a day, which avoided serious trouble.

Sensed that the restlessness of the student body was based mainly on a feeling that they should be activists like other student groups, and encouraged the administration to provide outlets for letting off steam rather than cracking down.

One would expect such opportunities to arise only rarely. But the team leader's action in these cases well may have meant the survival of the project.

The reports of ineffective performance in this area were more mundane, such as

Grew increasingly panicky as the deadline approached and tried to do everything himself, shutting his team out completely and thereby losing rather than gaining time.

But even here the immediate consequence was a missed deadline, and the aftermath of this behavior surely was still more detrimental.

Selection Implications: Many candidates for the team leader position will have had only limited opportunity to respond to crises, making it difficult to assess their behavior. But at least for some candidates, the question of

- Is he reasonably unflappable in high pressure or crisis situations?

should provide useful indications.

**Requirement 9b: Poise—
Constructive Response to Mishaps**

The second manifestation of this quality, and the one most frequently reported, lies in a *temperate and constructive response when mishaps occur*. Does he keep his cool and set about solving the problem, or is it his natural tendency to fly off the handle?

Examples: The reports include many examples of superb control under extremely trying conditions. The following are particularly impressive:

When he discovered near the end of his work that the host government had given him the wrong figures to use, he calmly estimated the costs of redoing it and got additional funding, without ruffling anyone's feathers.

When it was decided not to provide him with the U.S. administrative assistant he had been promised, he spent much extra effort training locals and himself on the procedures, and handled the job without complaining.

On the negative side, the examples ranged from a lack of self-discipline,

Became so angry about the mistake that he chewed out his team members in front of others,

through petulance,

Would not make the trip when he found the gas pump was locked, instead of just buying gas on the market and submitting a voucher,

to basically psychopathic behavior,

Physically threw his local secretary out of the office.

As on so many other dimensions, there were enormous differences in individual team leader performance.

Selection Implications: Data on this kind of behavior should be available on every candidate for the position because the situations that trigger it arise so often. The simplest way of getting this information may be to ask

- Has his staff found him to be patient and helpful when someone makes a mistake?

Laughter in reply to this question may be the most common type of negative indication.

**Requirement 9c: Poise—
Acceptance of Reverses**

The third of these related characteristics is *equanimity in accepting a setback* and trying to go forward from there. Can he accept defeat or is he a sore loser?

Examples: This characteristic manifests itself in two ways in the reports. The first is in knowing when to quit on a lost cause, as in the following examples:

Effective: Realized that USAID and Ministry opposition to a man nominated by his campus was too strong to overcome, so gave in peacefully without causing problems.

Ineffective: Refused to accept Controller's interpretation of his contract, went to the Mission Director and when this failed to the Ambassador, alienating everyone along the line.

The second is in being able to "forgive and forget," as in the following examples:

Effective: Although he had done extensive work to document a request to USAID, he accepted its rejection without letting this interfere at all with subsequent working relations.

Ineffective: Tried to keep every new activity from being assigned to a Department against which he carried a personal grudge, even when this Department was the best one to do it.

Lingering resentments of this type are a luxury that few development projects can afford.

Selection Implications: The appropriate question to ask is

- Has he typically been a good sport about being overruled or turned down on something he considers important?

This is another fairly common occurrence to which most candidates should have been exposed in their past job assignments.

Requirement 10: Backbone

Many of the problems that a team leader is called on to solve do not require superior knowledge or wisdom, or any substantive skills at all. The right course of action is perfectly clear, and the only requirement is to go ahead and do it. The catch lies in the opposition or risk or unpleasantness to which this action will lead. And for a weak team leader these can be potent deterrents.

The tenth requirement is for the backbone a leader must have to take the actions for which he is responsible, however troublesome or unpleasant. This quality is cited in a large number of the incident reports as a key factor in three types of situations.

**Requirement 10a: Backbone—
Defending Convictions Under Stress**

One of the common needs for this quality arises in *situations of controversy* among or within the agencies with which the team leader works—the host government, AID Mission, and contractor firm. In most of these situations, it is incumbent on the team leader to take a position in accordance with his honest convictions; and the question is whether or not he will do it. Has he the courage of his convictions, or will he be wishy-washy and try to straddle the fence?

