



## **The Ins and Outs of Pre-Employment Testing**

There are a wide variety of tests available on the marketplace ranging in quality from poorly crafted tools that take advantage of stereotypes to job specific, scientifically validated tests that predict performance outcomes. The challenge for human resource professionals is to find the right test for the right use. Pre-employment testing is more than just a tool for getting rid of bottom of the barrel employees. Rather, it is an opportunity to contribute to a sustainable business by identifying employees that will best fit with the organization and position. When times are tough, the talent pool widens and organizations are faced with even more choices. By understanding the ins and outs of testing and validation, HR professionals have the opportunity to be a strategic partner in driving the business.

### **What impact should testing have on your organization?**

- Help you hire less frequently because people stay
- Hire individuals who are engaged and committed
- Provide a better workforce; a better workforce yields:
  - Increased quality
  - More efficient order fulfillment
  - An ability to implement change

### **Why Validate?**

- Identify the best candidates for the job
- Improve productivity and profitability by reducing training costs, turnover, etc.
- Ensure legal defensibility by:
  - Conducting a thorough job analysis
  - Documenting the validity of the test(s)
  - Implementing the tests in a fair and consistent manner



## What is Test Validation?

Test validation is a process that evaluates the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. To further understand test validation, a helpful testing and assessment guide for employers to refer to can be found at: [http://www.onetcenter.org/dl\\_files/empTestAsse.pdf](http://www.onetcenter.org/dl_files/empTestAsse.pdf). Chapter 9 provides a summary of the primary principles of assessment that employers should have in their awareness. The most relevant for test selection are:

- “Use only assessment procedures and instruments that have been demonstrated to be valid for the specific purpose for which they are being used (p. 3-1).”
- “Use assessment tools that are appropriate for the target population (p. 3-6).”
- “Use assessment instruments for which understandable and comprehensive documentation is available (p. 5-1).”

## Questions to Ask Test Vendors

**Do they have studies showing that their tests predict performance in your jobs? What validation work do they intend to do for your location?**

There are many good vendors who routinely validate and maintain extensive data on their tests, which are available in a manual. On the other hand, there are vendors who act as publishers and re-sellers of minimum qualification tests. We have conducted local validation studies on such tests that revealed no relationship with job performance in a specific organization for a specific job. However, the company had bought the test because it worked somewhere else.

- If your selection goal is to decrease turnover and increase performance, validation is a must.
- If you are subject to potential legal risk by using tests that may not be valid for your situation, validation is a must.



## **How many Industrial/Organizational psychologists do they have on staff? What oversight will they have on your project?**

Vendors who are re-sellers, publishers or administrators have few if any professionals who know the ins and outs of testing. They assume that all jobs and employers require the same set of master skills that they have identified. You will be re-assured by a sales person that all their tests are valid and don't require any validation study. This simply does not meet professional or legal guidelines. In addition, organizations often find that one size fits all never fits like a glove.

Partnering with a firm that provides technical support from an I/O psychologist will help ensure that you are provided with testing options that directly tie to your unique business goals. For virtually the same investment you can end up with a well-tailored approach. And, of course, relationship is important. You need to be confident that you have a technical partner who is passionate about your success.

## **How are cut scores set and maintained?**

Cut scores work when they maximize getting the best candidates in the door while minimizing adverse impact. There are many tests that only screen out the bottom 5% of job applicants. You need control over the business rationale for cut scores so that you can select the best candidates for your company by optimizing diversity, skills and attitudes. We recommend looking at cut scores on an annual basis. It is much like getting your car a tune up.

## **Indicators of Quality Testing Procedures**

- Monitoring of applicant data
- Quality control processes you can monitor and inspect
- Easy data download so that you can examine trends, distributions and adverse impact.
- Technical reporting on your organization
- Well-developed manuals describing the development, validation of the test including jobs similar to yours