



Assess Advantage

HIRE TOUGH • MANAGE EASY

"How to Use Benchmarking to Avoid Hiring a Horror Story"

Many times the team here at AssessAdvantage are asked by hiring managers if we can measure their top performers to create a benchmark, a "blueprint" of their best person(s) to enable them to hire a "clone".

Using our [Prevue assessment](#) makes it easy to create a Job-Fit Benchmark that factors in all the personality traits, cognitive ability, motives and interests we see in our current performers. However, when we start hiring people against this benchmark, not surprisingly, we discover it is difficult to find applicants who are a perfect match (90% to 95% job fit) to the benchmark.

Although we have improved our hiring decisions, we haven't hired a lot of "clones". So - how do we take benchmarking using the Prevue assessment tool to the next level?

Let's take a moment and look at your existing employees. I want you to divide them into three distinct groups:

The Top – Your best performers you wish you could clone.

Middle of the Pack – Not Ideal, but can be developed.

The Bottom – You wished you hadn't hired them.

Over the past eighteen years, I have asked dozens of managers to rank their employees in this manner - the ratios may vary slightly, but I have found managers can rank employees without too much difficulty. The only thing that varies is how many end up in each group, and let me tell you; there's not much variation. I bet its 20/60/20 - 20% are your top performers, 60% average and 20% you wished you have never hired.

If I asked you one question: "What is your objective in the hiring process?" A vast majority of you will answer - "To hire somebody in the top 20%," i.e. your top performers. Now, this may sound like a "no-brainer", but I would argue that you should give equal time to ensuring that you never again hire somebody in the bottom 20%.

Like most managers, I think you'd be quite prepared to coach and develop the 60% of people in the middle group. However, instead of that, you are probably spending about 80% of your management time dealing with the bottom 20% - with absolutely no return. In fact, these people bleed your time, revenue and customers.

Your new objective should be, never again hire someone in the bottom 20%.

Many managers hire candidates who are not an ideal fit; they want to meet their objectives of filling vacant positions with the best candidates they can find - usually the best of a bad bunch. It would be unrealistic to wait until the perfect fit was found. However, care needs to be taken not to make an accommodation that violates one of the jobs critical behavioural attributes - enter the power of developing job benchmarks BEFORE you begin the hiring process.

Here's the starting point. Identify the key issues that you've had with your bottom group. Create a profile(s) of problem employees who historically haven't succeeded in this job. In all likelihood, you will identify several common themes of behaviour. If it's practical, test (or refer back to their initial results) these poor performers as well as your top performers - this is critical to discriminate confidently between the two groups.

Armed with this insight, you can add new dimensions to your decision making around applicant suitability and:

1. Make more effective use of Prevue's critical hiring range (the red zones) on your benchmark to place more emphasis on the importance of those results thus putting more power in your cut-off score.
2. Better understand the significance of applicant results that fall off the benchmark.

No candidate is going to be perfect. When you are armed with information on variances from the benchmark that you can't live with, you now have much greater insight into what you can or cannot live with should you decide to hire.

Try this out the next time you are creating or reviewing a benchmark for a job, and you will have taken the first step to improving your hiring process and never again hire someone in the bottom 20%. Oh, by the way, as time goes by and your workforce average performance goes up, you will still be able to segment the employees this way with each review of the benchmark - to give you the opportunity to continually improve the workforce as the requirements of the position evolve.

Moral to this story - don't take the first benchmark you develop for a position as the ultimate end game - keep raising the bar as your hiring results improve - in all likelihood the position will be redefined with changing expectations for performance as the position evolves and you increase the ratio of effective performers. You will always be able to divide your employees into three groups and raise the bar by defining a benchmark that identifies both the profile of your most effective performer as well as the characteristics you don't ever want to hire again.

Another benchmarking fault we experience is the request to use a 'generic' benchmarks. The issue I have with this shortcut is that a generic benchmark is based on the job title, not the specific job fit to your organisation.

As an example, a simple role like an Accountant certainly has some basic attributes we do not want, like low conscientiousness. However, within each Accounting job and organisation, there will be individual differences. If the role requires a lot of debt collection, we would need a person with a good degree of assertiveness. If the Accountant had some direct reports, traits requiring the strong management of people would be needed.

There are many assessment products that confidently measure a candidate's personality, motivation and problem-solving. The power of the [Prevue Assessment](#) is the ability to customise those innate attributes to match your specific job. A benchmark creates a 'job-fit.' Score that will help identify any candidates that may struggle in the job or you

will struggle managing them.

Moreover, here's the best part, it will only take you around 10 minutes to complete our Job Description Survey to build your customised benchmark. A small amount of management time to ensure you don't hire a candidate with a poor fit to your job.

Would you like to experience the benchmark building process?

Just email us at support@assess.co.nz, and we will send you our Job Analysis Survey to complete. You'll get a comprehensive report on the attributes a candidate requires to be successful in the role you have analysed.

You can learn more about the Prevue Assessment

Platform at <http://www.assess.co.nz/assessments/prevue>

Ask us for a complimentary test drive.

Rob McKay MA(Hons) Organisational Psychology

AssessAdvantage Aust/NZ Ltd

Our goal (no, it's our passion), is to help you Hire Tough, Manage Easy!