Examples: The minimum requirement is for the team leader at least to state his opinion. This is the central point of the following paired examples:

Effective: During a critical program review, he expressed candid personal views, independent of the USAID or home office position.

Ineffective: Remained silent during a show-down debate between USAID and the Ministry on proposed deviations from the ProAg specifications; would not give his professional opinion.

On even this minimal requirement, there are variations in performance.

Performance above this minimum level consists of going the next step of defending one's position if and when it is challenged, as in the following examples:

Effective: Ignored local pressures to turn participant selection into a patronage system by exercising his vote in the process to insure selection on merit.

Ineffective: Made no effort to protect campus from USAID complaints on backstopping costs; caved in on each USAID demand as it was made.

The very highest level of performance consists of putting all of one's chips on a truly critical issue, as in the following example:

Took position that the contract should be terminated if the local government did not implement the system, which got the desired result.

Examples of the opposite behavior of sacrificing principle for the sake of survival were also reported.

Selection Implications: The appropriate question to ask about a candidate on this dimension is

- When he is right does he stick to his guns in a debate or controversy to the extent necessary to achieve the objectives?

That the focus of this question is on backbone rather than obstinacy if, of course, understood.

**Requirement 10b: Backbone—
Firmness with Team Members**

A second situation that calls for this quality and that is also quite common is one in which a firm position has to be taken with one or more team members who are stepping out of line. Will he run his team, or is his team apt to run him?

Examples: Effective performance in this respect is illustrated in the following reports of firm team leader action:

Stepped in when the bickering between two team members started to get out of hand; offered to help them settle the problem, or, if it could not be settled, to send both of them home.

Was not intimidated by a team member's threat to resign, but stuck to his position, resulting in a resignation that ended the intra-team problems.

When such problems arise, it is clearly incumbent on the team leader to exercise the authority of his position, however unpleasant may be the personal confrontation.

On the negative side, the failing that was most frequently reported was procrastination, as in the following example:

Put off action on a team member who was consistently insulting his counterparts; let situation go beyond the point of no return, and the team member eventually had to be sent home.

The extreme of this behavior is to shirk leadership responsibility entirely, as in the following example:

Put all major decisions affecting the team to a vote, making the entire operation a shambles.

In a number of these reports, the team leader's commitment to "academic freedom" that was discussed in an earlier requirement was again cited as a contributing factor.

Selection Implications: Because this quality can readily be observed in any supervisory assignment, the candidate's past performance should provide a good indication of the leadership he will exercise in the team leader position.

- Does he take firm and timely action on personnel problems, without weaseling or passing the buck?

is a question that should pose little difficulty for those who have supervised the candidate in other managerial assignments.

**Requirement 10c: Backbone--
Willingness to Take Appropriate Risks**

The third situation occurs much less frequently than the above, but has immediate and important consequences whenever it does arise. This is a situation that calls for *a deviation from plans or agreements*, and entails the risk of virtually certain criticism and second-guessing if something goes wrong. Is he willing to stick out his neck when circumstances require it, or does he go by the book no matter what?

Examples: The need for such action can arise as the result of bureaucratic delays or mix-ups, as in the following examples of effective responses:

Kept activities going for nine months while his firm was not being paid because of an administrative snafu.

Agreed to USAID request to proceed on the basis of the PIO rather than the contract when a discrepancy between the two was discovered, trusting that an appropriate contract amendment would sooner or later be issued.

Or, the need can lie in the technical requirements of the project, as in the following report of an ineffective response:

Insisted on sticking to the specified scope of work, even though the project had been overtaken by events which made the original plan unresponsive.

The position of the A.I.D. program manager on these incidents is easily understandable—he appreciated the former; was hamstrung by the last. But one does wonder what the final judgment would have been if the result of the risks the above team leaders incurred had been contrary to expectations.

Selection Implications: In evaluating a candidate on this requirement, it would seem appropriate to downgrade him for being too ultra-conservative, but not to give him positive marks for being a gambler. A suitable question would be

- Has he enough confidence in himself to deviate from prior agreements or instruction when there is an obvious need for modification?

