

# Unlocking the Right Fit

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF MATCHING  
PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS

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# USING THIS EBOOK

Theory is interesting, but when you’ve got 40 open reqs that need filling and 10,000 resumes pouring in from people who want to fill them, who’s got time for theory? You need to hire the right people, quickly and efficiently.

The goal of this eBook is to give you concrete tools to do that. It lays out the basics of how a person fits within the work environment, and breaks down steps and tools you can use to match the right person to your company, the job you’re offering, and the team it’s on.

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# INTRODUCTION

In 1951, social psychologist Kurt Lewin summarized the complete breadth of human behavior with a very simple heuristic, or loosely defined rule:

$$B = f(P, E)$$

What this means, basically, is that behavior (B) is a function (f) of both the person (P) and their environment (E). While this may seem self-evident, it was a watershed moment in figuring out how a person fits into a workplace environment. Since 1951, researchers have greatly expanded the Person-Environment fit literature into a comprehensive field of study. There are now three separate, generally accepted categories:

1. **Person-Job Fit:** the match between an individual's abilities and preferences and the demands and attributes of the job.
2. **Person-Organization Fit:** the match between an individual's values and the norms and values of the organization.
3. **Person-Group Fit:** the degree of fit between an individual and their immediate team of coworkers.

We'll take a look at each of these three categories of fit, see how to determine them, and look at whether they're all even that important.

## WHAT CREATES COMPANY CULTURE?

### The Attraction-Selection-Attrition Framework

Taken together, the three categories of fit illustrate that matching applicants to jobs is a complex affair. They also support another theory that has become fundamental in organizational behavior: the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework, which bases an organization's behavior on the collective norms, values, abilities, and preferences of the people in the organization, especially company leaders.

[Benjamin Schneider, Ph.D.](#), Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management and Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland, proposed the framework as a theoretical model in 1987, and it's since been supported by research. The ASA has become as fundamental to organizational behavior as the Lewin heuristic has to all human behavior. It shows that an organization attracts potential candidates, selects the ones that it believes will be best, and then encourages attrition for those who do not ultimately fit. What is left is a collection of people who define the nature of the organization, and its structure, processes, and culture.

Or, put more simply: You create and refine your organization's culture by continually screening and selecting candidates and replacing those who prove to be the wrong fit.

# FITTING THE PERSON TO THE JOB

Person-Job (P-J) Fit is the most basic type of fit. Fitting a person to a job is much like fitting a key to a lock: a key must have the required size, number, and shape of teeth — the right characteristics — to turn the lock. Similarly, an employee must have the right knowledge, skills, and abilities and the right characteristics to fit a job.

The right P-J Fit contributes to less turnover, absenteeism, and resentment among employees. Employees who fit a job are more involved and committed, and have a greater amount of trust in the organization and overall higher level of well-being than those who don't. That means happier employees who cost your organization less.

Person-Job Fit is best established by first conducting a **job analysis** to determine the specific demands and attributes of the job, then using that analysis to match the applicant's abilities and preferences to the job.

Complex methods such as competency modeling can be useful for conducting job analyses, but a basic task-clustering method also works well.



## Job Analysis

A formal process of determining necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) and connecting them to the tasks needed to be proficient at a job. It has both practical and legal implications.

## Legal Note

A complete, comprehensive job analysis is more than a recruitment tool: it's a versatile document that serves many functions in an organization. A job analysis provides a foundation for developing training programs, performance management systems, and testing instruments.

It can even offer legal protections. In *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, the U.S. Supreme Court established that the employer bears the burden of proof for any job requirement. The means of providing this proof is a job analysis — and not a thrown-together one but a comprehensive one that can hold up in court.

