

How to Avoid Putting Square Pegs into Round Holes!

**Understanding the Benefits of Psychometric Testing for Hiring
and Developing Employees**



By

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

AssessSystems Aust/NZ Ltd is a Leader In Workplace Assessment

Our Business Is Assessment. Our Focus Is People in Organisations – Who to Hire and Promote, Who to Train and Develop and How to Maximise Employee Performance. Our key point of difference is our Industrial Organisational Psychology training and experience.

Our team uses research-based psychological techniques to help organisations and individuals reach peak performance. We aim to establish a down-to-earth, friendly, and professional relationship with our clients and offer a wide range of assessment solutions to meet their needs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rob McKay:

Rob has an extensive background of 25 plus years in the New Zealand and Australian broadcasting industries. He pioneered commercial FM radio on both sides of the Tasman (Australia and New Zealand). Being an owner, operator and consultant of many radio properties, small and large, Rob has a solid base of general business and marketing knowledge in an industry that is very dependent on “people performance”.

After selling his radio interests in the early 90s, Rob decided to go back to school! Over five years of full-time study he gained a BA in Business Psychology and a MA(Hons) in Industrial & Organisational Psychology from Massey University.

Rob has spent over 15 years studying the selection process – what science tells us is the best methods of hiring the right person first time. He is the author of the hard covered book, “No More Square Pegs: How to Hire Winners for Your Business”. You can purchase this book at www.assess.co.nz/pages/buy_now.htm

Rob is an accomplished speaker/presenter and available to speak at your next conference or in-house workshop. Subjects related to the psychology of work – hiring, managing performance and developing employees.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 12 years at AssessSystems I have specialised in the assessment of candidates and employees for the purpose of selection and development. During that time I have been a strong advocate for psychometric profiling. This has been based not just on my personal experiences with 100s of clients, but also on what science tells us is the best way to understand whether current or future employee's will "fit" the job role.

Over the last 90 years the accuracy of selection methods has been extensively researched. The literature is very conclusive that using valid and reliable psychometric tools during the selection process will increase your odds of hiring the right person first time. However test results in isolation do not result in accurate selection. They should be used along with other scientific methods in a systematic approach. I have developed a seven step online recruitment process that achieves this. Visit our website, read my book or call me in person to learn more.

WHY USE TESTING?

Why consider using any form of psychometric test when hiring or developing employees? Mike Smith, in his excellent book, "Testing people at work" explains it succinctly...

"People are different. Some are intelligent, whilst others are slow-witted. Some are warm hearted, whilst others are cold-blooded. Some are motivated by money, whilst others are motivated by ideas. Jobs differ too. Some require slow-witted, cold-blooded people who are motivated by money. The task is to measure people's characteristics in some way, so that these characteristics can be matched to the requirements of the job." (Page 1)

The only way to accomplish this is through psychometric testing. Yes, I can hear you now – "Psychometric testing, what is all this mind reading mumbo jumbo about?"

One of the first things I learnt (and found difficult to do) was to throw out the academic language. Managers (and candidates) find the word “psych and “test” complicated and frightening. One of my earlier clients said it seemed to explain a medical procedure for brain scanning!

These are not “tests”. A test implies “pass-or-fail” and it’s not about that – it’s about “job-fit”. There is a job for everyone, our task to find the right round peg to fit our round hole, so that both the candidate and the organisation benefits.

So right up front, when we are referring to this process outside of this document let’s get rid of medical connotations – it’s out with “psychological” and “test” and in with “Job Fit Survey, Employee Assessment” or “Employee Profiling”. I think these are more commercially acceptable and induce less fear – what do you think?

I should note that tests of mental ability (refer to page 4) are “tests” as the questions asked do have a “right or wrong” answer. But my overall point is to de-emphasise the need to “pass” to get the job. Once again, it’s about job-fit.

Over the years, I have developed a simple visual analogy to explain how employee assessments fit in to the total selection process – This is the “Tree Analogy” (see figure 1)

THE TREE ANALOGY

Where Does Employee Profiling Fit Into The Selection Process?

The fruits on a tree help explain *what a person can do*. As this part of the tree is above ground, the fruit of the tree can be seen; this is represented by the candidate’s job Knowledge, Technical Skills and Experience required for the specific job role you are assessing. These job specifications (as opposed to person specifications) are observable and trainable.

Employee profiling is the only way to check out the roots of the tree. Here we are assessing *who* the person is; *how, or will, they do the job*. There is a lot of difference between *can the person do the job* and *how they will do the job*. Managers are very competent at assessing the *can*, but they rely on emotion, personal impressions, and gut feel to judge *how* the candidate will perform when they get on the job.

When it comes to Employee Profiling, we are taking a scientific approach to understanding the innate personal characteristics, mental abilities and attitudes of a prospective employee. These characteristics cannot be observed or assessed during the selection process via an interview, or the reliance of given referees. They can only be measured through a validated and reliable employment profile.