The emphasis is on “confidence” and “obvious need.” The other prerequisite to such action—having sufficient status in his home office to exercise this authority—is encompassed in one of the earlier questions.

Requirement 11: Political Finesse

Each of the preceding requirements contributes to the team leader’s effectiveness as an “agent of change,” in enhancing the personal competency and credibility that are basic to success in this role. But in the face of tradition, inertia, and strong vested interests, credibility is seldom enough. And so this final requirement adds the important dimension of tactics: of skill in promoting a change that hinges on the decisions and actions of others.

Much of the responsibility for these kinds of inputs, of course, should properly fall to the AID program manager, who can be expected to have considerably more political savvy than the specialist team

leader. But the critical incident data show that a substantial portion remains with the team leader, whose constant presence on the "front lines" of the project makes political impacts or gaffes virtually impossible to avoid. And, if the present trend toward a smaller direct-hire field staff continues, the demands on the team leader will be even greater than they were at the time these data were being collected.

Some candidates will have directly relevant experience, notably those who have had an earlier overseas tour, or who are recruited through participating Federal agency arrangement. But the vast majority will not. AID will almost certainly have to rely on fast learners more than on seasoned campaigners, and identifying the more rapid learners in a pool of essentially naive candidates will be the primary task of the selection procedures that focus on this dimension.

The incident data identify three characteristics of the successful development entrepreneur that should have some analogues in the candidate's past performance, and that can be used as an index of his potential. They are presented in order of increasing sophistication, which is also the order of increasing difficulty of assessment at the time of selection.

**Requirement 11a: Political Finesse—
Developing Active Supporters**

The first and least demanding requirement is for attentiveness to the needs and opportunities for *developing a constituency of active supporters*. Is he high or low on "public relations"?

Examples: The reports of effective performance in this respect encompassed two kinds of behavior. One consisted of building up specific personal credits, such as

Volunteered to turn over an unoccupied house assigned to his team to an expatriate for whom the government could not find adequate housing, earning the gratitude of local officials.

The other took the form of longer-range public relations efforts, as in the following example:

Went out of his way to visit the local professionals in the vicinity whenever he traveled upcountry, raising their prestige by showing them to be important enough for a foreign expert to come and consult them.

Ineffective actions were not reported, perhaps because missed opportunities for constituency-building are not readily visible to an outside observer.

Selection Implications: There is no direct analogue to these behaviors in the background of the typical candidate for a team leader assignment. But some of the essential components may be reflected in his popularity with his colleagues and in professional organizations. The answer to the question of

- Has he been popular and mobile in the organizations of which he has been a member?

may provide the best basis available for the assessment of candidates on this aspect of entrepreneurial potential.

**Requirement 11b: Political Finesse—
Sensitivity to Undercurrents**

A second and more challenging aspect is his *perceptiveness in picking up the undercurrents and tensions* in interpersonal and intra-agency relations. Has he or has he not developed fairly sensitive political antennae?

Examples: The variability in team leader performance in such basic political awareness is shown in the following paired examples:

Effective: Examined problem in the light of available host country resources and the realities of the relationships between the institutions that controlled them, and came up with an effective practical solution, *vs.*

Ineffective: Failed to appreciate the need for approaching the idea of developing agricultural output through the private sector in a roundabout way because of the government's mistrust of industry, and tried to bulldoze it through directly.

Effective: Analyzed the exact nature of the sensitivities between his counterpart and other local officials and worked within these constraints in all of his subsequent interactions, *vs.*

Ineffective: Persuaded the university senate that the informal arrangement between the Vice-Chancellor and the head of another university on the award of joint degrees should be formalized, not realizing that this would be politically impossible for either of them to accept.

The perceptive team leader can capitalize on his insights to promote the project; the oblivious one can seriously harm it with irreparable blunders.

Selection Implications: Most candidates will probably not have had the opportunity to operate at equally high and sensitive levels. But the evaluators should have some evidence on the question of

- Is he usually fast in catching on to the "hidden agenda" in delicate negotiations or discussions?

since these come up fairly often in most organizations.

