The Critical Factors for Choosing Predictive Assessments

Assessments

A Practical Checklist

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Introduction

The investment spent on recruiting, developing and retaining employees represents a significant portion of an organization's budget. The landscape is cluttered with tools and technology to address this strategic business need; often applied with the best intentions, but with dismal results. In light of this business challenge, it is no wonder there has been a strong trend in the increased use of assessments to acquire, develop, and promote the best talent. However, with this trend has come significant confusion about how to choose assessments and how to best use them to obtain a competitive advantage.

The purpose of this paper is to provide clarity and a practical checklist of considerations (see pages 26-27). Applying this set of criteria will enable you to:

- *identify and attract top talent*
- *reduce the amount of time required for recruitment*
- *predict job success much more accurately than using only interviews*
- *reduce training costs*
- *identify and develop behavioral competencies and core values*
- *identify management behaviors that develop and retain talent*
- *identify best placement for succession planning*
- *protect you from lawsuits*
- *facilitate effective teamwork*

There are many types of assessments and each has its own purpose. Skills assessments help answer the question, "Can the person do his or her specific job effectively?" Cognitive assessments evaluate a person's mental ability in relationship to a job. Behavioral assessments answer the question "Will the person behave in ways that generate success in his or her specific job?" Multi-rater or 360 assessments gather information about how others perceive an individual's capabilities and competencies. While all of these assessments can be useful and often should be used in combination, behavioral assessments can have the greatest impact on attracting, developing and retaining talent, provided they follow the guidelines outlined below.

When evaluating assessments, there are six key questions that must be considered:

1. *Is the assessment work focused and presented in a manner that builds the confidence of applicants and employees?*
2. *Does the assessment produce results that relate to job performance for the specific jobs?*
3. *Does the assessment produce an overall score enabling recruiters and line managers to make consistent and accurate employment decisions?*
4. *Does the assessment process measure all the important factors related to success for the job?*
5. *Is the assessment legal and ethical?*
6. *Is the assessment valid and predictive?*

Let's consider each question in more depth.

#1: Is the assessment work focused and presented in a manner that builds the confidence of applicants and employees?

The first thing to consider is how an assessment and the assessment process will impact applicants and/or employees. While this is often ignored when considering assessments, it remains one of the most important issues.

For example, it is very popular to use 360 feedback assessments in which employees are rated by their subordinates, boss, peers and self according to their fulfillment of different behavioral competencies. Although this can be an effective method to help develop employees, the questions should be clear and job-relevant. It should be indicated how important each question is to the specific job. Avoid too many redundant or overlapping questions that cause rater fatigue and confusion as to how to interpret the results. It should be made clear that feedback is something to consider and explore based on others' perceptions, rather than facts. Since managers need to make decisions that are not necessarily popular, the questions and subsequent interpretations should avoid undermining management authority. We suggest using questions related to paradoxical behavioral competencies to avoid the confusion of trying to interpret if a competency is "overused." (We will explain more about paradox later.) Finally, and most importantly, the results of the 360 survey should be given in a one-to-one setting by a qualified coach. Otherwise, there is a significant risk of creating many unnecessary upsets that could decrease morale and retention.

Using assessment for recruitment also needs careful attention to avoid unintended consequences. For example, some companies require all applicants to go through a long assessment process of one to two hours when they first apply for a job. At this point in the hiring process, the applicants have not received any indication as to whether the company has any real interest in them for the job. This is counter-productive

> " *It should be made clear that feedback is something to consider and explore based on others' perceptions, rather than facts.* "

because you not only pay for unnecessary assessments but you also probably cause the most-talented people to look elsewhere for employment. After all, the most-talented people will nearly always have several employment opportunities. Even if the most-talented applicants do complete such assessments, their first impression is likely to be one in which they perceive your company as being inconsiderate. This could easily become a factor related to them choosing another company.