When it comes to the roots of the tree, most managers tend to rely on self impression. You cannot “read” people in a one hour interview. Hiring people is like marriage – easy to get into, hard to get out of. Would you marry after a first date? When it comes to hiring, many managers do just that.

Just because a person presents well and communicates effectively during an interview does not guarantee they will perform satisfactorily on the job. Remember, the person you see at interview is the best you are ever going to see them!

Most managers’ hire on what a person can do, but will always terminate, or have problems based on who they are!

Job-Fit-Surveys, or Employee Profiles are best for assessing less obvious personal attributes and abilities required for any job. Many hiring managers think the use of these tools are extremely expensive and time-consuming and therefore should only be used for top management positions - nothing could be further from the truth.

It's important to make the right hiring decision whether we are employing a warehouse worker or a chief financial officer. Understanding the candidates "roots" will go a long way in achieving that, irrespective of the job role.

TYPES of EMPLOYMENT TESTS

There are seven main types of employment tests:

Mental abilities tests

Personality tests

Attitudes tests (Integrity)

Interests and Motivations

Sales tests

Teamwork and Communication styles

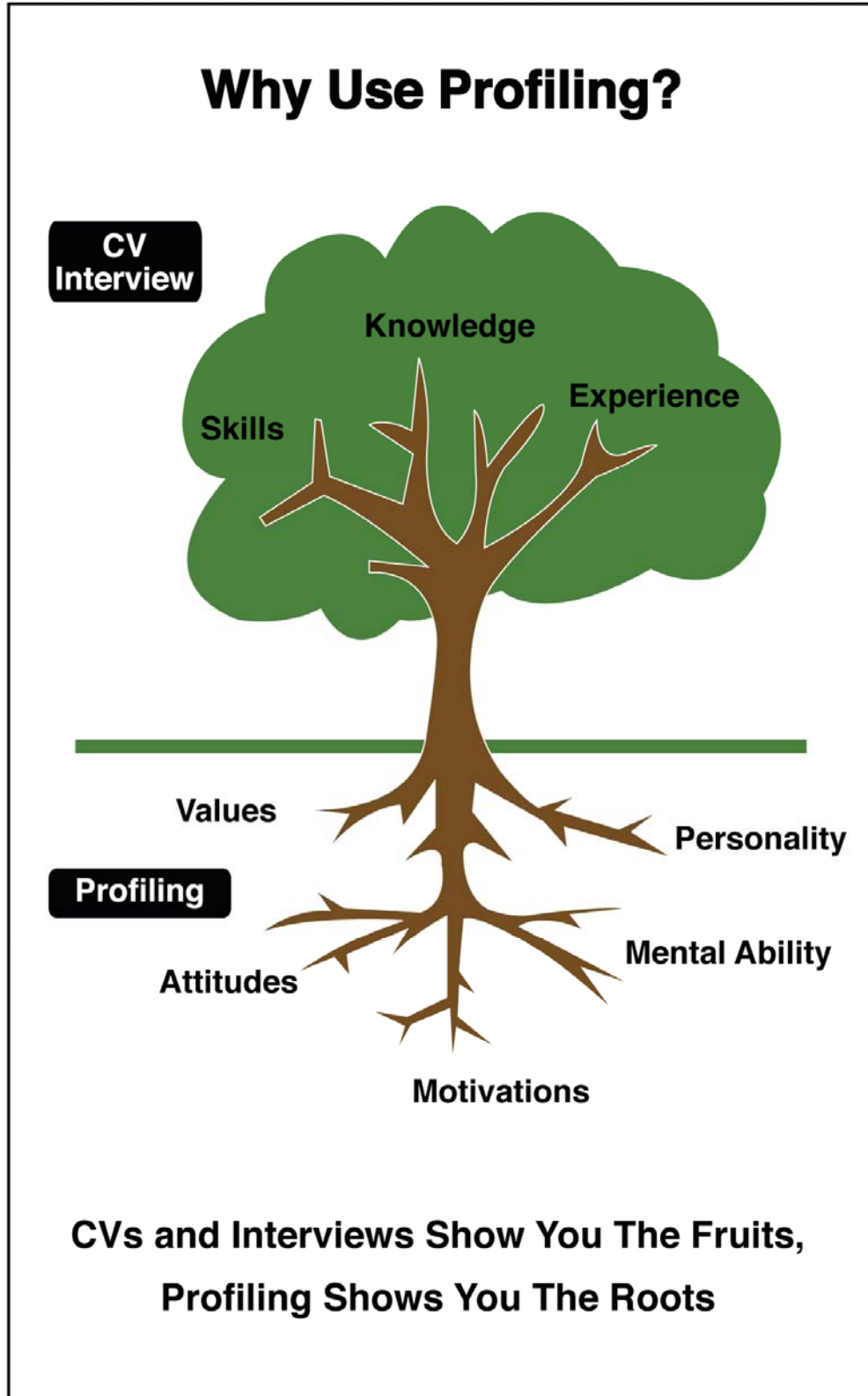
Skills Testing

Note: The job interview is also a "test" However; in most cases it has no scientific basis as it lacks standardisation. In fact, the way most interviews are conducted, an unstructured chit-chat, makes them the least valid and most expensive selection tool to use - expensive in management time and in the risk of hiring the wrong person.