**Requirement 11c: Political Finesse—
Selecting Appropriate Tactics**

The third and most frequently reported element is the ultimate payoff of political astuteness. This is shrewdness in *selecting the right button to push* to bring about a desired change, when the time for action has come. Does he know when and how to engineer a decision?

Examples: The incident reports describe a variety of mechanisms that team leaders can use (or misuse) to effect a desired change. The major ones include *the provision of effective incentives*, as in the following examples:

Effective: Would not move ahead on participant selection, for which the locals were pressing, until the concerned agencies would agree to a joint planning session, helping to relieve the problems of inter-agency coordination;

Effective: Told his counterparts at length of the excellent progress being made in similar institutions elsewhere, to stimulate them to greater efforts in planning for comparable achievements;

the judicious application of outside pressure, as in the following examples:

Effective: Arranged for his USAID manager to suggest to his counterpart quite "spontaneously" an idea that he himself had been trying to promote, which finally sold it;

Ineffective: Tried to get USAID to intervene on a problem prematurely, not realizing the importance of preserving USAID's leverage as a trump card to be held in reserve;

Ineffective: Did not think of using U.S. industrial representatives to apply additional pressure to get an industrial development project on track;

and a miscellany of *applied psychology tactics*, as in the following examples:

Ineffective: Tried to persuade locals to assign a full-time man to expedite parts deliveries by stepping in and doing this low-level task himself, which caused them so much embarrassment that they rejected the entire idea.

Ineffective: Tried to resolve the issue in an open faculty meeting, where he was victimized by mob emotions, instead of selling his counterparts on an individual basis in private discussions.

Ineffective: Decided to print the one chapter that had been completed too late for the scheduled review in its unreviewed form, providing a target for criticism of the entire report.

One is inclined to be sympathetic to these team leaders, who had the best of intentions. But the buzz-saws that they ran into could and would have been avoided by a more experienced tactician.

Selection Implications: Finding analogues to these skills in the candidate's past performance may pose the most difficult evaluation task of the entire selection procedure. And it will sometimes be necessary to respond to the question of

- Has he shown himself to be a skillful psychologist and tactician in getting action on an idea or approach he wants to promote?

with an enlightened guess, based on the candidate's more general skills in working effectively with different kinds of people.

PART II. SELECTION APPRAISAL: A TRIAL PROCEDURE

GUIDELINES TO USING APPRAISAL TECHNIQUES:

The appropriate procedures for evaluating a candidate on the preceding characteristics cannot be deduced with equal assurance from the data at hand. But the following guidelines can nevertheless be suggested, as consistent with these data and with the state of the art in selection techniques:

1) *Standardized Tests Not Realistic*: The development of tests or other highly objective procedures for team leader selection, which has from time to time been suggested, appears unrealistic. For, unfortunately, the vast majority of the performance requirements fall squarely into the domains of human behavior in which the state of the art in testing is least well developed. Off-the-shelf instruments that can make the fine and almost paradoxical discriminations the data suggest—aggressive yet diplomatic, sympathetic yet tough, imaginative yet humble, etc.—do not exist. And an investment in custom-made tests for these purposes is likely to prove more costly than productive. The burden for team leader selection would seem to remain, as in the past, on fallible human judgment.

2) *Improving the Quality of Judgments*: The detailed information provided in the critical incident reports can and should be used to improve the validity of such judgments, however. Asking an evaluator to predict the candidate's response to the specific situations described in the incident data on the basis of the responses he has observed the candidate make in the past to analogous situations should provide far more accurate judgments than the common approach of asking for global ratings on a set of loosely defined characteristics. A candidate's supervisors and colleagues will normally be able to recall many directly pertinent observations, *if* the questions are sufficiently well structured to jog their memories toward specifics. Using the incident data as "triggers" to the recall of relevant observations, as was done in the phrasing of the selection questions suggested throughout the Part I discussions, is the indicated approach.¹

3) *Realistic Judgment of Overall Suitability*: In appraising a candidate on the basis of the answers obtained to these questions, his overall suitability must be judged from a realistic perspective. Though it obviously would be comforting to insist that he should rank high on each of the important dimensions, such a requirement would seldom be met as a practical matter. Few if any individuals exist who are as good as the composite of the best qualities of the many different team leaders included in this survey, which is what the sum of these requirements in fact represents. And, in the small population of humans who do approach this ideal, the subset who are actually available for team leader assignments is much tinier still. Seldom is a contractor faced with the task of selecting the very best of a horde of qualified candidates, each clamoring to be sent overseas.