If you wish to automate the assessment process, there are much better ways to do it. Assessment technology is currently available for you to ask several targeted questions related to applicants' core qualifications such as their experience, education and skills when they apply online. The results can be automatically scored and the applicants sorted according to which ones are most qualified. This takes less than five minutes of their time and applicants are happy to provide this information because it enables them to receive quick feedback about the status of their application. Some systems can even immediately inform applicants that they are being considered for the job and request them to take the next step of the assessment process – all without any human intervention. This process gives an excellent impression of your company and encourages the best talent to continue the application process. This can also save a great deal of time by allowing you to focus on the most-qualified applicants, reduce the number of interviews required, and provide automated response emails to less-qualified applicants.

Once the applicants or employees start an assessment, it is important that they are fully informed related to the purpose of the assessment. The content of the assessment must be such that they can easily see how the assessment questions relate to their job. Asking questions that appear to be irrelevant to the job will probably turn them off and result in a lower quality of answers and a loss of credibility for the company.

"*Asking questions that appear to be irrelevant to the job will probably turn off applicants and* **result in a lower quality of answers and a loss of credibility for the company.**"

#1: Continued

This is particularly the case with behavioral assessments because many behavioral assessments ask questions that have no job relevance. We have seen companies that offered a personality test in the hiring process in which applicants were required to select colors they like the most from a group of colors. The results were then used to describe their personality and predict their job success! In other cases, we have even seen companies use personality assessments that ask questions that violate privacy. For example, one well-known personality test asks if the person believes in the Antichrist! Using assessments that have content that is unrelated to work destroys credibility and hinders the employment relationship that you are trying to build.

#2: Does the assessment produce results that relate to job performance for the specific job?

Another critical consideration in selecting an assessment is to use an assessment that fits your purpose. If you are attempting to hire, develop, promote, and retain talent, the assessments must produce reports that are related to the requirements of the job.

Does the assessment use the same set of factors for every job? If that is the case, it is very unlikely to effectively predict job success. *In order to predict job success, the assessment must be job-specific.* For example, many personality tests use the same set of personality factors for every job. The majority of these factors are likely to be irrelevant to job success for any one job. How can recruiters or line managers know how to use such information when it is not job specific? Using such assessments is not only counter-productive, it violates hiring ethics and, in many cases, legal guidelines.

The things being measured and considered when making employment decisions must be specific to the job and not confused with things that

> *"Considering norms for factors that are unrelated to job success reduces diversity, which is important for having a variety of viewpoints to make better decisions."*

#2: Continued

don't relate to success for that job. This eliminates many off-the-shelf assessments but it is just common sense. However, some off-the-shelf assessments are able to be configured to the job and even offer performance research related to success for a large variety of job types.

Some assessment providers show norms related to their assessment scores. At first glance this may seem to help interpretation. However, it usually causes misinterpretations. If the factor is not related to job success, there is no value in knowing the norm. Considering norms for factors that are unrelated to job success reduces diversity, which is important for having a variety of viewpoints to make better decisions. If the norm is presented as an ideal range, this also creates confusion since no one really wants to hire people who are average.

#3: Does the assessment produce an overall score enabling recruiters and line managers to make consistent and accurate employment decisions?

It is essential that the test developer produces an overall score related to likelihood of success for your specific job so that recruiters or line managers can accurately interpret the results. Assessments that provide only a series of scores without an overall score have little value and lead to poor hiring decisions. For example, if an applicant scores reasonably well on all of the assessed factors but one, should the recruiter eliminate the applicant or consider it to be only a minor hindrance? If this is not provided by the test developer, recruiters and line managers can only guess. This is often the case with behavioral assessments.

Test developers who provide an overall job-specific numerical value related to probable job success have most likely researched the factors related

#3: Continued

to job performance for specific jobs. Without such research, the test developers themselves have no way to determine how their assessment relates to success for different jobs. An overall score also enables others to determine the accuracy of the test. The overall score related to specific jobs is also critical to enable test developers to effectively weight factors and configure the assessment to predict job success.

Cognitive assessments also often do not provide job specific results, which can cause serious problems. We will share an actual case example: A large retail chain used a cognitive assessment as part of their overall assessment for hiring branch managers. They naturally decided to give preference to applicants with the highest scores. However, after a period of time, they discovered that many of the people hired were not successful. An analysis of the data showed that, in fact, employees with very high scores were unlikely to succeed and that employees with moderate scores were the most likely to succeed. The assessment was then calibrated to interpret the likelihood of success for that specific job. Only then was it able to be useful in the assessment process. Because the assessment provider did not calibrate its assessment for the specific job or even suggest that it needed to be done, the company suffered significant losses, at least hundreds of thousand dollars if not millions. This amount of loss would have dwarfed the cost of the assessment itself and the company would have been far better off to find a test developer who understood the importance of calibrating assessments for specific jobs, especially when hiring in such large quantities.