For more information, read my article on this subject at...

<http://www.assess.co.nz/pages/InterviewPoorPredictors.pdf>

Figure 1



Mental Ability Tests

Years of research have shown that a person's mental abilities give a good indication of the person's likely success on the job. In fact, they are the highest predictors of job performance. There are many mental ability tests, some of which indicate overall intellectual ability, others indicate a specific ability e.g. numerical reasoning ability, or mechanical reasoning. These tests are always timed, are on-line or pencil and paper based and vary in length from 5 to 20 minutes.

Here are a few examples of specific abilities that can be assessed:

- **Critical Reasoning** – measures high-level verbal & numerical reasoning ability
- **Abstract reasoning** – measures ability to analyse logical relationships and discover principles underlying those relationships
- **Verbal Reasoning and Comprehension** – measures ability to analyse information and make valid judgments about that information and to use and understand the relationships between words
- **Numerical Reasoning and Ability** – measures the ability to perceive and understand the relationships in a series of figures and use basic mathematical skills
- **Visual Speed and Accuracy** – measures ability to see details quickly and accurately. Ideal for people filling warehouse orders.
- **Manual Speed and Accuracy** – measures ability to make fine-finger movements rapidly and accurately

Tests of mental ability are relevant for most jobs, because intelligence determines the rate at which people process information. In turn, processing of information controls the rate at which people learn on the job (training) and the ability to cope with the new novel aspects of the job (Smith, 2005).

These types of tests are sometimes labelled cognitive tests and they are usually divided into two areas - ability and aptitude tests. An abilities test usually measures

the person's broad talent that applies to a wide range of tasks. These tests mainly measure verbal, numerical and spatial ability in the framework of a single time test.

Aptitude tests are generally narrower and apply to the way in which an actual skill is used. Examples of aptitude testing would be mechanical reasoning and visual speed (ideal for people that have to match order numbers on documents with product on the shelves).

At AssessSystems we have several mental ability tests: some of these are combined, with personality measurements; others are stand-alone. Time factors vary from eight minutes through to 20 minutes and costs for one-off bureau testing can range from \$25-\$50.

Personality Profiling

Personality profiles can be used to assess a range of personality attributes. To be legally defensible the personality attributes assessed must be relevant to success on the job – “job-fit”.

Personality profiles explain the style of how things will be done – the person's innate characteristics of their preferred way of doing things or reacting. For example, will a person be impulsive, persuasive and resilient? Or will they be cautious, accommodating and anxious?

Science now accepts that the development of one's personality is driven 50% by genetics and 50% by the environment. By the time we're into our late teens our personality is basically cemented. There is a lot of evidence from the 30 year Dunedin twin studies that the child you see at three will be the adult you see at 30!

Yes we can change our personality in certain situations but we will always go back to home base. So imagine if you hired a salesperson that lacked “sales personality” - for example – low optimism, resilience, assertiveness, motivation to influence and

persuasion - no amount of training will turn this person into a successful salesperson - they are simply in the wrong profession.

It's accepted that the taxonomy (the systematic structure) of personality is now based on the **Big Five**:

Conscientiousness - the degree to which an individual is persistent, motivated, and organised; ranging from highly disciplined and dependable or lackadaisical and carefree.

Likability - the degree to which the individual is pleasant and agreeable; ranging from warm, tolerant and tactful to tough-minded, sceptical and direct.

Unconventional - the degree to which the individual is predictable, rules orientated and structured to being open to new ideas, adventuresome and inconsistent.

Extroversion - the style and focus of an individual's emotional energy; ranging from outgoing, dominant, ambitious, and sociable to introverted, shy and quiet.

Stable - the degree to which an individual is emotionally stable and resistant to stress.

*A good way to remember this is with the acronym **CLUES** – Hence the name of our popular pre-screening assessment **PeopleCLUES***

Below these five dimensions sit six sub-facets. It's accepted by personnel psychologists that our innate characteristics can be explained within 30 personality traits. However, we don't need to measure all of these to get an understanding of job fit. Depending on the role and whether we are *selecting in* or *selecting out* will dictate the type of personality assessment to use.

Personality assessments (along with other assessments, like mental ability and attitudes) can be used early in the selection process to screen-out unsuitable applicants ([peopleCLUES](#) is a good example), or used later to screen-in suitable applicants ([ASSESS](#) and [Prevue](#) are a good examples).

The type of assessment will vary depending on where in the selection process the test is placed. For example, when there are large numbers of applicants it is advisable to screen-out early on the key personality attributes required for success in the position. These pre-screening tests (PeopleCLUES is a good example) are lower in cost, easy to administer, require no expert interpretation, suit lower level roles and are predictive of work attitude, not necessarily work performance.

