Psychometric Assessment in Recruitment

MyHiringBuddy

Why use psychometric tools when hiring?

The more informed you are about a candidate's technical and behavioural capabilities, the more effective your decision making should be. At a very simple level psychometric assessment can be a helpful additional tool for employers to gain a greater insight into a candidates' capabilities beyond interviewing alone. The application of scientific, data driven assessment, can give employers greater substance to help them form their judgements around candidates' existing or predicted performance capabilities.

Poor hiring decisions can be extremely costly (the cost of a bad hire estimated at 30% of their first years' earning), and some reports suggest 50% of hiring managers make poor selection judgements using interviews alone. So, with a little more investment up front, companies could reduce this risk – perhaps that is why roughly 75% of FTSE100 companies use psychometric tools within their hiring processes!

The additional virtue of most psychometric tools is their convenience to deploy. Most assessments can be taken remotely with results coming through very quickly, removing considerable time investment from those involved in candidate assessment.

What is Psychometric Assessment

Psychometric Assessment is essentially broken down into 2 forms – cognitive ability testing and behavioural or personality profiling.

Cognitive Ability Testing:
Cognitive ability is the strongest predictor of job success for all employment levels across industries. It helps to gain an understanding of the candidate's ability to learn, apply new knowledge, and solve problems. Cognitive ability is an umbrella term for a multitude of aspects that make up General Mental Ability (GMA). A person's GMA involves reasoning, problem-solving, planning, abstract thinking, complex idea comprehension, and learning from experience. Some common examples of cognitive ability tests include verbal & non-verbal reasoning, spatial reasoning, logical thinking, mechanical ability, and will very often be time restricted.

Behavioural profiling:
The underlying principle of a behavioural assessment is that past behaviour is a valid predictor of future behaviour. They are designed to provide employers with the ability to build up a picture of a candidates' behavioural style and preferences to help form a judgement of how they will fit within the organisation and perform against the demands of the role. They normally consist of a range of cross reference situational questions, whereby the candidate will indicate the response that is most and/or least likely to be the one they would adopt. Employers will normally use this assessment to focus on a selection of behaviours that they believe to be most important for success in a given role. Typical examples of these could be personality questionnaires which won't be timed pressured, or situational judgement exercises which can be under timed conditions.

How are psychometric assessments best used?

- To support a behavioural/competency based interview process

- To assess for highly technical roles requiring high levels of a particular cognitive ability – e.g. analytical, mathematical, accuracy

- For a deeper behavioural assessment – e.g. leadership level

- To screen high volumes of applications when a minimum threshold of attainment can help keep candidate levels to a manageable level – e.g. graduate/apprentice hiring

- To assess for an optimised organisational fit or team dynamic

The potential drawbacks to be aware of

- Mis-using the results – simply handing a report to the hiring manager with no explanation could lead to misinterpretation of the information

- Mis-interpreting the results – most psychometric reports should be delivered in conjunction with a qualified assessor to avoid misrepresenting the results and making inaccurate judgements about the candidate

- Lack of an internal barometer/benchmark – if you are screening an external applicant against a certain 'pass mark', you should also verify this as a legitimate measure with existing staff members

- Practising for results – some candidates will be more practised than others in taking time-controlled tests, which could skew the outcome slightly

- Candidates taking tests under varying conditions – sitting the assessment in the wrong surroundings or under different conditions could negatively impact a candidates' performance

- Cheating: with any remote test there is a risk the candidate could get support or not even take the test themselves

- Risk of bias (sample population, age in cognitive ability, reducing diversity, mental health condition)

Best practise guideline for using Psychometric Assessment in a hiring process

- Make sure you understand why you're using a particular assessment tool and are clear about what information you are looking to receive from it

- Set consistent conditions for assessment to create a level playing field for all the candidates, such as a quite place, avoid distractions, an appropriate time of day etc

- Provide access to practise questions for the assessment tool you're using (or encourage the candidate to do this themselves) so all candidates can 'brush up' their technique and produce the truest sense of their capability

- Avoid using the reports in isolation to form judgements, they are more effective when used in parallel with an interview or other form of assessment

- Where possible obtain feedback from a qualified assessor to properly understand the results, and incorporate this information into your wider selection process

- Avoid the risk of cheating by administering the assessment in person. If being taken remotely, consider the use of a 'control' test within the process to verify the results, or perhaps suggest the possibility of it to discourage anyone trying to cheat

- Use a valid benchmark where possible from which to measure performance, particularly for aptitude testing where an appropriate 'pass' mark may be used

- Ideally you should offer to share the results with the candidate who's taken the assessment, as it could be beneficial to them as well and they've taken the time to complete the tasks

So how do you know which tools to use?

There are many test publishers and service providers available in the market, so it's not always easy to know which tools will suit your organisation, or for which type of role. As such, we've produced a list of providers you can consider with a quick reference overview of their key products and our 'experts' view to offer advice on what could be best for what.

MyHiringBuddy

www.myhiringbuddy.com