## Perform a Job Analysis By Task Clustering

1. Interview or lead a focus group of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in order to develop a comprehensive list of KSAOs. You can have SMEs walk through a typical day or problem, ask them about their performance requirements, or have them simply list performed tasks and task frequency.
2. Personally observe SMEs to discover tasks they overlook.
3. Use all of the qualitative information from interviews, focus groups, and observations to determine the primary functions of the job. There should be about 5 – 10 of them.
4. Within each job function, identify the all the tasks necessary to perform that function. (You can find sample lists of generic task statements on [O\\*NET](#) or see our example on this page.) To write a task statement:
  - a. Start with a functional action verb (e.g. prepares, analyzes, or meets) to describe what's being done
  - b. Follow the action verb with an object (describing to whom/for what purpose the action is done)
  - c. Say how the task is performed
  - d. Finish by explaining why the task is performed
5. Once all functions and tasks are clearly defined, have them audited and refined by the Subject Matter Experts. Keep in mind that writing concise, unambiguous tasks is the most difficult step in the job analysis process. You may need to rinse and repeat your evaluations and refinements a few times before you get it right.

### Consider this example for a locksmith:

Job Function: Customer service interaction

Example task: Ask (functional action verb)

1. the customer (object, describing to whom the action is done)
2. for all relevant information about the problem (for what purpose the action is done)
3. over the telephone (how the action is performed)
4. in order to choose the best tools for the job. (why the task is performed)

Once you've finished the job analysis, you can use it to write a reliable and valid job description complete with all the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics necessary to find that perfect, key-like fit.

# FITTING THE PERSON TO THE ORGANIZATION

Person-Organization Fit means matching a candidate's norms and values with an organization's, but usually involves much more than that. Many different potential interactions can affect the degree of Person-Organization Fit. For example, an individual who lacks strong personal values can fit into organization with differing values, just as an organization without strong values will adopt the values of the people it comprises.

## Q: What do these things have in common?

- Googlers can have meetings in an egg.
- Genentech employees get [six-week sabbaticals](#) for every six years of service.
- Sales employees at The Container Store are offered a ["family friendly" shift](#) of 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Netapp provides [enhanced benefits](#) for parents of special-needs children.

**A: They're all illustrations of organizational culture.** And finding employees that fit your culture is an important aspect of recruiting talent: it reduces turnover, improves employee job satisfaction, and reduces employee stress.



## The Power of P-O Fit

One study found that managers who were most dissimilar to their organization in terms of age, education, and lifestyle reported the poorest integration into their work teams. Another found a relationship between P-O Fit and salary and career prospects, demonstrating the potential long-term effects of Person-Organization fit. In a [1992 study at Cornell](#), Timothy Judge and Robert Bretz, Jr., found that applicants were more concerned about their future employers sharing four values — concern for others, achievement, honesty, and fairness — than about pay or promotional opportunities. These values were near universally viewed as desirable. If your organization honestly values these traits, don't hesitate to use them in formal job sources.

## How do you consider Person-Organization fit in your recruitment strategy?

- Publicize and reaffirm an honest image in your applicant-facing materials. Job applicants form their own personal assessments of fit early on, through interaction with company representatives and formal job materials (such as a website or job description).

These perceptions relate both to their perceptions after entering an organization and to employment quality. Formal job sources that convey honest information about a job, and about the organization's values and culture, will make applicants' fit perceptions more accurate.

- Increase the number of formal job sources. This has been demonstrated to increase perceptions of fit with an organization.
- Train employees on how to interact with applicants.
- Put together a [realistic job preview](#) and post it on your organization's website.

### Realistic Job Previews (RJPs)

"RJPs are defined as programs, materials, and/or presentations that provide applicants with realistic and balanced (positive and negative) information about a job."<sup>1</sup>

### A Note of Caution:

Person-Organization Fit is important, but it shouldn't be used early in the selection process because it relies on subjective rather than objective opinions. Recruiters' and interviewers' fit assessments could be biased, leading to illegal hiring practices. Applicants' interpersonal skills, goal orientation, and physical attractiveness, for example, all contribute to assessments of fit when holding general employability constant. Basing a hiring decision on these traits, regardless of an applicant's ability, could lead to inaccurate hires or even rejections. You want to consider P-O Fit in your recruiting process, not in your selection process.