4) *Primary Functions of Appraisal Techniques*: Accordingly, the proposed appraisal techniques should not be viewed as vehicles for the selection of uniformly perfect team leaders. The primary functions

¹ Implicit in this approach to selection, of course, is the assumption that the evaluators have known the candidate long enough to have observed him in a variety of situations. And this almost necessarily implies that contractors should nominate long-term members of their organizations rather than new staff acquisitions. But this is a desirable practice in any event, for reasons even more basic to project success than enlightened selection.

they can be expected to serve are to

- a) identify those candidates who, irrespective of their positive qualities, have one or more limitations that make them poor risks for a particular assignment;
- b) indicate the areas in which an acceptable but less-than-perfect candidate should be buttressed with supervisory inputs or onsite assistants; and
- c) when there is indeed a choice of candidates, provide a sufficiently detailed comparison to permit a confident choice.

These outcomes appear to lie well within the reach of the evaluative questions that were suggested in Part I.

A TRIAL SELECTION PROCEDURE:

To translate this set of evaluative questions into an operational selection procedure, it is necessary to decide *who* should answer each question, and *at which stage* of the selection process it should be considered. This is partly an empirical issue, since only "live" tryouts with real candidates and actual evaluators can provide a confident answer. But, as a first approximation, a four-step selection process preceded by the development of an adequate job definition might be attempted.

A: Job Description

Most of the selection criteria that emerged from the incident data are reasonably independent of the nature of the project and its specific overseas setting. The key elements of job orientation, emotional maturity, and leadership are surely of universal importance to all development efforts. But certain of the other requirements can take on a variety of forms, depending on the specifics of the task and the conditions under which it is to be done. A necessary first step, therefore, is to prepare a job description that pins down these variable requirements for the actual project in question.

The suggested approach is summarized in Figure 2 in tabular form. This lists the eight requirements that are likely to vary most significantly from one project to another, and indicates the kinds of information to be assembled on each. The final column will be the one used by the evaluators, to determine the relative importance of these eight requirements for the team leader of this particular project.

Information on the first five requirements will normally have to be developed in the field, by AID and/or contractor personnel who have first-hand knowledge of local conditions, personalities, and expectations. To generate the kinds of information suggested in Figure 2, the following kinds of questions should be addressed:

1: *Technical Specialization.* What are the fields of technical specialization that are most central to the major goals of this project? Are there any sub-areas within these fields that are especially important? How much of the burden for these kinds of technical inputs will the team leader be able to delegate to others? How much will he himself have to carry? In which sub-areas will he be expected to function as the sole or primary resource?

2: Institution-Building. Does this project have a significant institution-building component? What is the exact nature of this institution, and at what organizational level(s) will the project link in? Will the team leader be expected to be familiar with the inner workings of this type of institution? Are there any special institutional characteristics (e.g., British-style administrative procedures) in which specific experience would be decidedly helpful?

3: Paper Qualifications. Are an individual's paper qualifications an important factor in his acceptance in this country? What credentials do the host country officials consider desirable for the kind of role the team leader is expected to play? What is the minimum they will accept? Will the prestige and reputation of the contractor compensate for deficiencies of this kind in the team leader's background, or will such deficiencies pose continuing problems?

4: Administration and Planning. Beyond his basic responsibilities for managing his team and the contract, will the team leader be expected to contribute also to the management of related host government functions? Are his counterparts strong in administration and planning, or will they look to him for substantial assistance? How much responsibility outside the limits of his "official" role will he in fact have to assume by default?

5: Tactics. How much of the responsibility for selling ideas, overcoming resistance, and engineering change will fall to the team leader? How much help on such maneuvering will be available to him from more experienced personnel also in-country? How much further help can be provided if and when needed? To what extent will he simply have to operate on his own?

Other factors in the local situation that seem to field personnel to represent special requirements should, of course, also be included among the job specifications. But a good fix on these five is essential.

