

Optimize Your Staffing Decisions by using In-depth Work-style & Personality Assessment Tools

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The wrong hiring decision can cost your company well over two to three times the individual's salary according to Vistage International speaker, Barry Deutsch. This figure may be a conservative estimate because of factors like training, evaluation, termination, re-initiating the hiring process, and lost opportunity costs. There is also an emotional factor involved in a bad hire situation. Not only can it cause stress and anxiety for both management and employees, but it also takes away focus from your company's primary goals. Essentially, a bad hire can have a negative impact on your company's bottom line and that won't benefit you or your workforce.



These circumstances can be minimized during the initial hiring process by using several techniques including effective recruitment programs, skilled interviewing and in-depth work-style and personality assessment tests. A personality assessment is a highly effective tool and an efficient use of company resources at this crucial point of the decision making process.

This article focuses on personality assessment tests and how your company can benefit from them during the interview process, before a potential new hire turns into the wrong decision. An in-depth personality test, in conjunction with a thorough interview process and good background check, can reduce the possibility of a hiring error. It also can provide your company with quantifiable information on a candidate's specific strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, an assessment will offer objective, expert guidance on how best to manage and place that individual within your organization.

Personality Assessment Testing – A Standard in Recruiting

Personality tests are a standard recruiting practice for many branches of the government and military, as well as many Fortune 500 companies when assessing potential hires for key or critical positions. They are used to reduce employee turnover and improve department effectiveness. Correctly interpreted, professionals can help guide your organization on how to best manage, communicate and train new hires and staff members.

As with any business decision, having the right information is critical. Work style and personality assessment testing can provide insight into potential hires, as well as your current workforce, in several ways:

- **Identify potential red flags:** A personality assessment can discover issues that are sometimes overlooked during the interviewing process and can quantify an intuition or feeling the interviewer may have about a particular candidate. It can be used to identify potential red flags concerning behavioral issues, help understand how to manage individuals for greater work performance and compare interpersonal dynamics of teams, departments and candidates.
- **Learn how to optimize employees' work performance:** A personality assessment can provide extensive information on an individual's ability to work with their job responsibilities, team dynamics and company culture. Additionally, the assessment can show effective strategies to gain optimal performance from that individual within their particular work environment. It can also be employed to quickly identify the most effective management style for a new employee or predict how team members are likely to interact.
- **Ensure you have the right people in the right positions:** Additionally, personality assessments can be utilized in rehires, or situations which call for employees to re-apply for their current jobs, as in the case of a corporate merger or restructuring. A personality assessment test can also ensure that your company continues to have the right people in the right positions and distribute assets & talents effectively.

Which Personality Assessment Tool Should My Organization Use?

There are several elements to consider when researching a personality assessment test for your company:

1. The number of primary scales as defined by the “Big 5” testing standards. Many tests will claim to have more scales than they actually have; this can lead to misrepresentation of data. Scales are similar to pixels in a computer screen, the more pixels the better the picture.

Additional categories of information that can be helpful when comparing the profile results to a detailed job description could include:

- Problem solving
- Coping with stress
- Leadership style
- Organizational role & work-setting preferences
- Strengths & developmental areas
- Career characteristics
- Primary thought flow process to gain insight on communication & thought patterns (ie, LCS Typology).



2. Scale for “Impression Management”: This is necessary in order to understand the accuracy of results and whether someone is trying to ‘fake good’ or misrepresent themselves. According to Deutsch, a critical element in predicting a potential candidate’s success is measuring real personality and style. Recruitment and job search professionals have discovered that an articulate candidate can essentially ‘fake’ their real personality and style in an interview. An in-depth work-style and personality assessment presents a fairly accurate picture of a candidate’s personality, work style, and fit within a company’s culture.

If a profile does not have an impression management scale, then it is difficult to tell how accurate the data is. A profile needs to have at least 165 questions in order to gather enough data for this scale.

3. What is the history of this profile & how long has it been employed?
4. How often is the normative database updated & where is the data coming from?
5. Is cultural bias built into the profile and if so, for what regions or countries? A profile that is just translated without cultural bias built into the profile is not as effective.
6. Does the test meet U.S. government employment standards? Has the test been reviewed for ADA compliance & gender, culture & racial bias?
7. What is the reading level of the assessment? (5th grade English, etc).
8. What is the number of profiles that have been administered?
9. What is the number of clinical studies conducted by major universities? Multiple studies are preferred so that you can feel comfortable that the results that you receive are valid and reliable as well as to inform you about the assessment’s base line. Independent or in-house studies need to be validated by outside organizations that are impartial, such as major universities.
10. How much training or is a degree required in order to correctly interpret the data? Testing and human behavior is a very complex subject. When making hiring or internal decisions, organizations need as much understanding & sensitivity as possible. An accurate evaluation and recommendation can only be provided by a highly-trained, credentialed individual. Weekend warrior training is not sufficient when you have your dollars on the line.

Frequently Asked Questions

A frequent question from companies and organizations concerns the legal guidelines in administering assessments to potential employees. Industry regulations can vary and the best option is to consult with your company's trade association or legal department. As a general rule, if your company uses an assessment, any test or set of hiring questions must be administered to all of the final candidates in order to assure that discrimination is not present. Additional information can be found online at the EEOC website, in the Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations of Employees section: <http://www.eeoc.gov/docs/guidance-inquiries.html> .

An additional question concerns how a new hire may feel about taking an in-depth personality and work style assessment. There is a certain amount of "test anxiety" that can be common. However, the test demonstrates that your company is serious about who they hire. If your company explains that the goal of the assessment is to reduce turnover and is only one of several factors involved in the hiring decision, the individual usually responds very well. In many cases, the candidate may accept a position from the organization they perceive to be more thoughtful during the hiring process.

Conclusion

A personality assessment is only one component needed for a successful recruitment and hiring program.



It can provide valuable information for critical personnel decisions. Combined with an effective recruitment program and skilled interview techniques, it can benefit your company as a whole, in addition to your individual employees. Armed with accurate and quantifiable data from an in-depth personality assessment, the interview process becomes much more reliable. Ultimately, this only adds to your organization's bottom line, allowing more effective management of your existing workforce and limiting the potential for wrong hiring decisions.

For additional information, please email Dana at dana@lighthouseconsulting.com or call him at 310-453-6556, extension 403. Lighthouse Consulting Services LLC, 3130 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 550, Santa Monica, CA 90403 & our website: www.lighthouseconsulting.com Lighthouse Consulting Services, LLC provides a variety of services, including in-depth personality assessments for new hires & staff development, team building, interpersonal & communication training, conflict management, workshops, and executive & employee coaching.