Even Organizational Psychologists are unable to effectively interpret such tests without analyzing a significant sample of test results in relationship to performance for a specific job. In order to clearly understand how to interpret reports for specific jobs, a large amount of data is required. However, recruiters and line managers generally don't have access to a sufficient amount of data, and even if they did, few would have the ability to effectively analyze the data.

"In order to clearly understand how to interpret reports for specific jobs, a large amount of data is required."

#3: Continued

Unfortunately most off-the-shelf assessments do not provide job-specific scores related to predicted job performance because it is expensive to develop. However, any assessment without such features should be avoided.

#4: Does the assessment process measure all the important factors related to success for the job?

Previously we discussed why assessments should focus on factors related to success for specific jobs and not include irrelevant factors. In addition, you should consider if the assessment or assessments cover all the important factors that relate to specific job success. If all the important factors are not included and formulated, there will be significant gaps that reduce the accuracy and usefulness of the assessment. For example, if a person's typing speed or writing skills are important for a job and you fail to measure them, you will have a significant gap that prevents you from accurately predicting job success.

There are two types of factors that need to be assessed: eligibility and suitability. Eligibility relates to the individual's previous experience, educational qualifications and various skills or abilities necessary to perform in the job. Suitability relates to behavioral issues such as preferences, tendencies, attitudes and behavioral competencies necessary to perform well in the job. Both are very important for nearly every job. Eligibility tends to be somewhat more important for technical jobs and suitability tends to be somewhat more important for jobs that require more people skills such as customer service or sales.

Assessing Eligibility

Many organizations assess eligibility factors by setting minimum requirements. This only helps to eliminate the people who don't meet the

requirements, but it does nothing to determine which of the applicants are best qualified. By quantifying each candidate's level of eligibility you can identify the candidates who are most eligible.

Recruiters and line managers often do not carefully analyze how to evaluate the combination of eligibility factors. This leads to confusion and miscommunication, as each party is likely to have a different idea when it comes to selecting whom to interview and whom to hire. In addition, this lack of clarity makes it especially difficult to use other assessments. For example, if you are using behavioral assessments, unless you are able to know the person's level of eligibility, how can you make an overall determination? Recruiters and line managers must be able to determine how these two aspects combine in order to make effective decisions.

To assess eligibility, first determine what the eligibility factors are. What education is required? What previous experience is required? What skills are required that are not assured by education or experience? Make a list of all the core factors. Avoid long lists of small details. Five to ten factors are usually best. Then weight each factor according to how important it is in relation to the other factors. Review each factor and analyze what it means when the applicant has different levels of that factor. What is the ideal level of each factor? What is the minimum level of each factor for which candidates should be rejected even if they are perfect in each of the other factors? For each level of each factor that is less than ideal, indicate the number of points you would subtract from one hundred. In doing this exercise before showing the other stakeholders (recommended to avoid lengthy discussions) you will find that there are many things that were previously either vague or not considered in your selection process. After discussion, these things can become clarified and you will have real alignment with the other stakeholders, as well as an effective means of evaluating eligibility.

Assessing Eligibility Continued

Software is readily available to make the process of weighting and scoring eligibility factors easy. You can even automate your recruitment process by asking an online targeted question for each factor. The online questionnaire can score the result and you can immediately see the eligibility score. This also provides an extra advantage of being able to quickly identify the best talent. In many cases you can start the interview process right away, making it more likely that you can recruit the top talent before your competitors do.

For some jobs you also may wish to use specific tests related to eligibility. For example, you may wish to determine the person's language ability, numerical reasoning, typing speed or software skills. Such assessments should usually take place later in the recruitment process because they are more expensive to administer and often more time-consuming to complete. However, if the assessment is fairly short and not very costly to administer, then it can be given earlier in the process. Keep in mind that it is better to avoid eligibility testing or eligibility factors that can reasonably be learned from training. For example, if you need someone to use a specific software package that only takes a short time to learn, it is better not to use that as an eligibility factor or eligibility test.

