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Hiring: To test or not to test

Hiring the right person is one of the most difficult decisions a manager has to make. Administering a test certainly can increase the likelihood of success.

A manager for a small office hired a receptionist through a referral. After she had been working for this office, the manager found that she did not know proper office methods and also could not spell. An office test would have determined her skills.

This office manager created an administrative test by dictating ten common office words (for checking the ability to spell) and having the job applicant write a letter using the ten words (for composition).

Testing is conducted for various purposes such as career assessment, leadership and training development, customer service improvement, absentee reduction, turnover, and screening applicants.

There are many kinds of testing you can conduct (remember that these tests have to be job related!). Behavior, KSAOs (knowledge, skills, and abilities and others), job match, personality, psychological and many more. It depends what the job the applicants are seeking and which test will be effective in helping you to pick the most qualified candidate.



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Corporate Perspective

Before you consider testing, you must not only have a good reason for testing but effective and valid, non-discriminatory tool.

Testing can be a very effective tool for skills assessment. Also, you need to make sure that the person conducting the test is fully qualified to administer it. There are training classes and programs the applicants may attend in order to prepare. Test administrators must understand the full scope of how and why the test is essential to the company. He/she should be prepared for any questions an applicant may have during and after the test. It is important to remember that if you test one applicant you must test all applicants for the same job.

If you use an employment agency, most of them administer

comprehensive administrative testing (i.e. Word, Excel, Data Processing, Math, Data Entry, Filing Skills, etc.). Make sure that your employment agency performs these tests to possible applicants.

In the computer age, there are many sources for testing candidate skills. Many test suppliers are legitimate and offer good products.

However, how do you identify a good test from a poor one?

Purchasing test materials from a vendor can be costly and time consuming and you want to make sure that it is a good one. The answer is to get validation. An effective test is designed to reduce subjective and human error in selection decisions. Validation tells you the degree to which the test actually measures - i.e. typing test for speed and accuracy for an administrative assistant.

If you are considering utilizing employment tests, consult an industrial psychologist or a human resources professional trained in testing and measurement.

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