

Pre-Employment Testing: A New Frontier for HR

Incorporating pre-employment tests into the hiring process leads directly to improved quality of hire, and can significantly enhance your bottom line. Cost savings from reduced turnover and incremental revenue from increased productivity are two of the most prominent benefits realized by employers who use pre-employment testing.

Pre-employment testing can do wonders for the hiring process. Professionally developed and properly validated employment tests can help a company's hiring process by increasing the likelihood of hiring candidates who will perform well on the job. It can help ensure alignment between the employee selection process and desired business outcomes such as lower turnover, increased sales, and higher customer satisfaction. The benefits a company may realize by implementing an effective employee testing solution include:

- Higher Productivity
- Increased employee retention
- Reduction in costs associated with turnover (e.g., hiring and training costs)
- Increasing the defensibility of the hiring process by using objective data

A comprehensive review of peer-reviewed studies of the predictive validity of various selection techniques concluded that aptitude tests are twice as predictive as job interviews, three times as predictive as experience, and four times as predictive as education level. When properly implemented, a pre-employment testing program can lead to higher productivity, because test results can be accurate predictors of future job performance. Tests are among the most accurate means of predicting performance because they are an objective means of determining the extent to which a candidate has the capacity to perform well at a given job. Research has shown that cognitive aptitude tests, for example, are much more accurate predictors of job performance than are other widely used employee selection techniques. One reason that aptitude tests are such accurate predictors of job performance is that the qualities these tests measure--problem solving, the ability to learn and apply new information, critical thinking, and reasoning--are abilities that are important to a wide variety of jobs. Aptitude tests will be most highly predictive of performance for those jobs which call for higher levels of problem-solving and critical thinking abilities.

Supporting Studies:

- Cognitive aptitude test score has been found to be the best predictor of both training performance and job performance across multiple job types. In nearly every job studied, general cognitive ability and conscientiousness were correlated with job performance (Hough & Oswald, 2000; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, 2004; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2002)¹

¹ Hough, L.M., & Oswald, F.L. (2000). Personnel selection: Looking towards the future and remembering the past. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 631-64.

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- A study by Ree, Earles, and Teachout (1994)² found that general cognitive ability and specific ability both predicted job performance, with specific ability only being slightly more predictive over general cognitive ability.
- Gatewood & Field (2001)³ found that ability tests show the strongest validity for complex jobs which require large amounts of information processing.
- Based on decades of research by Schmidt and Hunter, general cognitive ability affecting job performance is explained by the acquisition and utilization of information required to do one's job. People who score higher on general cognitive ability are able to learn quicker and more efficiently, and are more effective at using what they have learned.
- A study by Murphy (1989)⁴ has proposed that this relationship means that cognitive ability plays an even larger role in complex jobs, when a person first begins the new job, and when changes in the workplace require workers to adapt to new ways of performing their jobs.

BLOSSOM COHEN

Chief Executive Officer

Painless Hire

877.277.6665

info@painlesshire.com

www.painlesshire.com

Painless Hire believes in the effectiveness of testing as an accurate predictor of future job performance, and offers position-specific tests for various industries and positions.

Schmidt, F. L., & Hunter, J. E. (1998). The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), 262-274.

Schmidt, F. L., & Hunter, J. E. (2004). General mental ability in the world of work: Occupational attainment and job performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(1), 162-173.

Viswesvaran, C. & Ones, D. S. (2002). Agreements and disagreements on the role of general mental ability (GMA) in industrial, work, and organizational psychology. *Human Performance*, 15(1/2), 211-231.

² Ree, M. J., Earles, J. A., & Teachout, M. S. (1994). Predicting job performance: Not much more than g. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(4), 518-524.

³ Gatewood, R. & Field, H. (2001). *Human resource selection*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company.

⁴ Murphy, K.R. (1989). Is the relationship between cognitive ability and job performance stable over time? *Human Performance*, 2: 183-200.