If the test is placed later in the selection, it is used to gather in-depth insights on the short-listed applicants for comparative purposes. Here we are selecting candidates. These tests are highly predictive of job performance because they are linked (benchmarked) to specific job competencies. They tend to be more expensive, but provide a deeper interpretation.

Some commonly assessed personality attributes are (From Prevue):

- Independent – Diplomatic
- Conscientious – Spontaneous
- Extroverted - Introverted
- Stable - Emotional

Some personality assessments, like our premier instrument used for the selection and development of managerial and professional positions (it's called [ASSESS](#)), **combine** various personality characteristics to provide an assessment of more complex performance factors (competencies) such as:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| ▪ Communication skills | ▪ Teamwork |
| ▪ Customer service focus | ▪ Leadership |
| ▪ Initiative | ▪ Managing others |
| ▪ Innovation | ▪ Planning/organising |
| ▪ Stress tolerance | ▪ Sales ability |

- Negotiating ability
- Building relationships

The AssessSystems range of personality and mental ability assessments can be benchmarked against specific **positions** including the following:

- Receptionist
- Administrative/clerical
- Customer service
- Hospitality
- Production and distribution
- Retail sales/manager
- Sales
- Health care
- Call centres, help desks
- Drivers
- Supermarket cashiers
- Personal services
- Professional positions
- Managers

The personality attributes for each of these positions have been found to predict job effectiveness in that position.

For example the personality attributes predictive of success in a retail management position are:

- **Positive sales attitude** – a person’s attitude about the customer and sales
- **Leadership** – a person’s inclination to lead others
- **Persuasiveness** – a person’s ability to influence customers
- **Energy** – a person’s activity level and action orientation
- **Good judgement** – a person’s tendency to think objectively
- **Organisation and attention to detail** – a person’s approach to organising work and attention to detail
- **Frustration tolerance** – a person’s ability to remain emotionally positive in spite of frustration

Personality assessments can take anywhere between 15 and 50 minutes to complete and can cost between \$30 and \$350. Several of the personality assessments we use at AssessSystems also have mental ability testing built in.

Attitude Assessments

Attitude assessments usually fall under the general heading of integrity assessments, or assessments of counter-productive behaviours. One's values usually drive attitudes, and attitudes are reflected in behaviour. Adding this form of assessment into the first part of your "screening out" process for entry-level type positions can save large amounts of management time.

The [PeopleCLUES](#) suite of assessments includes an excellent attitudes assessment. It highlights a person's propensity in respect to six areas of counter-productive behaviours. These are:

Honesty – will they steal from you?

Attitudes to drugs and alcohol

Conscientiousness – will they show up for work on time and be reliable?

Computer abuse – will they use company time and internet facilities for personal use?

Aggression in the workplace – will they punch somebody's lights out!?

Sexual Harrasment in the workplace

It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete and can be used as a stand-alone measure, although usually it is used in conjunction with personality or mental ability as a block of tests. This format is ideal for prescreening large numbers of applicants.

Interest and Motivations

Motivation is a strong condition of job performance. An employee could have excellent personality but produce nothing unless motivated. Smith (2005) expresses the following hypothetical formula:

Job Performance = (mental ability + personality) X motivation

Measures of job interest and motivation are used extensively in career guidance work. However they can become useful in specific job roles; for example sales - Is the person motivated by money, affiliation with people, learning new things etc? One of AssessSystems products – *Prevue*, includes an interest/motivation measure along with mental ability and personality. This is an excellent all-round assessment for all job roles. Our *SalesMax* assessment (for sales selection and development) also tests for sales motivations.

Sales Assessments

These are specifically designed for the selection of salespeople and usually include personality, sales knowledge and sales motivation. One such tool is *SalesMax*. At AssessSystems we have had great success over the last 10 years predicting successful sales people using the Rembrandt Portrait assessment.

Rembrandt Portrait measures 13 personality attributes plus problem solving. It measures several personality attributes that are key to sales success, like resilience, motivation to persuade, willingness to confront, listening ability, assertiveness etc. Rembrandt is also quick to complete and can capture a large amount of valid and reliable information on candidates in 20 to 40 minutes. It can also be linked to an online application process.

Teamwork and Communication

These tools are usually focused on four, or five dimensions (they are not to be confused with the personality taxonomy of the Big Five). Many of these tools are inexpensive; some are free. Many are unreliable. Most common are DISC and Myers Briggs. They measure observed behaviour - how we respond to the four Ps of performance: problems, people, place, and procedures. But this, although important, does not tell us *why*.

Using a car analogy is a simple way to explain the difference between these behavioural instruments and a personality assessment. Using a behavioural instrument like DISC or Myers to Briggs to understand future on-the-job

performance will help you identify the colour, make and model of the car, but will not tell you about the engine.

