Development and Validation of the People Person Test

This paper describes the development and validation of the People Person Test (PPT), a new scale that allows organizations to evaluate applicants’ fit with others in the company before they are hired. Most organizations currently use mechanisms such as resumes and interviews to evaluate applicants’ previous experience (Smith & Jones, 2011), and a few even use ability tests to predict the likelihood that an applicant can successfully do the job (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). However, managers often want more than an employee who can perform job tasks efficiently; they want a person who will fit in well with the team. Many jobs require not only technical skills but also people skills. For example, success in a sales position requires not only product knowledge but the ability to build rapport with a potential customer. Many work environments today require teamwork and collaboration, and tests of cognitive abilities tell an employer nothing about these essential skills. The PPT was designed to address this serious gap in the research literature.

The PPT measures the degree to which an individual can be considered a “People Person” – that is, the degree to which the individual enjoys being around and gets along with other people. It can be used in job selection settings to identify applicants with adequate people skills. This study describes the first empirical validation of the PPT. We administered the measure to a large sample of participants, evaluated its reliability, and used exploratory factor analysis to discover its factor structure. Finally, we examined the ability of the test to predict an external criterion.

Method

*Participants*. The PPT was administered to 356 students in an introductory Marketing and Advertising course at a large Midwestern university. The average age of the participants was 20.56 years (SD = 3.5). Most (93%) were Caucasian, and 67% were female.

*Measures.* The PPT consists of 15 items (see Table 1 for full item text) that assess the extent to which a respondent can be considered a People Person. The items were written by a group of experienced managers who are themselves successful People and based on their extensive knowledge of the skills needed to work well with others in business. Items were presented using a 5-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.”

The criterion variable in this study was students’ final point totals in the course. Course grades were determined based on 3 multiple choice exams, worth a total of 300 points.

*Procedure.* Participants completed the study during class time and received 2 extra credit points for their participation. The course instructor introduced the study and explained to participants that it was very important that they answer honestly. To facilitate matching of survey responses to students’ final course grades, students were asked to write their names on the survey. Participants completed the measure a second time later in the semester to assess reliability.

Results

Means and standard deviations for all items and the criterion variable are presented in Table 1. The PPT is scored by adding all items together. The minimum possible score is 15, and the maximum is 75. In this sample, the mean total score was 50.9, with a standard deviation of 15.67. Thus, 66% of respondents scored between 35.23 and 66.57.

*Reliability*

We assessed reliability by calculating the correlation between Time 1 and Time 2 total test scores. This correlation was highly significant, *r* = .71, *p* < .0001. This indicates that there was virtually no measurement error in our test, and that the items could be considered highly internally consistent.

*Factor Structure*

To determine whether being a People Person is a multidimensional construct, we performed a factor analysis on the Time 1 data. We conducted this analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0 (IBM Corp., 2011). To assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis, we conducted Bartlett’s test of sphericity. This test was significant, χ2(105) = 3,667.59, *p* < .001, indicating that there were significant correlations among the items. Inspection of the correlation matrix confirms this; in fact, all correlations among items were extremely significant at *p* < .001 (see Table 2 for all item correlations).

Principal components extraction revealed that there were three eigenvalues greater than 1, indicating that three factors are needed to describe the data. A scree plot of the eigenvalues is provided in Figure 1. To produce the most interpretable solution, we used an orthogonal VARIMAX rotation. The rotated factor loadings appear in Table 3. To aid in interpretation, factor loadings below .30 were considered trivial and are not reported here. Although a number of items had substantial loadings on more than one factor, it seemed clear to us that the three factors represented distinct constructs.

The items that loaded most highly on the first factor were “I like to joke around with the guys in the office” and “People very seldom don’t do what I ask.” Other items in this factor included “I know how to read a customer” and “People like me.” These items appear to reflect a clear Popularity factor, which is a crucial element of being a People Person. It is not surprising that this factor accounts for the majority of the variance in the items.

The items that loaded best on Factor 2 were “I like being part of a team,” “I know how to get others to do what I want,” and “I am very good with names.” This factor appears to emphasize People Skills and the ability to use them to accomplish work objectives.

Finally, Factor 3 is characterized by “I am a very high-energy person,” “I make a point to get along well with my customers’ wives,” and “I like to have a beer with the guys after a long day at work.” This factor appears to reflect Sociability, or the disposition to seek out company.