Suitability/Behavioral Assessment

For most jobs, suitability/behavioral factors are about 50% of the reason people succeed or fail at a job. Therefore, effectively measuring suitability is an essential part of assessment. The importance of assessing behavior during recruitment is evidenced by the fact that most organizations hire people for their eligibility and then try to develop their suitability. And in many cases, they fire them for their lack of suitability. Since behavior is fundamentally more difficult to change than eligibility, it is better to hire people who already have the right suitability for the job.

Suitability/behavioral factors are more difficult to assess because,

> "Since behavior is fundamentally more difficult to change than eligibility, it is better to hire people who already have the right suitability for the job."

unlike eligibility factors, there is no objective and verifiable information that is readily available. In addition, suitability factors are much more interrelated, and subtle balances between factors have significant implications for behavior. To make it even more challenging, applicants have a significant incentive to withhold or distort information that might hinder their job opportunity. This is highlighted by a recent study that determined that 80% of resumes contained lies. In many cases, people are not even fully aware of their behaviors. In addition, the behavioral requirements for each job type are very different. The behaviors required for a technical expert, manager, office administer, customer representative or salesperson are all very different. Not only is it unlikely that a recruiter will have a complete grasp of the combination of behavioral factors related to job success for each job, it is much more unlikely that the recruiter can accurately assess each applicant related to each factor. Considering the above, it is no wonder that interviews have a low ability to predict behavior.

Behavioral assessments have a much better chance of gaining insight into behavior/suitability because they have a pre-designed strategy that structures questions and carefully considers interpretations of the questions. However, to be effective, behavioral assessments must:

- *measure a large number of factors*
- *effectively manage lie prevention and detection*
- *produce results related to specific jobs*
- *offer an overall job specific score that guides interpretation*

The best suitability assessments measure a wide range of different types of factors including motivation, attitudes, work preferences, work values, work environment preferences, and interests. In doing so, you can capture all the important suitability factors related to job success. A behavioral assessment that focuses only on personality will have significant gaps that will hinder its ability to predict job success. For

> "At least 30 behavioral factors impact success for any one job, but only a small portion actually relate to success for a specific job."

Suitability/Behavioral Assessment Continued

example, an applicant might have the right personality fit for the job but may dislike some of the tasks required. Or, the applicant may dislike certain aspects of the work environment or lack interests related to the job function. Such things will significantly hinder performance and impact attrition.

Many people use simple personality tests that measure only four to ten factors, thinking that they are easy to use. However, these tests are actually very difficult to use because they don't provide reports related to specific jobs with an overall score. Consequently, there is no way to effectively interpret the results. In addition, such tests are extremely unlikely to predict job success because they don't measure enough factors. Our research indicates that there are at least thirty behavioral factors that impact success for any one job and only a small portion (about 25 to 30%) of behavioral factors that are measured actually relate to success for a specific job.

This can be confirmed by your own experience. For example, you probably do about five to ten different types of main tasks related to your job—which you either like or dislike—such as initiating projects, organizing information, doing precision-type tasks, teaching others, presenting to groups, etc. In addition, there are probably about five to ten different organization criteria related to your job preferences such as the desire for autonomy, the desire for authority, the tendency to be innovative, the willingness to lead others and the motivation related to challenges. There are also likely to be at least five to ten areas of interpersonal skills that are required for your job. For example, you may need to effectively enforce rules, deal with conflicts, receive corrective feedback, communicate directly and respectfully, be warm and empathetic, be outgoing or be cheerful. If you lacked any of these things, it could easily affect your performance. If you lacked certain interests related to your job, such as an interest in people, computers, or science, it is unlikely that you will be fully engaged with your work. If you had a

> *"Focusing on work-related preferences demonstrates a concern for what is important to the applicant or employee and thus reduces the tendency to skew answers."*

> "Employees need to obtain insight into **how their behaviors affect their specific job.**"

strong aversion to any one of numerous different things in your work environment such as excessive noise, working closely in teams or sitting for long periods, your performance could be affected. Consider also, these issues are different for different jobs. It should be pretty obvious from this reflection that behavioral assessments need to measure many different factors and the results need to be job-specific with an overall score.