Many managers hire on imprecise observations, and, as they have painfully learned – what you see, is not always what you get! This is akin to purchasing a car with the bonnet welded shut!

So, in short, these behavioural tools should never be used for selecting employees because they cannot be “normed” against job roles and or individuals so they can not be used to predict future performance, or compare one person against another. I don’t want to get overly technical here, but take it as a “given” from the psychological community that ipsitative tools like these, used on their own, are not valid predictors of work performance – even the Myers Briggs website alerts users to this fact.

At AssessSystems our tool of preference in this area is *MyHardwired*. This instrument measures not only preferred and expected style but also intrinsic style and therein lies the difference against any DISC or Myers Briggs product. These behavioural instruments are ideal for identifying group styles to enhance communication and team building.

Drug Testing

Although not common in New Zealand, some major organisations have instigated these tests, particularly if the job role involves a high degree of safety. These physical tests are quick and non-evasive and are conducted by specialist testing agencies.

Remember, the PeopleCLUES Attitude test will measure “admissions” in this area. These type of tests endeavour to uncover a candidate’s attitudes to drugs or alcohol use/or abuse. The theory is that a positive, accepting attitude will most likely be reflected in actual behaviour.

In summary, the use of employment assessments provides an objective, unbiased assessment of personality attributes, mental abilities, motivation and interests. These personal attributes and abilities have been found to be a good indicator of likely performance in a variety of positions. They also provide insights that show where further investigating or checking should be done. Most assessment reports provide interview questions and reference probes for this purpose.

Skills Testing

Although not a strict psychometric test, using skills tests during your pre-employment screening process will also help you evaluate a candidate's readiness for the job. Our skills tests are developed by Subject Matter Experts (SME's) and help identify a candidate's strengths and weaknesses in relation to key knowledge and skills areas. It helps take the guesswork out of hiring by helping ensure that a candidate's knowledge and skills in relation to the role (say, being able to confidently use Microsoft Work) match what is listed on a application form or CV.

AssessSystems skills tests are also used to measure incumbent's knowledge and skills in order to support career development and training initiatives. Our skills testing application is one of the only products that provides test authoring tools that allow you to create your own tests for training and employee development purposes.

AssessSystems offers an extensive test catalog (ask us for a copy) with hundreds of skills assessment tests in categories such as: Accounting/Financial, Call Center, Clerical, Microsoft Office, Engineering, Industrial / Warehouse, Medical, Retail, Banking.

VALIDITY and RELIABILITY OF ASSESSMENTS USED IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

This is a very technical area and it is not in the scope of this document to address these concepts appropriately – there are many good books available on this subject. However, it is important to have a basic understanding to help you evaluate what tools to use. Or, more importantly, what tools not to use!

Validity

Validity refers to *what characteristics* the test measures and *how accurately* the test measures that characteristic. The lay definition of validity is “*the extent to which a score measures what it purports to measure*”. A more modern definition is, “*best available approximation to the truth or falsity of a given inference, proposition or conclusion.*” (Cook and Campbell, 1979). Validity is the strength of our conclusions, inferences or propositions. In short, were we right?

Validity tells you if the characteristic being measured by a test is related to job qualifications and requirements. Validity evidence indicates that there is linkage between test performance and job performance.

Validity also describes the extent to which you could make specific conclusions or predictions about people based on their test scores. In other words, it indicates the usefulness of the test. It is important to understand the difference between *reliability and validity*.

Validity will tell you how good a test is for a particular situation; reliability will tell you how trustworthy a score on the test will be. You cannot draw valid conclusions from a test score unless you are sure that the test is reliable. Even when a test is reliable, it may not be valid. You should be careful that any test you select to be both reliable and valid to your situation.

A test's validity is established in reference to a specific purpose; the test may not be valid for different purposes. For example, a test used to make valid predictions about somebody's technical proficiency on the job may not be valid for predicting his or her leadership skills or integrity.

Criterion or Predictive Validity

This is a statistical argument that demonstrates a relationship between an assessment and some measure of job performance.

To give you an example; a sales organisation may use an assessment (the predictor) to assess the sales capability of a job candidate (criterion). We would first want to assess all current sales people and grade these people on a specific performance criterion, like revenue written each month (objective) or client service ability (subjective).

Our statistician would then look for assessment scores that significantly discriminate between the current good and poor performers. We could then use these results to predict future performance and thus agree that the assessment used measured what it purports to measure – sales success and is therefore valid. This is often referred to as “benchmarking” and can be done inexpensively and quickly using either PeopleCLUES and/or PREVUE assessments

Reliability

Reliability is about consistency. A lay person's definition would be *the extent to which a measure repeatedly produces the same or very similar results* when applied in under the same condition with the same subject. So in other words, if I was to assess you today and then re-assess you in six months time, I would want minimal variances on the results received.

