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# Three Questions to Consider Before Selecting an Employee Assessment

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**E**mployee assessments boast decades of use in organizations across the world. For companies that view their human capital as their largest strategic advantage, assessing candidates is commonplace, both before they're employed and at multiple points throughout their tenure.

The most popular use of assessments may be to help clarify hiring decisions for job candidates, but they're also used for assessing employee engagement, cultural alignment and more.

Companies facing challenges in such areas often turn toward assessments to establish baselines or measure the success of new initiatives.

Before launching a new assessment, three crucial elements must be considered to ensure success.

# Is the Assessment Measuring the Right Things?



**In most organizations, job aptitude is analyzed through resume screening, traditional interview questioning, and sometimes in the form of skills testing. While candidates may be deemed qualified to execute a job based on these methods, hiring managers often find that other “fit factors” actually drive success on the job.<sup>1</sup>**

And it's these nebulous factors contributing to an employee's performance that leave hiring managers vexed. As a result, companies often turn toward assessments for help in identifying another element that assures a new or existing employee is right for an open job opportunity.

### **Such assessments may claim to:**

- ☛ Screen applicants for personality
- ☛ Compare an employee's values and level of conscientiousness to those the organization deems important
- ☛ Capture an employee's engagement at the organization in real time

And so on...

But is that really what companies should be measuring?

Executives are well aware that implementing a new assessment process takes careful thought, planning and time. However, equal—if not more—emphasis should be put into selecting an assessment that predicts successful outcomes.

Implementing a new assessment is a common project assigned to Human Resource departments. But building a solid strategy for what needs to be measured is the most critical part of the process.”

# Does the Assessment Predict Success?



**A second critical measure to ponder is whether or not the assessment's outcomes are predictive of the employee's performance and/or success at work.**

In the recruitment assessment category, for example, there tends to be a lack of knowledge about the types of assessment methods that research has shown to be most effective for identifying who will perform best on a job.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, Human Resource professionals often rely on trusted brands of assessments despite not understanding whether the survey provides a useful metric for predicting future success (or lack thereof).

If measuring an employee's cultural fit, for example, cannot determine whether or not they'll actually perform well in the job, then is such an assessment worthwhile?

Despite prevalent use, personality assessments are among the least effective in predicting job performance, according to research by Frank L. Schmidt, Management and Organizations Professor Emeritus at the University of Iowa.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, while employee engagement assessments provide moment-in-time measurements of a workforce's energy and interest in both their job and their work context, these types of assessments do not provide an effective prescription of what needs to be done in order to increase performance and engagement.

As a result, while the employee engagement assessments have been linked to the performance of an organization, the key to using them as a means for improving engagement, and therefore organizational performance, remains a mystery.

# Is the Assessment Scientifically Validated?



**Scientific validation is a critical qualifying factor when selecting an assessment. Your best guess may be better than one suggested by an assessment lacking scientific validation.**

The validation process allows assessment creators to gather and report on data based on actual predictive outcomes. Proper validation demonstrates that report outcomes are both consistent and valid in predicting success.

Without validation, reporting may be inconsistent and highly unreliable. So while validation is often a discounted portion of the assessment selection process, it is the most critical aspect.

A validated assessment helps Human Resources staff demonstrate an ROI in the use of assessments, as well. Without scientific validation, whether or not the assessment is delivering the uptick in any success at the organization should rightfully be questioned.

As the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) states, “Validity is the most important issue to consider when deciding whether to use a particular assessment tool because an assessment that does not provide useful information about how an individual will perform on the job is of no value to the organization.”<sup>4</sup>

In fact, utilization of a non-validated assessment also opens the organization up to legal liability. Any assessment procedure used to make an employment decision (e.g., selection, promotion, pay increase) can be open to claims of adverse impact based on a multitude of subgroup differences.

Adverse impact is a legal concept used to determine whether there is a “substantially different” passing rate (or selection rate) between two groups on an assessment procedure. Any assessment may be challenged in court, and ultimately, any individuals who contributed to the selection of a non-validated assessment may also be liable.<sup>5</sup>

## SUMMARY



# The Right Way to Select An Employee Assessment

Selecting and implementing a new assessment is a large project for any organization. Therefore, time ought to be spent determining the requirements for the assessment and conducting the inquisitive questioning process outlined in this whitepaper.

**When selecting any assessment, ample emphasis is required on these key factors:**

- Determine what needs to be measured.
- Research assessments that measure real predictors of success.
- Narrow the search by omitting any assessments that aren't scientifically validated.

As a result, the efforts involved in any new assessment selection process are invested in choosing the best possible assessment for your organization's needs.



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**Sources:** 1. Josh Bersin, "The datafication of HR." Global Human Capital Trends 2014. Deloitte University Press, March 7, 2014; 2. Ryan, A. M., & Tippins, N. T. (2004). "Attracting and selecting: What psychological research tells us." Human Resource Management, 43, 305-318; 3. Meinert, Dory, "What Do Personality Tests Really Reveal?" Society For Human Resource Management, June 1, 2015; 4. The Office For Personnel Management, "Assessment & Selection: Designing An Assessment Strategy" <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/assessment-strategy/>; 5. "Uniform Guidelines On Employee Selection Procedures," Biddle Consulting Group <http://www.uniformguidelines.com/>