There are at least thirty different factors related to success for each job and each job type has a different set of factors. How can we imagine that only a few personality factors can predict behavior of a wide range of jobs? To measure behavior related to a wide variety of jobs, you need to measure at least one hundred factors and preferably one hundred fifty. From this base, the thirty+/-job-specific factors can be tabulated to effectively predict success and offer optimum growth and coaching opportunities.

By now you might be thinking this is pretty complicated. You are right! It is too complicated to effectively do without a comprehensive and strategic behavioral assessment. Fortunately, behavioral assessments are available that have done performance research and formulated sets of factors for specific jobs. You only need to review the suggested factors for your job to confirm that it fits the job requirements. In addition, if you have thirty or more people in the same job, you can even request the test developer to research the key factors for your specific job. Computer technology makes this straightforward. You will need to provide performance ratings for your existing employees in order for the test developer to determine the factors that relate to job success.

Besides being comprehensive, a behavioral assessment needs to have an effective means to elicit truthful answers and determine areas in which the person is either confused or giving untruthful answers. Behavioral assessments have different ways to do this. Some attempt to determine

the reliability of answers by offering two words or statements along with a third answer option that always states "in between." If the person answers too many items as "in between," the results are considered unreliable. While this may sometimes give some indication of answer reliability, it is a very weak and questionable method, because in many cases the most truthful answer is "in between." For example, "Are you outgoing, introverted or in between?"

There are other much more effective mechanisms that help to obtain truthful answers. First, focusing on work-related preferences demonstrates a concern for what is important to the applicant or employee and thus reduces the tendency to skew answers. In addition, if various work preference statements are required to be ranked within a group of other statements, the applicant or employee is forced to give their priorities. If the statements appear more than once but in different groups, it can greatly reduce the amount of time it takes to gather extensive behavioral information while at the same time detect the consistency of the person's answers.

This ranking method can also help to prevent deception if the items ranked are all positive items in which it is difficult to say which ones are better. Even if individuals attempt to give the "right" answer, their own behavior patterns tend to dictate which answers they consider are right. For example, if a person tends to be very frank and direct, he/she will consider this tendency to be a virtue as well as a desirable answer.

You might ask, "If all the items are positive, how can an assessment determine negative factors?" The extent of counter-productive tendencies can be determined by analyzing the paradoxical relationships between the positive factors without asking any negative questions and without the person having the slightest awareness that they are revealed. To understand this, we need to further explain how paradox relates to behavior.

Suitability/Behavioral Assessment Continued

Behavior is typlically very tricky to assess due to its paradoxical nature. It might appear that we can look at a single attribute in and of itself in order to determine if that attribute is positive. However, if an attribute doesn't have other balancing factors, it becomes a negative factor. For example, being highly motivated to achieve is nearly always considered to be a good characteristic. However, if it is not balanced with appropriate people skills, stress management and the tendency to explore all important issues before taking action, the would-be positive factor actually becomes a negative factor. In another example, being direct, straightforward and truthful can be important for effective communication. However, when not balancing communication with tact and respect, the would-be positive tendency becomes a serious hindrance. These balances are different for different jobs. For example, customer service jobs require a stronger emphasis on tactfulness whereas managers will generally perform better with a balance between the two. By considering the paradoxical relationship between traits, such imbalances can be accurately measured without having to ask any negative questions.

From the employer's point of view, it is essential to obtain an accurate measurement of a wide range of potentially counter-productive factors such as being dogmatic, easily influenced, defensive, self-critical, impulsive, blindly optimistic, skeptical, overly cautious, logical, illogical, stubborn, scattered, authoritarian, defers decisions, under achiever, stressed achiever, permissive, punitive, resistant to change, addicted to change, rebellious, insensitive, blunt, evasive, over sensitive, and many more. This is critical for making hiring decisions and just as important for employee development and team development. Employees need to obtain insight into how their behaviors affect their specific job.

> "...laws do not hinder you from doing effective assessments because they **allow you to ask questions** related to the applicant's ability to perform specific tasks required for the job."