Statisticians define reliability as *the proportion of variance that is not due to random error*. Error can be large or small. This may occur for numerous reasons,

for example we may have assessed the person in a very calm quiet environment the first time – however, in the second application of the assessment, it may have been done in a very noisy, hot environment. The results would not be evidence of reliability due to an administration error. However, an error can also be attributed to the design of the assessment itself and this error would label the assessment unreliable.

THE VALIDITY OF COMMON HIRING TOOLS – What are you using?

Note: The numbers below represent the predictive validity of each process. For example, in the table below, .14 tells us that when using an unstructured interview, we have no better than around a one-in-six chance of choosing the right person.

Unstructured Interview – .14

- A general discussion between manager and candidate
- Questions are unprepared and not rated

Reference Checking – .26

- From a structured reference checking form

Biodata Form – .30

Rating the candidate's suitability from a range of personal data collected through a carefully structured Application Form

Personality Profile – .38

- A validated test that measures the candidate's "personality traits" like assertiveness, aggression, sociability – BUT not benched-marked to the specific job role

Structured Interview – .46

- A multi-rated structured interview using behavioural based interview questions

Mental Abilities Test – .54

- Examples are tests that measure the candidate's numerical, verbal, mechanical, dexterity skills etc.

Interest Test – .66

- Usually based on the candidate's interest to working with data, things, people and ideas. If the candidate's interests are correlated with the job tasks, this leads to more motivation and hence better job performance

Job Matching (Benchmarked) – .75

- Using a combination of the above measures, ensuring the employment tests are specifically benchmarked to the role

JOB MATCH OR NO JOB MATCH – Results of a Major Validation Study

High Turnover Industry – Sample Size = 13,102

Job Match?

	No	Yes
Percentage who quit or were dismissed after 6 months	46%	24%
Percentage who quit or were dismissed after 14 months	57%	28%

Low Turnover Industry – Sample Size = 5,941

Job Match?

	No	Yes
Percentage who quit or were dismissed after 6 months	25%	5%
Percentage who quit or were dismissed after 14 months	34%	8%

Greenberg & Greenberg (1985).

As the above table demonstrates, an employment test for personality and mental ability coupled with a structured, multi-rated interview, both aligned (benchmarking against the job) provide a very strong selection process.

This combination gave a 50% reduction in turnover in high turnover industries and a 500% turnover reduction in low turnover industries.

Employee testing is proven to offer dramatic incremental validity to your selection process, and ensures you hire the right person first time. Or to put it another way, employee-testing helps you economically select out those candidates that do not “fit” the role.

BUT, WHAT ABOUT FAKING?

Faking is not a problem with mental ability testing because it is difficult to fake the correct answer to objective problems. Faking “bad” is theoretically possible, but highly unlikely. After all, who would want to purposely give incorrect answers to a test of mental ability?

The situation is different with personality, motives and interests measures. Candidates naturally see these assessments as being "tests" that they must “pass” in order to be successful in gaining employment. Therefore it is in their interest to try and answer questions in a manner that will achieve this objective.

The trouble with faking is that it is not a constant error. By that I mean some people may not fake, some may fake a little, others more and a few fake a lot. To overcome this situation, and/or detect faking, personnel psychologists construct questions, methods of answering, frame initial test instructions and build in specific triggers to detect degrees of faking.

However, there has been a tremendous amount of work done over the last 10 years in terms of test faking in respect to job performance. Psychologists Mount and Barrack(1995) have done considerable work in this area. The consensus is that if a person has the ability to manage their self-impression during a personality assessment then they have the same ability to do that at the coal face. At the end of the day, is there anything wrong with that? In fact it may be said it could be a measure of success for a sales position. Conversely, it could be a red flag if the assessment was for a financial position.

In short, this highlights the best way to interpret assessment results. Candidates will rarely fake bad, and faking good is usually detected, or shown, by overly "perfect" results. This helps us draw conclusions that assessments are highly reliable in showing us individuals with poor job fit as opposed to those that are "superstars".

COMBINING THE INSIGHTS

Once an assessment has highlighted the personality attributes, mental abilities or attitudes that show potential concerns, these have to be explored further. This can be done through the interview (the benefit of doing a pre-screen test) and through reference checking. All employment tests used by AssessSystems will provide you with a set of behavioural questions to use in the interview, as well as a set of reference questions.

For example, if an applicant for the retail manager position has been assessed as having low frustration tolerance, a possible follow-up interview question is:–

“Describe those aspects of your previous jobs which have frustrated or irritated you.”

Listen for responses that confirm a low frustration tolerance or a tendency to be easily disappointed or upset.

