Innovations in Testing and personality profiling

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Innovations in the way we test employees and measure their personality for recruitment, promotion and succession planning

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What is an Occupational Test?

An occupational test is a psychological test used in the world of work. There have been numerous attempts to define what a psychometric test is. One definition of a test is:

"A standardised sample of behaviour which can be described by a numerical scale or category system" (Cronbach 1984)

Psychological or `psychometric' tests aim to maximise objectivity by standardising test conditions, instructions, time, content, scoring and interpretation.

There are all sorts of tests you can use. The skill of the professional interviewer is to use only reliable tests that are valid for the job in hand.

Qualified personnel can obtain their testing materials from reputable suppliers, some of which are as follows:

The American Psychological Association
SHL
The Test Agency Hogrefe Ltd

Nielsen

The Psychological Corporation

The British Psychological Association

The Psychological Corporation Pearson assessment

Testing has been around for many years. Psychometric tests enable you to ascertain WHAT THE CANDIDATE CAN DO NOW. You can then do a mathematical comparison with them against an industry or group average, known as a norm group. Thus, when you test you check the results against a standard and appropriate norm group, rather than compare against the group you are testing. It provides you with an accurate measure at the point of testing. It, therefore, helps to reduce the risk of employment error and bias.

The "tests" can be paper and pencil, run in strict, exam conditions and are timed. The other way is to do them online, which is quicker, but a high level of security is needed. All people who do testing should be professionally qualified

In addition to psychometric pencil and paper tests, simulations like In-tray exercises very accurate, especially at more senior management levels. In- trays consist of letters, memos and items of background information and give scores on abilities like organising, forecasting, decision-making and written communication.

Personality profiling

These are not tests but questionnaires, which help us, understand someone's personality. There are thousands on the market – select with care as you dont always get what you pay for.

For recruitment, promotion or development up to a Jr Manager level, the NEO would be a good tool to use. This measures the big five personality factors:

Neuroticism
Extrovert
Openness
Agreeable
Conscientiousness

For more senior posts there are only a few to choose from, NEO PI-R, SHL, MMP are a few that come to mind.

These are substantial instruments. The OPQ 32 or the NEO-PIR are one's I would recommend it has about 240 questions and reports on a large number of personality factors Personality questionnaires are ideal for spotting what someone LIKES to do – therefore they are a good predictor of future behaviours. The higher-level personality questionnaires are very hard to manipulate, and in the main, most people tell the truth.

Almost every day we find ourselves describing and assessing the personalities of those around us. Whether we realise it or not, these daily musings on how and why people behave as they do are similar to what psychologists do. While our informal assessments of personality tend to focus more on individuals, personality psychologists instead use conceptions of personality that can apply to everyone. Personality research has led to the

development of some theories that help explain how and why certain personality traits develop.

What's changed?

The advancement of data collection on us all, by all the search engines we use, your phone, every time you use a credit or debit card; the shopping we do and of course social media has allowed masses of data to be collected on YOU. This data is bought and sold, shared and modified. It's referred to as your digital footprint. Psychologists and data experts produce something called Psychographics, which is derived from using a series of algorithms on your private data.

So what can we derive about you; without even seeing you, and without your knowledge? Focusing on the world of work if we were to interview you; we can establish:

Your personality profile and map it onto the existing Big Five personality measures

We can know your political persuasion

We can also find out your IQ

Also, we can find out your preferences over a wide range of topics

Is this in the future, no; it can be done today. From an interviewing point of view, this will change the way we interview and represents a significant paradigm shift in how we use data. Interviewing has moved from a very hit and miss process to one where bias is almost entirely removed. This exciting change provides a method where decisions are made on proven data rather than subjective feelings.

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