

Best Practices in Recruitment Assessment

A Positioning Paper by Harrison Assessments Int'l

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Assessment is the essential foundation for organizational success because high quality assessment used at the point of hire enables you to have the greatest impact on performance, productivity and retention.

To be effective, assessment must comprehensively assess both eligibility and Suitability and provide an overall score. Eligibility factors include previous experience, education, certifications, skills, abilities and reference checks, and aptitude. Suitability factors include attitude, motivation, interpersonal skills, task preferences, interests, and work environment preferences.

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Some jobs such as computer programmers require a stronger emphasis on eligibility while other jobs such as customer service usually require a stronger emphasis on suitability. However, regardless of the emphasis, it is essential to assess both eligibility and suitability in order to obtain an accurate overall assessment. Otherwise, you will only be looking at about half of the factors that create job success. If you fail to assess the other half and take both into consideration, it is very unlikely that you can make good hiring decisions.

In order to be effective, assessment must provide a score for eligibility, a score for suitability and a total score. This requires pre-defining how each of the suitability factors and each of the eligibility factors will impact the total score. Otherwise, each interviewer will guess at how each

factor will impact job success and consequently, the value of the assessment will be compromised.

Integrating Eligibility and Suitability Scores

In order to achieve an integrated assessment, eligibility must have a scoring system. Screening out applicants who fail to meet the minimum eligibility requirements only eliminates people who are not qualified for the job. It does nothing to assess the eligibility levels of the people who pass the minimum requirements.

If eligibility and suitability are not scored and integrated, many interviewers will make employment decisions based on a serial process. For example, they may short-list the candidates who are eligible for the job. Then they may assess suitability and select the person with the highest suitability. This is a serious mistake because it does not take into consideration the different levels of eligibility for those candidates when making the final decision. The candidate with the highest suitability level may not be the best candidate because that candidate may not be as eligible as other candidates.

By scoring the eligibility of the candidates who meet the minimum requirements, you can combine the eligibility score with the suitability score to achieve an overall assessment. Otherwise, each interviewer is left to determine how the suitability assessment will impact the overall result. On what basis can the interviewer decide how different suitability factors will impact at least a half a dozen eligibility factors? How can they reliably and consistently hold such a formula in mind when evaluating dozens of candidates? A systematic approach produces controlled and reliable decision-making based on a complete view of all the job success factors.

Formulating the Success Factors for the Specific Job

The first challenge of effective assessment is to fully analyze the job to determine the factors that enable job success. Without a comprehensive set of the job success factors, assessment cannot be effective. However, listing of factors is only the first step. The factors need to be developed into a formula that weights each factor and scores different levels of each factor.

A Job Success Formula includes three parts: Eligibility, Suitability and the Interview. Eligibility factors can be scored using assessment questions either before the interview or during the interview. If used in a pre-assessment before the interview, the interview can be used to further investigate and confirm the answers. Suitability factors can be scored using a suitability assessment, using behavioral interviewing questions, or both.

Other assessments such as aptitude tests or manual dexterity tests can also be added to the formula, but must be formulated in the same way to reflect how different result levels will impact the overall score.

The Eligibility Formula

First, you need to determine what the eligibility factors are. For example, you may require previous experience in the same job, previous experience doing similar tasks, certain educational levels, or specific skills such as typing speed or the ability to use certain software packages. If you don't already know these factors, you can start with the job description which should include tasks that are performed, responsibilities that are given, and performance factors. The key question is: What experience, education, or skills does the person need to perform well in this job? If you are using the Harrison Assessments system, you will be able to stimulate your thinking by viewing factors that are common to that job type as well as other factors in the library and incorporate those factors into your job analysis.

Your next task is to determine the minimum and ideal levels of each factor. The minimum level enables you to eliminate candidates that are not eligible for the job. The ideal level enables you to ascribe a higher score to candidates as they reach the ideal level of eligibility for that factor. This information will serve as the foundation for the eligibility formula in which you will score the different levels in between.

The next step is to define each factor clearly. That means stating exactly what the factor is. For example, if the factor is related to sales experience, is it a specific type of sales experience such as prospecting sales? Then you can create a question for that factor which can be used for a pre-assessment and/or during the interview. Mutually exclusive and all inclusive answer options should also be created which can be included on the pre-assessment and/or interview. The answer options are critical because they define different levels of that experience, education, or skill and allow you to score each possible level. This provides the controlled scoring that is necessary for accurate assessment.

If you are using the Harrison Assessments system, you will have access to a complete library of eligibility factors that are already pre-defined including the assessment question, answer options, and potential scoring options. This enables you to quickly and easily create the eligibility formula. Even if you require a factor that is not in our standard library, you will be able to select sets of answer options and scoring options that will in most cases fit your factor and save you the time of creating your own.

If you want to make your assessment even more sophisticated you can designate certain factors to be gradient, minimum or bonus. Gradient factors enable you to score different levels of each factor. However, you may want to include "nice to have" factors which would be better to score as a bonus. By doing so, it will give additional points to applicants who have that qualification without penalizing the applicants who don't. You may also want to use minimum factors which will remove points for candidates that don't have a certain qualifications without giving points to applicants who do. For example, with



regard to educational factors, you may want to use minimum factors to eliminate candidates who don't have a high school diploma or subtract points (without eliminating) from applicants who don't have a bachelors' degree.