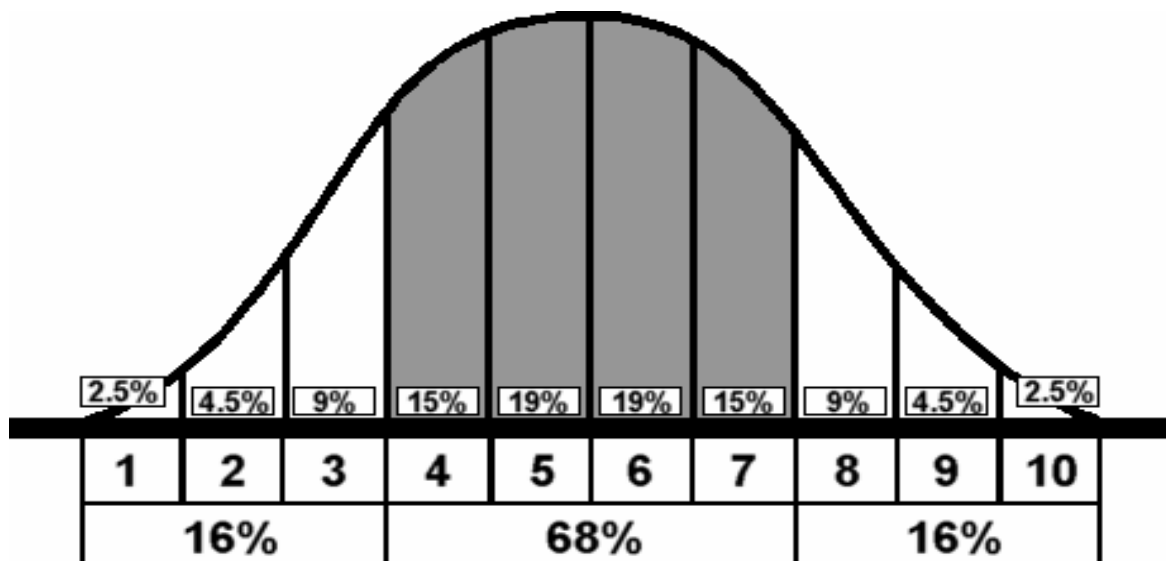
Seek Verbal Feed Back

We also advise you speak to us directly – don't just take the written report as a "given". Our assessment costs INCLUDE verbal feedback. This is often more powerful than any written report – use it!

Finally, as all our tests are normed against specific populations or job roles the results are report in relationship to the Bell Curve. Assessment scores from a

large sample of the population, when graphed, create a bell shaped curve as shown in the diagram below.

The bell curve can be divided into ten equally wide dimensions called standard tenths or stens. Approximately 16% of the population will have sten scores in the 1-3 range and 16% in the 8-10 range. The other 68% will score in the middle range of 4-7. You can be very confident of scores falling in the lower left or right of the curve. These are the scores to concentrate on, the one that “wave the red, or green flags”.



WORK SAMPLE TESTING

Work samples are mini-tasks that a person is required to perform. They are good predictors of future performance on the job.

Obviously using a work sample is not suitable for all positions, but where they can be created it is advisable to do so.

Position	Work sample
Bartender	Mixing drinks
Sales Representative	A sales presentation
Receptionist	Answering the call
Customer Service	Dealing with a difficult client

Work samples can provide an accurate and consistent measure of performance factors required for success. The initial telephone interview can serve as a mini work-sample test. For example, if the job is for a call centre, receptionist, customer service position, does this candidate's oral communication skills measure up? If a sales role, are they selling you?

WHEN IN THE SELECTION PROCESS TO CONDUCT ASSESSMENTS?

Each selection process has its own nuances. This is why the team at AssessSystems likes to understand where you are in the process, the job role, the type of industry and past recruitment history in respect to employee turnover and number of applicants usually received.

In today's environment, the number of job vacancies is decreasing; however, the number of applicants has greatly increased. Many of our clients who had vacancies 12 months ago were struggling to attract one or two applicants. Those same job vacancies today may get 100 applicants. This dictates a different selection process.

Selecting people out, those that don't fit the role, becomes a higher priority to save time and money during the selection process. For this reason we strongly advise using a pre-screen assessment to filter the field quickly. We have designed a seven-step system and have built DIY Recruit Kits around this. You can check these out at www.helpmehireright.com

An ideal process would be:

1. Define the performance factors required
2. Source applicants
3. Complete application form
4. Conduct a brief telephone interview
5. Assess remaining applicants with a valid and reliable employee profile
6. Carry out reference checking
7. Conduct main multi-rated behavioural interview

*Note how we put the interview last – it's the least valid (if unstructured) and the most expensive of any selection assessment. By checking out the *fruits* of the tree via the application form, and tele-interview and collecting information on the *roots* of the tree via our employee profiling we can select out many people who don't "fit" the job role before wasting time on lengthily interviews.*

USING ASSESSMENTS FOR EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Training new employees can be a costly exercise. The ability to identify what needs to be trained is an important starting point. Many times this is accomplished through general observation, or requests from employees.

Many employers take a blanket approach to training, they fail to identify individual needs and align training to these needs appropriately. The latter is much more effective and less costly.

Employee assessments are ideal at identifying individual training needs in relationship to specific job performance factors. This is not to be confused with skills training.

