

Tool 5: Assessing a Candidate's Personality: How Well They Suit the Job and Company.

Analyzing Personality, Behaviours and Traits

Personality tests intended for personnel selection contain a series of questions or tasks. They are designed to reveal aspects of a candidate's personality characteristics related to future job performance. They provide precise and objective information about attitudes, motivations and strengths of candidates relatively quickly. Tests available today can predict how candidates:

- prefer to communicate in the workplace,
- fit into work teams, or
- fit into the overall workplace environment.

Tests can also reveal

- the kinds of work candidates excel at, and
- identify long-term development opportunities.

For candidates who are still getting used to a new/alternate career or who are new to the Canadian workplace, some tests can also pinpoint

- cultural adaptation challenges
- behaviours which may benefit from workplace coaching

Personality tests have existed for a long time and were initially introduced in the 1920s for personnel selection in the US military. There are some long-established personality tests (for example the *16 Personality Factor Questionnaire*, and the *Belbin Team Role Inventory*). Integrated 'batteries' of several such tests can be combined to provide a more comprehensive profile of a candidate's personality. But more recently, single tests have been devised to produce a similar comprehensive profile with a much simpler and shorter questionnaire.

A personality test should only be used as one element in the selection process. For example, it should not be used as the only tool to assess knowledge and competence. This helps to avoid adverse impact on certain groups of newcomers.

What are the benefits of using a personality test?

Many employers are concerned about "candidate fit". Unfortunately, "fit" is difficult to define objectively. In reality it is often determined by the limited impressions interviewers can gain when meeting candidates. Results depend on the amount of time available and the skills and experience of the interviewer. Generally, this puts newcomers to Canada at a disadvantage.

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Personality tests can provide a better and more objective profile of a job applicant. In fact, many recruitment firms already use personality tests to create

- more comprehensive candidate summaries, and
- better interview short lists.

Also, some employers use the results of the tests to

- build better teams, and
- place employees in the most suitable job roles throughout their career.

Generally, those employers gain more motivated, loyal and satisfied employees who tend to produce better work results.

How can my company use a personality test?

“The key is for employers to use valid, reliable, and legally defensible tests in hiring employees [...] it is the only way that employers can scientifically identify the best candidates for the job. “

Cornell HR Review January 2013: <http://www.cornellhrreview.org/personality-tests-in-employment-selection-use-with-caution/»>

A wide variety of tests are available today, and recent versions take full advantage of improvements in technology. This allows them to provide easy access for candidates, faster or instant computation of results and if desired, full control of administration to employers.

The strongest personality assessments to use in a hiring context are ones that possess these attributes:

- Measure traits that are stable over time in different settings.
- Allow you to compare one candidate's scores against another's.
- Have a “lie detector” scale so you understand how likely it is that the results accurately portray the test-taker.
- Have been shown to be valid predictors of job performance, i.e., have high reliability including test-retest reliability above 0.7.
- Protect candidate privacy and confidentiality.
- Provide technical data and a sound explanation of what the test was designed to measure, what group it was tested with and what workplace behaviours it can predict.

Before choosing a test, also consider the following:

- What is the price per candidate? Are there other fees?
- How is the test administered? Pencil and paper or web-based?
- How long does it take to complete the test?
- What does the report of results look like?

Personality Test Evaluation Template

Criteria	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3
1. Does it measure traits that are stable over time in different settings?			
2. Does it allow me to compare one candidate's scores against another's?			
3. Does it have a "lie detector" scale?			
4. Is it proven to predict job performance? (that means, have high reliability including test-retest reliability of 0.7-1)			
5. Does it protect candidate privacy and confidentiality?			
6. Have a seen technical data and a sound explanation of what the test was designed to measure, what group it was tested with and what workplace behaviors it can predict?			
7. What is the price per candidate? Are there other fees?			
8. How is the test administered? Pencil and paper or web based?			
9. How long does it take to complete the test?			
10. What does the report of results look like?			
Score	___ out of 10	___ out of 10	___ out of 10