*Validity*

To assess the validity of the PPT, we correlated participants’ Time 1 total PPT scores with their final point total in the course. The correlation was positive and significant, *r* = .09, *p* = .044. Higher scores on the PPT were associated with better performance in the course.

Discussion

This study provided strong support for the use of the PPT as a means to assess interpersonal skills in the workplace. The scale demonstrated highly significant internal consistency, suggesting that it is a reliable basis for making decisions in the workplace.

The factor analysis revealed that being a People Person is a multidimensional construct, comprised of Popularity, People Skills, and Sociability. Further, these factors were found to be orthogonal, indicating that each makes a unique contribution to the construct. Further research should investigate these dimensions in greater detail. Although we expect that all three dimensions are necessary for successful performance in the workplace, we were unable to test that hypothesis in the current study.

Finally, the validation analysis yielded a significant validity coefficient, indicating that the PPT is a valid predictor of job performance. In summary, it appears that the PPT is a valid, reliable, and useful test that fills an important gap in the research literature. We strongly recommend the use of this measure to supplement traditional hiring practices.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistics for all items.*

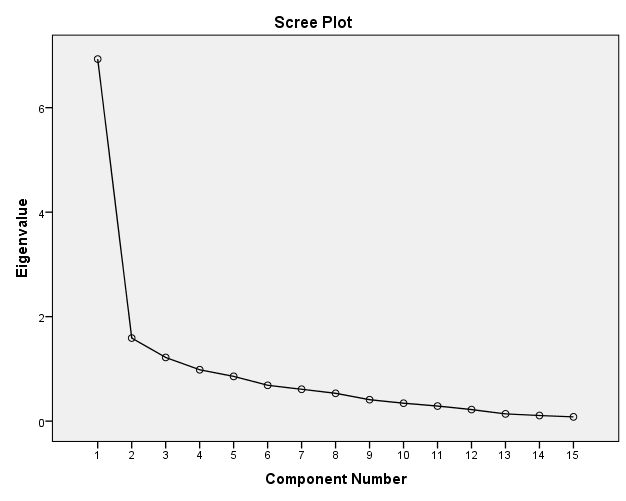
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Mean | SD |
| 1. I enjoy being around other people. | 4.01 | 0.58 |
| 2. I get along well with others. | 4.48 | 0.40 |
| 3. I like to have a beer with the guys after a long day at work. | 3.21 | 1.25 |
| 4. A good salesman knows how to make women like him. | 2.97 | 1.78 |
| 5. I like being part of a team. | 4.12 | 0.89 |
| 6. People like me. | 3.86 | 0.95 |
| 7. I know how to get others to do what I want. | 2.87 | 0.87 |
| 8. People very seldom don’t do what I ask. | 2.40 | 1.35 |
| 9. I like to joke around with the guys in the office. | 3.88 | 1.11 |
| 10. I make a point to get along well with my customers’ wives. | 2.45 | 1.59 |
| 11. I am a very high-energy person. | 3.11 | 1.01 |
| 12. I know how to read a customer. | 3.45 | 0.94 |
| 13. I am very good with names. | 3.56 | 0.98 |
| 14. I believe you can tell a lot about a man from a handshake. | 3.04 | 1.12 |
| 15. People usually laugh at my jokes. | 3.49 | .85 |

