

Why Personality Assessment Matters in Recruitment

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“Suitable applications are invited to fill the position of.....” This is the common phrase we encounter when viewing an advertised vacancy. When we look closely at this statement, what exactly does it mean? What do we mean by “suitable candidates”? What parameters do we use to measure the suitability of a candidate for a job? In an environment with nearly similar qualifications among candidates, how do we decide to settle on a candidate? Do we merely look at an individual and decide that they are young enough, attractive enough by our own standards, or that they smile often enough and at the right moments to be able to tackle the position? How do we know that a candidate is a right fit for a job?

Traditionally, the common practice was to look at the professional qualifications of an individual. These would then be used to decide if an individual was suitable to fill a position. The right candidate would be the one that possesses most, if not all the professional requirements, coupled with how impressive they are during the oral interview. This method, however, lacked objectivity. One’s discretion would often be used to decide how suitable a candidate was for the job. There was also a high likelihood that individuals would say all the right words that they think prospective employers want to hear and sell themselves really well, only to prove to be the exact opposite once they offered and start the job.

What is personality?

Corr & Matthews (2009) define personality as the characteristic set of [behaviors](#), [cognitions](#), and [emotional](#) patterns that evolve from biological and environmental factors. Each individual possesses their own unique characteristics that differentiate them from others. Using these different characteristics, we can then ascertain how suitable an individual is for employment. However it is much harder to assess personality as it is not a tangible component, without the assistance of some validated instrument. These instruments have been developed over years through extensive research.

The Big Five Personality Traits

Researchers believe that there are five core personality traits;

- Openness
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

Each of the five personality factors represents range between two extremes, for example, extraversion

represents a scale between extreme extraversion and extreme [introversion](#). In reality, most people lie somewhere in between the two ends of each dimension.

Personality Testing

As a result of the problems stemming from the traditional interview method, modern day recruiters have taken to personality testing in the quest to find the most suitable candidate for the job. Personality tests offer an objective method of assessing an individual. There are several different validated personality assessments including The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), The 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire, HEXACO Model of Personality Structure, Personality Inventory, Comprehensive Personality Assessment, to name a few. These tests give employers an insight into the personal characteristics of an individual.

Why it is important to consider personality when recruiting?

As aforementioned, personality tests offer an objective assessment of an individual. The Comprehensive Personality Assessment (CPA) offered by Industrial Psychology Consultants, is one example of a test that gives employers insight into different individuals and how they would perform in a job. Each of the big five personality dimensions is tested and scored. These scores are further explained, in line with the job and how other individuals in the normative group would perform, giving a prospective employer sufficient information on a candidate, in order to make an informed decision. The personality assessment tests have revolutionised hiring procedures. Instead of merely depending on cognitive abilities to hire an employee, the prospective employer will also assess the individual's personality against the job. For example an employer, with the aid of the personality assessment results, will most likely employ an extroverted individual, for a sales and marketing position, as opposed to employing the introverted who may face challenges engaging with different prospective and current clients.

Validated personality instruments are the way to go in this new age of recruitment and selection. With personality assessments, an employer can be assured that they are not only hiring a cognitively able individual for a job, but also an individual who has the right personality fit for the job. When we then say, "*suitable applications are invited...*" this is what we mean. We mean the candidate who possesses the right cognitive abilities, combined with the right personality traits for the job.

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