The latter three elements of the job description are less dependent on field conditions. These reflect mainly the magnitude of the project and the complexity of the contractual arrangements, and raise the following kinds of questions:

Job Element	What Kinds and How Much This Project Requires	Aspects That Will or Can Be Done By Others	Aspects That Must Be Done By Team Leader
1: Technical Specialization			
2: Institution-Building			
3: Paper Qualifications			
4: Administration and Planning			
5: Tactics			
6: Administrative Detail			
7: Supervision			
8: Contract Experience			

Figure 2: Essential Elements of Information to be Included in the Job Description of a Team Leader Position

6: Administrative Detail. Does this project entail complex logistic requirements, such as a large commodity component, or other substantial "housekeeping" chores? How much attention to such detail will be expected of the team leader? Are there or can there be provisions for administrative assistants that can take over these functions?

7: Supervision. How extensive are the supervisory responsibilities in this project? Are the functions of the team members fairly cut-and-dried, or will their effective utilization require continuing judgments? Are there any other factors (e.g., the inclusion of third-country nationals) that will make the supervisory requirements unusually demanding?

8: Contract Experience. To what extent will the team leader have to represent the contractor in contract-related negotiations? Given the scope and complexity of the project, are these needs likely to arise seldom or often? How much can be handled in the U.S. by backstopping staff? How much must be done in the field by the team leader?

Adequate information on these kind of issues is normally available from existing project documentation.

The resulting description will differ from the project descriptions that are normally prepared in focusing not on the totality of inputs required, but on the specific subset of these inputs that is to be the personal responsibility of the team leader. And this will provide the contractor with a convenient list of the background and experience factors that he should look for in scanning the rolls for potentially suitable candidates in his organization.

B: Recruitment

The first step of the actual selection process is to perform a "scanning" operation, to identify all of the employees who can be realistically considered for the position. Basically, this consists of reviewing the possibilities, and including in the prospective candidate list everyone who comes close enough to the job description to warrant a more intensive assessment. At this early stage, it is usually wise to err on the side of generosity in judging potential suitability, so as to maximize the selection options.

As guidelines for matching the capabilities of the prospects against the requirements of the job description, the criteria developed in PART I: THE FIELD STUDY may be applied. For the eight elements included in the above job description, these criteria encompass the following questions:

- Requirement 1-a: *Technical Goodness of Fit*: Can this candidate trouble-shoot and solve technical problems in the specialty that is the nub of this project?
- Requirement 1-c: *Institution Building*: Has he been active in the institutional as well as the strictly technical aspects of this kind of activity, and has he been effective in performing these kinds of functions?
- Requirement 1-d: *Paper Credentials*: Will his credentials carry enough weight in this country to gain him the respect and high-level access the position requires?
- Requirement 2-a: *Attention to Detail*: Does he take care of the administrative details that are part of this present job punctually and effortlessly, without slip-ups, flurries, or special reminders?

- Requirement 2-b: *Anticipating Contingencies*: Has he shown himself to be skillful in planning, and to be sufficiently well-organized to stay on top of a number of ongoing activities at the same time?

- Requirement 2-c: *Using Team Members Effectively*: Has he shown himself to be relatively free of "blind spots" in judging the capabilities of his staff and assigning them suitable functions?

- Requirement 2 d: *Experience with Government*: Has he experience in working with the legal and quasi-legal aspects of contract administration?

- Requirement 11-c: *Selecting Appropriate Tactics*: Has he shown himself to be a skillful psychologist and tactician in getting action on an idea or approach he wants to promote?

The relative weight to be given these questions in the overall assessment depends on the emphasis of the job description. The implications of a negative answer to the question on trouble-shooting technical problems would be quite different, for example, for the team leader who is to serve mainly as the manager of a large group of specialists, and for the one who is to double-hat as the primary resource person in the key specialty himself. And the question on supervisory judgment may not be applicable at all to the "team leader" of a one-man assistance project.

That these criteria are much less specific than the details of a typical job description should also be noted. This has been done intentionally so that at least a tentative judgment can be made about candidates who have not been observed under conditions directly comparable to the field situation. For the more specific performance data on which these questions are based, Part I should be consulted.

