

Tests For Pre-Screening Entry-Level Employees

By John Towler

Do your applicants have the skills you need?

It is difficult to know these days, whether there is a labor shortage or whether it is more a question of a shortage of people with the right skills. Nevertheless, the popularity of job posting boards on the Internet and companies accepting resumes by email has resulted in employers and placement firms being swamped with applicants all of whom claim that they are highly skilled, wonderfully successful and excellent in whatever job you have to offer. This has given rise to the development of services for writing better applicant questionnaires, hosting positions on the web, searching job boards, screening resumes and doing background searches. However, very little attention is being paid to finding out whether applicants actually possess the skills they profess to have or to discovering what levels of proficiency they have in these skills. You are no further ahead hiring a person who seems to be the strongest candidate, if he or she doesn't have the skills you need.

You Can Pre-Screen Entry Level Positions Using Tests

Some firms offer skill testing at an extra cost, but there is no reason why you can't do this yourself and save time and money in the process. There are tests for everything these days, and here are some that do a fine job of pre-screening applicants for most entry-level positions.

The Applicant Review Test: A Screen for Honesty

You might start with the Applicant Review test. It was especially developed to address the issue of employee theft and violence in the workplace and enable employers to screen out dishonest applicants. Unlike some honesty assessments, it will not disqualify honest people by accident and it includes a unique Moral Reasoning component, which enables it to differentiate between those who have internalized honesty and those who have not. This is a quick, reliable, four-page test that meets EEOC/ADA and Canadian Human Rights standards. It takes only 20-25 minutes to complete, minutes to score and reports results in an easy-to-understand percentile score ranging from 0 to 99%. The test is an ideal addition to any other testing battery that does not address honesty or integrity.

The Employee Aptitude Survey: Assessing Ten Core Abilities

If you want more information about an applicant, consider using the Employee Aptitude Survey. It uses 10 subtests to measure:

- Verbal Comprehension

- Numerical Ability
- Visual Pursuit
- Visual Speed and Accuracy
- Space Visualization
- Numerical Reasoning
- Verbal Reasoning
- Word Fluency
- Manual Speed and Accuracy
- Symbolic Reasoning

Each test takes only five minutes to administer, and you have the choice of administering all 10 subtests, or just the ones you need.

The Differential Aptitude Test (similar to the Employee Aptitude Survey)

This test is similar to the Differential Aptitude Test. It measures candidates in eight areas:

- Verbal Reasoning
- Numerical Ability
- Abstract Reasoning
- Mechanical Reasoning
- Space Relations
- Spelling
- Language Usage
- Clerical Speed and Accuracy

The tests take 6 to 20 minutes to administer and can be used as separate scales or as a complete battery.

The Basic Skills Test: More Detailed Info on 15 Abilities

If you are looking for even more detailed information about basic skills, try the Basic Skills Test. It consists of 15 individual tests which have been specifically designed to measure language skills, numerical ability, reasoning and perceptual ability – the abilities required for successful performance in clerical, administrative and customer service positions. Each test takes about five minutes to administer and you can choose the ones you need, or use the whole battery. The complete sequence measures:

- Language Skills
- Reading Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Computation
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Following Oral Directions
- Following Written Directions
- Forms Checking
- Reasoning
- Classifying
- Coding
- Filing Names

- Filing Numbers
- Visual Speed & Accuracy

One of the best all-round pre-screening tests we've seen is the Canadian Personnel Selection Inventory. It measures applicants on the following scales:

- Honesty
- Tenure or Job Commitment (the likelihood that the applicant will quit after a short period of time)
- Employee/Customer Relations (tendencies toward courtesy, cooperation and service)
- Work Values
- Supervision Attitudes (the likelihood that the applicant will respond appropriately to supervision)

This test also contains measures of accuracy (did the applicant understand the test) and distortion (whether the person tried to give answers that are socially acceptable). One of the most useful aspects of this test is that it generates an Applicant Employability Index. This is a composite score that provides a quick reference as to the applicant's overall suitability for hire.

Conclusion

All of these tests are easy to use, quick and inexpensive, but none of them should be the basis of your hiring decision and most of them should be used in conjunction with other tests, assessments, interviews, background checks and other measures that will ensure that you find the right people with the right skills.

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