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1 Earnest D. R., Allen, D. G., & Landis, R. S. (2011). Mechanisms linking realistic job previews with turnover: a meta-analytic path analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 64(4), 865–897 [link](#)

# FITTING THE PERSON TO THE GROUP

As technology transforms from a segmented industry into a feature of all industries, work is evolving faster than ever before. The result is increasing job complexity and a need for teams, rather than individuals, to manage that complexity. Fitting employees into teams or groups (we use the terms interchangeably) is an essential part of building effective organizations, which means that even though Person-Group Fit is the youngest child in the fit family, it has lately received increased attention.

As does Person-Organization Fit, Person-Group Fit involves a layer of complexity. The fit must be both **supplementary** (meaning the individual shares the goals, values, or abilities of his/her team) and **complementary** (meaning the individual compensates for team members' weaknesses). An individual must match a group but also be able to add to the group.

**Take this puzzle.** Separately, the yellow and blue pieces mean nothing. Together, they complement and supplement each other to form a coherent image. Their contours and edges match each other (supplementary fit), as do their embedded letters, which together create something new: the word "group" (complementary fit).

If the yellow piece instead ended with an "e," there would be supplementary but not complementary fit (unless, of course, you're speaking French). Conversely, ill-fitting pieces with the correct letters would have complementary but not supplementary fit.



## Why does P-G Fit matter?

PG fit is an important consideration in employee selection. Properly fitting group members contribute more, are more satisfied with their work and work relationships, have reduced tardiness and absenteeism, and are less likely to turn over. Research has found that group cohesiveness leads to group productivity, and the more diverse skillset a group has the more effective they are.

## Necessary but not sufficient

The relationship between P-G Fit and performance is not entirely clear, as adequate skill and satisfaction does not automatically translate into performance. In other words, P-G Fit alone is not sufficient to produce effective teams, but it is necessary. So when recruiting for a team, it is important to not only match candidates with job requirements but to also match them with the values and needs of the team itself.



## How and when to evaluate Person-Group Fit

P-G Fit can be used in employment pre-screening, because the characteristics that contribute to it, like personality, are stable. Some methods you can use to determine this fit:

- Look at resume skills to see if the candidate fills in for what's currently missing (complementary fit)
- Use strategic interview questions to determine goals, values and abilities (supplementary fit)
- Administer a validated selection assessment (to determine supplementary fit)

## CONCLUSION

Finding the right fit between people and your organization isn't easy, but it is a critical part of building a solid company culture and is a big driver of employee satisfaction and tenure. It's a complex balancing act of Person-Job Fit, Person-Organization Fit, and Person-Group Fit. We hope you find these tips for considering all three implementable and interesting.

For more insights into hiring the right people, or to quickly find the best people for your organization, visit us at [Bright Hiring Solutions](#).

## FURTHER READING

Want more information on Person-Group Fit? Look for research by these academics:

[Dan Cable](#) (Person-Organization)

[Jennifer A. Chatman](#) (Person-Organization)

[Jeffrey R. Edwards](#) (Person-Job, Person-Environment)

[John R. Hollenbeck](#) (Person-Group)

[Timothy Judge](#) (Person-Organization)

[Amy L. Kristof-Brown](#) (Person-Group, Person-Job, Person-Organization, Person-Environment)

[Charles O'Reilly](#) (Person-Organization)

[Ben Schneider](#) (Person-Environment)

[James D. Werbel](#) (Person-Group)

[Ryan D. Zimmerman](#) (Person-Job, Person-Organization, Person-Group, and Person-Environment)

# ABOUT BRIGHT

Bright.com was founded in 2011, and has raised over \$20 million in financing from Silicon Valley institutional and angel investors. A first in the market, Bright is not just an innovation in online job search. Our mission is to move the labor market faster via data science and engineering.

The Bright Score, a numerical assessment of a candidate's qualification for a particular job, alleviates the lengthy and expensive task of finding the right fit between a position and a qualified candidate. Recruiters can locate the most qualified candidates within seconds, greatly reducing the time spent searching for top prospects and sifting through applicants. And now job seekers can automatically apply to jobs where they have the best chance of attracting the attention of hiring managers.

In order to accomplish this, our data science and engineering teams analyze the hiring trends of every company and industry in every city in the United States.

For more information about Bright, visit our websites at [Bright.com](http://Bright.com) and [Bright.com/labs](http://Bright.com/labs).

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