C: Initial Screening

Having developed the initial list of prospects on the basis of background and experience factors compatible with the job description, the evaluators should now review the results from the point of view of the "human" component. Are any of these individuals clearly unsuited for the assignment on personal grounds, despite their congruence on paper to the requirements of the job description? Have any of them an overriding temperamental shortcoming that should disqualify them from further consideration?

Six of the criteria developed in Part I are appropriate for purposes of this second screening. Stated in negative form, these are as follows:

- Requirement 1-b: *Practical Applications*: Is he too locked into high-powered and sophisticated approaches to relate to his counterparts on practical down-to-earth problems?

- Requirement 3-a: *Empathy*: Is he too self-centered or callous to be attentive to the needs of the people who will be dependent on him for assistance?

- Requirement 3-b: *Proper Treatment of Colleagues*: Does he turn off the people who work with or for him by being aloof or autocratic, or otherwise trying in working relations?

- Requirement 3-c: *Good Taste*: Does he frequently offend others by ignoring common courtesies and conventions, or showing poor taste?

- Requirement 7-b: *Freedom from Chauvinism*: Does he lack the stature and influence in his own home office that he will need to look out for the best interests of the project?

- **Requirement 7-c: *Personal Conduct:*** Is he prone to trouble via liquor or women or other intemperate behavior?

These questions are deliberately stated in extreme terms because only obvious misfits should be rejected.

The main purpose of this preliminary screening is to pave the way for the next step of consulting the prospective candidates about their own interests in such an assignment. For this should be done only with candidates who are at least plausible choices, to avoid needless soul-searching of the type that is usually triggered when exotic opportunities beckon, and to minimize the mutually painful task of explaining later rejections. Insuring that the candidates consulted not only match the essentials of the job description, but also are free of any overriding limitations are minimum precautions.

D: Self-Appraisal

The inputs that the candidates themselves should be invited to make to the selection process at this juncture should go beyond an indication of their availability for an overseas tour, to a fairly hard self-appraisal. For they are the best possible judges of their fit to the attitudinal and motivational requirements, which are the next elements to be considered in the assessment. And, even though some candidates may be less than entirely objective, most people would rather avoid an uncongenial job than live through it for one or more years, and will give their honest reactions.

As the basis for an enlightened self-appraisal, the candidate must be given more detailed information than typically has been provided, however. He should be asked to read the job description, the work plan and related documentation, and the relevant sections of this TAGS, especially Part I. Such country-relevant data as are usually provided in his pre-departure orientation also should be made available to him, at this point rather than later.

After he has reviewed this material, the candidate should be given an opportunity to discuss it with the AID and contractor officials who are responsible for the project. And, on the basis of this discussion, the next four selection criteria should be applied. These are

- **Requirement 4-a: *Goal Orientation:*** Does he realize how much personal direction and push he will have to give to the project, and does he seem comfortable about playing so active a role?
- **Requirement 5-a: *Acceptance of USG Role:*** Is he willing to function in a quasi-official role, as a part of the U.S. Government structure?
- **Requirement 5-b: *Acceptance of Policy:*** Does he fully understand the goals and mechanisms that have been established for this project, and is he willing to operate within them?
- **Requirement 5-c: *Diplomacy:*** Does he realize that the exercise of "freedom of speech" in this assignment must stop short of pronouncements that his hosts would find offensive?

The candidate who feels himself to be qualified on these criteria (and who also persuades the evaluators of this in the course of the discussion) would be regarded as sufficiently promising to justify the final step of developing the comprehensive profile of pluses and minuses that will permit a confident decision.

E: Final Assessment

The fifteen criteria that have been deferred to this final stage of the process are no less important than those applied at the earlier stages. But they do permit somewhat greater flexibility in accepting compromises and trade-offs that need not cripple the project. And, since every candidate will exhibit certain limitations, the final task will inevitably be to decide whether the "net" merits of the best of the available candidates balance out to a tolerable or intolerable level of risk.