Once your eligibility formula is in place, it will govern the assessment and scoring of eligibility throughout the entire assessment process and allow you to see an overall eligibility score. This will enable you to be sure that eligibility is assessed according to criteria that is thoroughly considered and systematically applied.

Suitability Formula

For most jobs, suitability factors are about 50% of the job success factors. Therefore, effectively measuring suitability is an essential part of assessment. However, suitability is much more difficult to measure than eligibility. The first challenge is to determine which suitability factors relate to job success for a particular job. However, even when that is determined, to accurately assess job suitability you also need to formulate how different levels of each suitability factor will impact job success. For example, you may determine that self-motivation is an important factor for job success for a particular job. But you still need to quantify how each level of self-motivation will impact success in order to calculate the results. For example, if the person scores a 5 out of 10 on self motivation, you need a means to designate how that will impact overall job success for the specific job. For some jobs, the more self-motivation the person has the better. However, for other jobs, a moderate level is enough and high levels do not relate to increased performance. Each level of each factor needs to be scored according to its impact on performance.

How do I know which behavioral factors relate to success for a particular job? It is not an easy task to determine this, especially to determine how different levels of those factors will impact job success. That is why it can be very useful to have access to behavioral research that identifies not only the behavioral factors that impact job success for different job types, but also how different levels of those factors should be scored. Harrison Assessments contains 20 years of performance based research regarding suitability factors and their impact on performance for different jobs. It enables you to clearly see which traits are essential, which traits are desirable, and which traits should be avoided. Unlike most behavioral research which examines the norms or average traits for people in the job, the Harrison research focuses on the traits that differentiate the high performers from the low performers. Some research focuses only on high performers, but this also is not effective because it assumes that the low performers don't have the same trait which is often not the case. Consequently, it is extremely likely to reduce the accuracy by introducing a significant number of factors into the assessment are not related to performance. Therefore, the research needs to identify the traits that differentiate the high performers from the low performers for that specific job type.

Using a Suitability Assessment

If you use a suitability assessment, there are several important factors which make the assessment useful. These include:

- The ability of the assessment to measure different aspect of suitability – If only personality is measured, there will be significant gaps in the suitability information.
- The ability of the assessment to measure at least 100 traits – Since behavioral assessments are general only about 25% of the traits will relate to success for a specific job. Therefore more traits need to be measured to obtain a sufficient number of traits that promote or obstruct success for the specific job.
- A questionnaire that is work focused – Otherwise the results will not be as relevant to the workplace and there may be legal risks related to justifying how your assessment is related to the job requirements.
- The ability to detect false answers and to pierce self-deception – Otherwise, the results are not reliable.
- Performance research that is used to create job success formulas for specific jobs – Otherwise, you are just guessing at the behavioral factors that relate to success.
- Reports that are job specific, numerically quantified and easy to understand – Otherwise, the results are randomly interpreted.
- The ability to weight and integrate the eligibility score and suitability scores – Otherwise, there is no effective means to achieve an overall assessment.

For more detailed information on this subject, please see the supporting document entitled “Best Practices in Assessing Job Suitability”.

Pre-assessment

By using a comprehensive suitability assessment and a comprehensive eligibility assessment, you can effectively pre-assess applicants. This can save you a great deal of time and trouble by enabling you to deal with only the best applicants. It also enables you to interview fewer people because you don't need to spend your valuable time interviewing anyone other than the best candidates. Depending upon the number of applicants, this can reduce your recruitment workload by up to 80%.

Assessing Suitability at the Interview

Using a comprehensive suitability assessment in combination with the interview is the most effective means of assessing suitability. A suitability assessment given before the interview provides an effective means of double checking what you are seeing at the interview and focusing on specific areas that could be a problem. This provides insight that is most likely to not appear using only an interview to assess



suitability. Consequently, it provides an effective means of dealing with applicants that are often highly prepared for the interview. Job boards are now bombarding applicants with information about how best to hide their weaknesses and exaggerate the strengths. Some behavioral assessments such as Harrison Assessments not only reveal the real candidate, but they also provide behavioral interviewing questions and scoring suggestions that help you to gain further insight into the person's job behavior during the interview. If you feel more comfortable evaluating suitability during the interview you can give a higher weighting to the suitability evaluation from the interview and consequently minimizing the impact of the other formal suitability assessment. Harrison Assessments also allows you to score the important suitability factors and have that score integrate with all the other scores of eligibility and/or suitability.

However, if you decide not to use a separate suitability assessment, it will be best to structure behavioral interviewing questions beforehand. You could learn behavioral interviewing skills that will improve the result. If you are using the Harrison Assessment system, you can easily enter your own behavioral competencies and create a scoring system that will integrate with all the other assessment factors in order to obtain an overall assessment.

Making Your Hiring Decision

If you have an effective Job Success Formula, your final decision is simple. Since you have already defined the exact criteria for hiring as well as how you want to score the different levels of those factors, the candidate with the highest total score should be the best candidate. If that is not the case, you should probably review your Job Success Formula and make the necessary adjustments.

An effective Job Success Formula governs the entire process of recruitment and enables you to effectively pre-assess applicants, interview applicants and determine the best candidate. It not only structures the interview, it structures the entire recruitment process making the assessment much more systematic and accurate.