#5: Is the assessment legal and ethical?

Obviously, employers have every right to attempt to determine if applicants are likely to perform well. We have previously discussed the importance of questions that relate to work and test results that relate to performance for specific jobs. This not only makes assessment more effective, it provides you with strong legal standing related to your hiring practices. Being able to demonstrate that your hiring practices focus only on job performance factors is the most important means to protect yourself legally and to have ethical hiring practices. Assessments containing factors that are unrelated to performance for the specific job unfairly discriminate against applicants who don't score well on those factors and often unfairly discriminate against race, gender and age. Therefore, the best rule of thumb related to legal compliance and ethical standards is to use only assessments that relate to job performance for your specific job. Interviews are considered a form of assessment and therefore many of the same rules apply to the types of questions you can ask during the interview.

Even if you happen to work in a country with minimal labor laws, unsound assessment practices hinder talent management by causing you to miss out on the best applicants or misevaluate employees. And, since assessments are used for making decisions that have a significant impact on other people's lives, their use should have ethical consideration.

Legal and ethical issues can be very subtle. For example, in the USA, you are not allowed to ask questions that violate privacy and therefore cannot ask questions about individuals' private lives such as their childhood or private habits that are unrelated to employment. You also cannot ask about their marital status, children, health condition, disabilities or other similar things because such things don't necessarily prevent an employee from performing well. These laws do not hinder you from doing effective assessments because they allow you to ask questions related to the applicant's ability to perform specific tasks required for the job. For example, you can ask if the person can lift a certain amount of weight or type a certain number of words per minute, provided that this is required to

perform in the job. You can also ask work-related behavioral questions and evaluate applicants related to those behaviors, provided those behaviors relate to performance for the specific job.

There are differing requirements for compliance in various countries and it is important to determine that the assessments and assessment process you are using comply with the regulations in your country. The key questions you need to ask are:

1. *Does the assessment focus on factors that relate to performance for specific jobs? If not, you may be at risk.*
2. *Does the assessment comply with all legal guidelines? For example, in the United States you must ensure you meet all EEOC requirements.*
3. *Has the assessment been reviewed by an employment law firm to verify compliance?*
4. *Has the assessment ever been challenged in court?*

#6: Is the assessment valid and predictive?

There is a great deal of confusion around the issue of validity. All test developers claim validity, so it is important to understand what it is. It is easy for many people to conclude that if a test has validity it will necessarily be effective in predicting and developing job success. In fact, that is not the case. To understand this, we will briefly explain the main types of validity as related to employment assessments.

Face validity refers to what the test appears to measure. If a test has face validity it "looks valid" to the applicants or employees who take it, the HR professionals who choose it, and the recruiters or line managers who use it. Face validity refers to assessment questions that are work-related and report results that appear to relate to the requirements of the specific job. As previously mentioned, questions that are job-related will make a much better impression on applicants and employees and will more likely enable the test to predict job success. Reports that are job-specific and provide an overall score will help recruiters to make better employment decisions and help coaches to more effectively guide employees to better performance.

> "*Having strong face validity has a big advantage of helping to protect you against lawsuits and greatly reduces the burden of having to prove that you are not unfairly discriminating...*"

Behavioral assessments that focus on job-related questions (especially preferences) also provide the benefit of making the assessment more easily transfer across cultures because generalized personality questions nearly always have culturally influenced significance that makes answers to such questions quite different across cultures. Having strong face validity also has a big advantage of helping to protect you against lawsuits and greatly reduces the burden of having to prove that you are not unfairly discriminating against specific races, genders or age groups.

Criterion validity is generally considered to be the most important aspect of validity for employment assessments. It indicates the degree to which a set of scores from test results relate to job performance. A strong relationship indicates that the assessment is likely to predict job success for that job. It is important to note that it is only related to the test when used to assess for a specific job and not the test in general. Criterion-related validity for one job does not necessarily indicate criterion-related validity for another job, because a test that can reasonably predict success for one may not do so for different jobs. As previously discussed, if the test does not produce an overall score related to specific jobs, there is no way to determine if it predicts job success and thus there is no way to show (or know) if the test has criterion validity.

