Hiring

Using Pre-Employment Personality Tests as a Hiring Tool

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Have you ever regretted hiring someone? You're not alone.

The price tag of a "bad hire" has cost some U.S. companies more than $50,000, according to a **CareerBuilder study** released in 2013.

But you might not know about an age-old tool that can help you reduce your chances of **hiring the wrong person**. It's efficient, cost-effective and fair to all applicants.

I'm talking about pre-employment assessment tests.

After regaining popularity with larger organizations in the late 1980s, pre-employment assessment tests are now used by companies of all sizes.

These tests can help reduce your chances of **hiring someone who doesn't have the necessary skills or personality** to be a successful member of your team. It can also provide more detailed information about your candidates that you might not get from a resume or interview. This way you get a well-rounded view of your potential new hires before you make a final decision.

But with hundreds of tests out there, where do you start without wasting your own time and money?

Here's the secret to taking advantage of two of the most popular types of pre-employment assessment tests.

Skills assessment test

What if a candidate performs well in an interview, but you're unsure if they have

knowledge, experience and proper skills to do the job every day?

A skills assessment test can help you evaluate hundreds of skill-sets for certain positions or measure one specific skill.

For example, there are more than 200 skill-sets that can be measured for an accountant position. This can be a decisive factor if you're struggling to choose between candidates.

A skills assessment test can also save time later on during the training process. By narrowing down a person's strengths and weaknesses, you can create **a more focused training plan**.

Pre-cognitive test

While a skills assessment test may indicate if your candidates can perform certain tasks, it won't tell you about their personality or what motivates them at work. That's where pre-cognitive assessments come in.

This test gives insight into how a person operates by measuring core behavioral traits that are critical to job performance.

This is important from a managerial standpoint, as it suggests if someone is more of an introvert or extrovert. It can also help determine candidates' ability to adapt to **your company's culture** and whether they're a good team player.

The test can dive deeper to reveal a person's confidence, likeability and assertiveness. This is essential if you're looking for someone who can bring fresh ideas to the table. Aside from strengths, you'll also learn which areas a candidate might need guidance. This can help you grow and develop your talent.

Some positions require specific personality traits, and this test could help distinguish who meets that criteria. This is important in positions such as sales, customer service or health care, for example. But not all jobs require candidates to have strong interpersonal skills. For instance, information technology roles are typically more dependent on a candidate's skill-set more than personality.

Customize your test

While vendors offer countless assessments, it's important to choose the right test that's customized to your needs.

An organization should never make their own assessment test unless they have a psychologist or other appropriate expert who can create a proper benchmark.

A common mistake is when companies test their **best employees** and use their results as a benchmark when testing new candidates.

Assessment tools should be properly validated and results studied by organization psychologists or Ph.D.-certified professionals to maintain validation over time. Any reputable vendor can provide technical documents explaining the processes and studies that went into the assessment's validation.

Administering an invalidated assessment of any type may open the organization up to wrongful hiring practices lawsuits.

Why design is so important

Few people enjoy taking tests. Therefore, it's essential that your **candidates have a positive experience** with your assessment. That's why you want to take design and length into consideration.

The test's look and feel should be conducive to your company's culture. It's unlikely the applicant will form a positive impression of the company if it doesn't.

If the test is long or cumbersome, it's not going to be a beneficial tool to the hiring process and can result in increased candidate drop-off rates.

The best time to give the test

While all managers have a personal preference, it's best to administer the test after the initial interview. This gives you an opportunity to meet the person first and bring the results into the fold.

Some managers prefer giving the assessment prior to the first interview so they can include **interview questions** on the test. This can help you prepare behavioral interview questions that focus on certain personality traits that are important in your evaluation.

Not giving the test immediately before or after the first interview could mean a missed opportunity. Throwing it in later can make it seem like an afterthought.

Consider making the test available online. Your candidates will appreciate an accommodating and stress-free process that doesn't require travel to your office.

Risks

Just remember: What goes for one, goes for all.

In order to maintain a fair and compliant interview process, every candidate for an open position must undergo an identical interview process. If a step is skipped or added during an interview, then an organization could be at risk of violating the EEOC's **discrimination laws**.

They took the test. Now what?

It shouldn't take a special degree to read the reports. Most assessments are designed to bring quick and simple results.

Keep in mind that assessment tests are only a piece of the hiring puzzle. Never completely eliminate someone solely because of their results.

If a candidate scores below expectations, it doesn't mean they won't be a great fit. Hiring managers can use candidates' results to coach and help them grow professionally after they're hired.

Do your homework and verify you are using the test correctly. It could be the best way to improve your hiring process, and as a result, save you time and money.

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Allison Tinkham

Director of Recruiting Services

Allison Tinkham has more than 16 years of recruiting experience and is currently the director, recruiting services at Insperity Recruiting Services. She specializes in talent identification, training and development, and process design and implementation. She holds a B.S. degree in Psychology from Stephen F. Austin State University.

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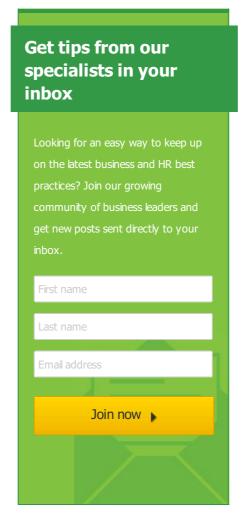### 5 Ways to Keep Your Best Candidates from Losing Interest

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