In assessing these trade-offs, it may be helpful to view the fifteen remaining criteria as falling into four groups that have somewhat different implications, as follows:

1) *Potentially Crippling Limitations*: The first and most critical group encompasses characteristics that can seriously disrupt the project, and that are not readily susceptible to change or control. It includes three evaluative questions:

- Requirement 9-a: *Resisting Precipitous Action*: Is he reasonably unflappable in high pressure or crisis situations?

- Requirement 10-a: *Defending Convictions*: Does he stick to his guns in a debate or controversy when he is right?

- Requirement 10-b: *Firmness with Staff*: Does he take firm and timely action on personnel problems, without weaseling or passing the buck?

Deficiencies on these criteria would mean that the project will have to survive without the benefit of strong and effective leadership at critical times. And this should be regarded as a trade-off that is difficult to accept, unless the candidate indeed has some other priceless qualities that offset this severe limitation.

2) *Less Critical Limitations*: The second group can be regarded as somewhat less critical in that the impact of deficiencies in these respects can be cushioned by the forbearance of his team members, counterparts, and USAID officials. It includes five personality-linked questions:

- Requirement 8-a: *Objectivity*: Does he take good advice when it is given, without regarding this as a threat or an affront?

- Requirement 8-b: *Admitting Mistakes*: Does he admit to mistakes candidly, without indulging in elaborate excuses or rationalizations?

- Requirement 8-c: *Relaxed about Status*: Is he reasonably relaxed about his dignity and status, and about exacting his just due in amenities and respect?

- Requirement 9-b: *Constructive Supervision*: Has his staff found him to be patient and helpful when someone makes a mistake?

- Requirement 9-c: *Acceptance of Reverses*: Has he typically been a good sport about being overruled or turned down on something he considers important?

A team leader who ranks low in these respects would admittedly be a trial to have around. But most people are willing to accommodate to such frailties in someone who is making an excellent contribution in other respects, and this makes these limitations an easier trade-off than those in the first group above.

3) *Compensable Limitations*: The third group is different from both of these in that the contractor can frequently compensate for these kinds of limitations by introducing appropriate controls and providing close supervision. It includes the following five criterion questions:

- Requirement 4-b: *Initiative*: Is he an alert and reasonably aggressive self-starter?
- Requirement 4-c: *Effort*: Can he be counted on to produce on an assignment, no matter how much time or energy may be required?
- Requirement 6: *Development Commitment*: Has he shown himself to be patient and skillful in developing more junior staff members?
- Requirement 7-a: *Integrity*: Is he one of the people who can be counted on to support a decision that is for the good of the entire institution, without getting caught up in its impact on himself?
- Requirement 10-c: *Risking Criticism*: Has he enough confidence in himself to deviate from prior agreements or instructions when there is an obvious need for modification?

On each of the requirements that generated these questions, the contractor can arrange for regular inputs from the home office by requiring detailed reports and monitoring the activity closely. And so the weight to be given to these factors in the composite assessment depends largely on what the contractor is willing and able to do.

4) *Plus Qualities*: The fourth group is different still, in calling for qualities that are a decided plus in a team leader, but that will usually result in nothing more serious than a missed opportunity if he does not have them. The two questions that comprise this group are

- Requirement 11-a: *Building Support*: Has he been popular and mobile in the organizations of which he has been a member? and
- Requirement 11-b: *Sensitivity to Undercurrents*: Is he usually fast in catching on to the "hidden agenda" in delicate negotiations or discussions?

These can be given substantially less weight than the above because the most critical aspect of the Political Finesse dimension from which these are drawn was already considered as part of the job description.

Such groupings are largely speculative, of course, but they should make the task of juggling a large number of criteria a bit easier to manage. For, as the basis for the final decision, not only these fifteen but also all of the earlier evaluations should be reviewed, to come up with a composite assessment that makes use of every scrap of relevant data.

Overall, all aspects of this suggested approach must be regarded as tentative, and in some respects as no more than illustrative, pending actual trials. But the core recommendations of using the critical incident data to

- 1) prepare more pointed and relevant job descriptions,
- 2) evaluate an candidate on the basis of his responses to related situations in his past job assignments,
- 3) make more effective use of the vehicle of self-appraisal, and
- 4) diagnose the candidate's needs for special assistance and supervision

seem solid, and are indicated directions for the improvement of team leader selection procedures.