Criterion validity is determined using correlation coefficients, which show the degree of relationship between test results (overall score) and job performance. A correlation coefficient of 1.0 indicates a perfect correlation in which the overall score of the test matches perfectly with the performance scores of the employees. This is pretty much impossible to achieve since performance scores themselves are not perfect and there is no need for the test to predict the exact level of performance. For example, a test result of 95% is close enough if the performance is 90%. Being reasonably close in the large majority of cases is considered quite useful and will generally be achieved by a 0.5 correlation.

> "The important and reliable means to determine the value of an employment assessment is criterion-related validity."

A correlation coefficient of 0 indicates that there is no correlation whatsoever between the assessment score and performance.

Extensive research has shown that structured interviews without any assessment have a correlation of 0.2 and therefore any assessment should have a correlation of at least 0.2 in order to be useful. A correlation coefficient of 0.5 will generally predict performance quite well and thus is considered a strong correlation.

Keep in mind that most assessments are only intended to measure part of the factors related to job success and thus the most important measure is how all assessment components, including the interview, combine to predict job performance. Knowing the degree that each assessment segment predicts success (correlation coefficient) enables you to know how much weight (if any) to put on the various assessment segments. For example, if you use a behavioral assessment that has an independent 0.5 correlation, greater weight should be placed on the behavioral assessment than the interview results. However, keep in mind that the sample size is also important. If the sample size is thirty to fifty or fewer and the correlation coefficient was related to existing employees, the correlation coefficient for the next group of hires will very likely decrease by 25% to 40%. Larger samples of three hundred or more will tend to have significantly less of this effect.

Criterion-related validity is vitally important because it tells us how well the assessment works. Due to modern computer technology, criterion-related validity is much easier to determine and should be routinely evaluated for jobs in which you have more than thirty employees. Test developers will often do this for you for a minimal cost. To verify their conclusions you can use a standard software application such as Excel®. Enter the assessment scores in one column and the performance scores in an adjacent column so Excel® can calculate the correlation. Use the Help function if you are not sure how to do it.

Construct validity examines the question: Are the assessment method and results consistent with the related theory or concept the assessment intends to measure? Construct validity methods are very complex and technical and are used during test construction. To evaluate employment tests, construct validity is similar to evaluating the quality of the engine of a race car as compared to criterion-related validity, which is like timing the race car in a race. The important and reliable means to determine the value of an employment assessment is criterion-related validity.

Construct validity does not necessarily indicate that the test is effective for employment purposes. Some of the oldest and most popular personality tests have extensive construct validity but do not predict job success. In many countries those tests are not legal to use for recruitment but, unfortunately, they are still used in many developing countries. It makes no sense to use an assessment that was never designed for the workplace and doesn't relate to job performance. These tests are also used in developed countries for employee development. While they have the benefit of stimulating discussion related to teams, it would be far better to use assessments that stimulate reflection and discussion on real performance issues related to teams and individuals.

Test-retest is a method to determine the reliability of tests. It is determined by testing a group of people and then retesting them after a period of time (generally three months to one year later) to determine the consistency of the results. This can be a useful measure to confirm that an assessment consistently produces the same results. However, it does not have nearly the importance as criterion-related validity because it is extremely unlikely that a test that has low reliability will predict job success. Many personality tests measure only general personality patterns, or personality types, which tend to change very little over time and thus they have strong test-retest results. However, many of these tests have no predictive accuracy for specific jobs. Having a strong

test-retest correlation does provide some confidence that the results are measuring something that stays reasonably constant.

To summarize the issues of validity, face validity is most important for test acceptance and legal defensibility and criterion-related validity is most important to determine the degree to which the test can fulfill its purpose of predicting job success.

Summary

Effective assessment can help you to attract, develop and retain top talent. It can reduce the amount of time required for recruitment and provide excellent legal protection. In addition, it can provide clear insight into success behaviors and assist employees to be fully engaged and focused on success. However, to achieve these benefits you must follow a few critical guidelines. If these guidelines are not followed, you could easily waste your money and time, as well as create costly repercussions.