*Table 2. Correlations among items.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. | 11. | 12. | 13. | 14. | 15. |
| 1. | 1 | .427\*\* | .296\*\* | .361\*\* | .471\*\* | .528\*\* | .418\*\* | .574\*\* | .421\*\* | .506\*\* | .357\*\* | .282\*\* | .575\*\* | .461\*\* | .420\*\* |
| 2. | .427\*\* | 1 | .405\*\* | .561\*\* | .477\*\* | .458\*\* | .465\*\* | .509\*\* | .447\*\* | .350\*\* | .332\*\* | .524\*\* | .301\*\* | .530\*\* | .496\*\* |
| 3. | .296\*\* | .405\*\* | 1 | .286\*\* | .333\*\* | .453\*\* | .594\*\* | .402\*\* | .425\*\* | .533\*\* | .609\*\* | .399\*\* | .341\*\* | .556\*\* | .355\*\* |
| 4. | .361\*\* | .561\*\* | .286\*\* | 1 | .550\*\* | .384\*\* | .361\*\* | .426\*\* | .518\*\* | .242\*\* | .271\*\* | .438\*\* | .464\*\* | .518\*\* | .410\*\* |
| 5. | .471\*\* | .477\*\* | .333\*\* | .550\*\* | 1 | .354\*\* | .556\*\* | .300\*\* | .165\*\* | .273\*\* | .449\*\* | .233\*\* | .584\*\* | .522\*\* | .527\*\* |
| 6. | .528\*\* | .458\*\* | .453\*\* | .384\*\* | .354\*\* | 1 | .214\*\* | .529\*\* | .533\*\* | .577\*\* | .268\*\* | .475\*\* | .402\*\* | .438\*\* | .548\*\* |
| 7. | .418\*\* | .465\*\* | .594\*\* | .361\*\* | .556\*\* | .214\*\* | 1 | .264\*\* | .299\*\* | .267\*\* | .517\*\* | .138\*\* | .580\*\* | .545\*\* | .295\*\* |
| 8. | .574\*\* | .509\*\* | .402\*\* | .426\*\* | .300\*\* | .529\*\* | .264\*\* | 1 | .536\*\* | .467\*\* | .279\*\* | .570\*\* | .272\*\* | .485\*\* | .363\*\* |
| 9. | .421\*\* | .447\*\* | .425\*\* | .518\*\* | .165\*\* | .533\*\* | .299\*\* | .536\*\* | 1 | .363\*\* | .318\*\* | .523\*\* | .149\*\* | .250\*\* | .243\*\* |
| 10. | .506\*\* | .350\*\* | .533\*\* | .242\*\* | .273\*\* | .577\*\* | .267\*\* | .467\*\* | .363\*\* | 1 | .633\*\* | .570\*\* | .511\*\* | .296\*\* | .456\*\* |
| 11. | .357\*\* | .332\*\* | .609\*\* | .271\*\* | .449\*\* | .268\*\* | .517\*\* | .279\*\* | .318\*\* | .633\*\* | 1 | .528\*\* | .494\*\* | .421\*\* | .457\*\* |
| 12. | .282\*\* | .524\*\* | .399\*\* | .438\*\* | .233\*\* | .475\*\* | .138\*\* | .570\*\* | .523\*\* | .570\*\* | .528\*\* | 1 | .252\*\* | .463\*\* | .384\*\* |
| 13. | .575\*\* | .301\*\* | .341\*\* | .464\*\* | .584\*\* | .402\*\* | .580\*\* | .272\*\* | .149\*\* | .511\*\* | .494\*\* | .252\*\* | 1 | .579\*\* | .323\*\* |
| 14. | .461\*\* | .530\*\* | .556\*\* | .518\*\* | .522\*\* | .438\*\* | .545\*\* | .485\*\* | .250\*\* | .296\*\* | .421\*\* | .463\*\* | .579\*\* | 1 | .520\*\* |
| 15. | .420\*\* | .496\*\* | .355\*\* | .410\*\* | .527\*\* | .548\*\* | .295\*\* | .363\*\* | .243\*\* | .456\*\* | .457\*\* | .384\*\* | .323\*\* | .520\*\* | 1 |

\* - correlation is significant at *p* < .05. \*\* - correlation is significant at *p* < .01.

*Figure 1. Scree plot.*



*Table 3. Rotated factor loadings.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
| 1. I enjoy being around other people. | .451 | .488 |  |
| 2. I get along well with others. | .621 | .488 |  |
| 3. I like to have a beer with the guys after a long day at work. |  | .319 | .673 |
| 4. A good salesman knows how to make women like him. | .571 | .589 |  |
| 5. I like being part of a team. |  | .834 |  |
| 6. People like me. | .687 |  |  |
| 7. I know how to get others to do what I want. |  | .745 | .356 |
| 8. People very seldom don’t do what I ask. | .764 |  |  |
| 9. I like to joke around with the guys in the office. | .766 |  |  |
| 10. I make a point to get along well with my customers’ wives. | .417 |  | .771 |
| 11. I am a very high-energy person. |  | .353 | .799 |
| 12. I know how to read a customer. | .709 |  | .413 |
| 13. I am very good with names. |  | .725 | .379 |
| 14. I believe you can tell a lot about a man from a handshake. | .353 | .683 |  |
| 15. People usually laugh at my jokes. | .420 | .458 |  |