Assessments that measure and report results based on specific performance factors (job competencies), such as the ASSESS development and ASSESS 360

Feedback Reports are ideal. They can pinpoint employee weaknesses and align these to actual training needs so long as training can be targeted to individual need.

The ASSESS Development report will highlight *why* an employee performs in a specific way and the ASSESS 360 Report show *how* they are doing their core task. Combining these results gives a very powerful employee development platform

IN SUMMARY

The evidence from decades of psychological study confirms that the use of a valid and reliable tool to assess a candidate's personality, mental ability and attitudes in relation to the job they are applying for (job-fit) will dramatically improve your chances of hiring the right person first time.

There are thousands of assessments available on the market and no one assessment will necessarily be appropriate for every single job role. You can achieve this, but you would be using a very expensive, top-of-the-line assessment, for very basic roles, which would not make budgetary sense.

In the final analysis, it is strongly recommended that when seeking advice or using psychological assessments, you rely on trained personnel who have the psychological training and "in field" experience to be able to make sound judgement calls on what is appropriate to your situation.

There are many "salespeople" that are selling assessments that may look wonderful and indeed produce results that "paint an observable picture" of yourself after your test trial. But, many of these tools are dangerous due to their inappropriateness for the situation.

We have already highlighted this in respect to using behavioural tools like DISC or Myers Briggs for recruitment. In most cases the assessments untrained people peddle lack any form of validity or reliability. It is not that they intend to deceive; it's just that they lack the appropriate psychological discipline to understand the scientific background of what constitutes an appropriate tool for the specific situation.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENTS – Download a flyer

PeopleCLUES – [Personality and Mental Ability](#) and also [Attitudes](#).

This is the ideal combo pre-screening tool. Use on its own or link it into our online application system. Price range \$35 - \$50 depending on volume. Plus unlimited testing for one year starts at \$1800 for 50 employees or less!

You can also use the front end applicant tracking function – a brief 3 minute video explains this at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufv2dQOJzA>

[Prevue](#) – A good “all-round” assessment. You can build instant benchmarks. Prices from \$150 to \$220 depending on volume and benchmark building. Unlimited testing from \$750 a month

Prevue also has a front end applicant processing system to collect CVs, cover letters, assessments. It’s an ideal, paperless way to bulk screen large volumes of candidates. You can see a 5 minute video at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvsxTY12j_I

[ASSESS](#) – This is for managerial and top professional positions. It is competency based. Pricing from \$220 to \$385 depending on volume and certification level

[SalesMax](#) – For hiring and developing high performing consultative sales people. \$185 per assessment. Volume discounts and 2 hour development workshop available for your team.

YOUR NEXT STEP – WHY NOT TAKE A FREE TEST DRIVE?

In our experience, when you physically complete an assessment, whether it be yourself, another person you know well, or perhaps a current job candidate, you

get a better understanding of the power assessments can deliver in helping you uncovering “the real person – BEFORE you hire”.

We would like to offer you a free test drive – Call, email or Skype us – see contact details on page 2. Tell us the positions you mainly hire for, and the number of employees. We can then send you the appropriate online assessment link to complete an online test-drive.

OR – try our **PREVUE** starter pack - an incredible offer AND includes one job benchmark so you can assess 3 candidates against YOUR specific job role. Plus generate 6 report options - \$475. To activate, call or email us at office@assess.co.nz.

OR – try our **PeopleCLUES** starter pack – pre-screen 5 candidates – choose from over 52 benchmarks and 5 different report options - \$250. Active or email us – office@assess.co.nz

PLEASE NOTE – This offer is only available to employers – You must supply a valid company name and contact – we may verify this information before proceeding. This is important in respect to test security.

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TAKEAWAYS

- Always use, at least, a personality and mental ability assessment. Don't rely on your gut-feel to understand the "roots of the tree".
- Assessments of personality, interests and motivations are very good at showing you the "oops" but not overly reliable in highlighting "superstars".
- Always assess. Just because the person has been recommended or you know them socially is no substitute for understanding "the real person".
- Don't assume the use of assessments in the selection process is only for top executive roles. It is just as important to assess personnel applying for entry level roles. AssessSystems has the appropriate tools to cover all job roles.
- Recruiting new staff is an expensive and time-consuming project. You can dramatically decrease these variables by using a pre-screening assessment right up front, thus saving valuable time wasted on interviewing numerous people who may not, in the first instance, be a good "job fit".
- If selecting in, i.e. you have cut your applicant pool to a final two or three, use a more in-depth. We suggest ASSESS, Prevue or Rembrandt.
- Improve your predictive validity by doing benchmarking, testing high performers and/or doing our job description survey (Prevue). This will ensure greater "job fit".
- Where applicable, conduct a work-sample test.
- Where there are big safety issues, a drug test may also be advisable.
- Do a FREE test drive of one of our assessments? Contact us now.
- Use assessments to understand incumbent employees' strengths and weaknesses – this helps guide individual training and development needs – cuts training cost considerably and makes training more efficient.