Assessment questions should be work-related in order to gain the confidence of applicants, employees, recruiters and line managers. This supports face validity, which is important for legal protection. Assessment results should relate only to factors (and include all the factors) important to performance for specific jobs. When used for recruitment and succession planning, assessments should provide an overall score that can be used to determine the degree to which the assessment results predict job success. This provides important criterion validity and further legal protection.

Behavioral assessments should follow the above guidelines and, in addition, should measure a wide variety of at least one hundred factors. Behavioral assessments that contain only a few personality factors should be avoided because such assessments don't offer job-specific reports and thus recruiters and line managers are unable to effectively interpret the results in relationship to specific jobs. This lack of face validity also creates significant legal liabilities. If an assessment doesn't provide an

> "If these guidelines are not followed, you could easily waste your money and time, as well as create costly repercussions."

Summary Continued

overall score intended to predict success for specific jobs, it is unlikely to be based on real performance research.

You can save time and assessment costs by measuring each applicant's or high-potential candidate's qualifications with a short (five-minute) eligibility test at the time of application. This enables you to quickly identify the best talent, reduce the number of interviews, reduce the number of other assessments required, and better interpret the overall meaning of other assessments.

Selecting, developing, and promoting the right people, and understanding how to get high performance, is the key to success in any organization. With today's technology, choosing the right assessment can provide an organization with the management know-how that can create a whole new level of performance and competitive advantage.

About the Author

Dan Harrison, Ph.D. - Organizational Psychology. Dr. Harrison is the developer and CEO of Harrison Assessments and originator of ParadoxTechnology™ incorporated in Harrison Assessments. His diverse background in Mathematics, Personality Theory, Counseling Psychology, and Organizational Psychology has enabled him to make a unique and exceptional contribution to assessment methodology. His 30 years of research, innovation and experience in psychology and assessment has enabled Harrison Assessments to create and develop state-of-the-industry technology, tools, and systems that meet strategic business needs globally and provide effective solutions across the entire talent management life cycle.

About Harrison Assessments

Harrison Assessments was founded in 1990 and serves organizational clients in over 70 countries worldwide. Harrison Assessments focuses on providing the most accurate and effective assessments in the industry by dedicating a large portion of its resources to research, development and user friendly software engineering. Their assessment systems provide decision analytics for selection, development, succession and career planning. Solutions include comprehensive and customizable recruitment, development and talent readiness technology systems for organizations of all sizes and industries. Assessing 175 traits and competencies, the Harrison Assessments questionnaire is available in 29 languages with over 6500 job specific success templates.

Additional information is available at www.harrisonassessments.com.

Behavioral Assessment Evaluation Tool Checklist

Essential Factors	Benefits
Work-related questionnaire	*Credibility, face validity and potential usefulness*
Results relate to specific job performance	*Face validity, accuracy, legal protection, ease- and accuracy-of-use*
Overall score of the assessment	*Criterion validity, ease-of-use and ability to verify effectiveness*
Measures all performance related factors	*Greater accuracy and test confidence*
Legal and ethical compliance	*Legal protection, which is mostly determined by the above*
Validity and verifiable accuracy	*Better results and confidence, which is mostly determined by the above*
Measuring both eligibility and suitability with customizable job criteria	*Essential for comprehensiveness and effective interpretation as well as focus on real performance factors*
Effective lie prevention and detection	*Better results*
More than 100 behavioral factors	*Essential for accuracy*
Short eligibility pre-test	*Quick applicant processing and better interpretation in conjunction with other assessments*
Behavioral questionnaire focused on preferences	*Talent attraction, better test reliability, talent retention and succession planning*
In-depth coaching and development reports	*Provides insight to strengths, potential derailers and blind spots*

Significant Added Value Factors	Benefits
Applicant tracking features	*Saves time, allows for applicant tracking in the context of assessment*
Recruitment campaigns	*Segregates candidates by position for ease-of-use and tracking*
Competency and values mapping	*Helps employees to develop behavioral competencies and core values*
Team reports	*Establishes team values, identifies strengths and gaps*
Succession planning features	*Easily identifies jobs for which employees are suitable and eligible*
Interview reports	*Provides professionally crafted questions focused on job criteria*
Career reports	*Provides insight into how to develop careers and the most suitable careers*