WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD TEST
A GUIDE TO ELIMINATING THE RISK AND REALISING THE BENEFITS OF ASSESSMENTS
SOMETIMES, FEAR CAN BE PARALYSING.

As a HR leader, you’d like your organisation to use behaviour and personality assessments to help make your hiring and people development more effective. But you’re afraid. Not that assessments don’t work – you’ve seen evidence that they do – but that hiring managers and others won’t use them properly, and your effort will backfire.

Some hiring managers, you fear, will use the assessments as a crutch, and simply go along blindly with whatever the assessment recommended. Others may do the opposite – preferring their own judgment, they might just toss the assessment results in the trash.

Either way, the assessments won’t do much to help hire and develop the right people – and that could make you look bad. If you persuade the organisation to spend the time and effort to adopt assessments, and then have nothing to show for it, your credibility will suffer.

Naturally, you ask, “why rock the boat?”
We believe your fear is well founded. Obtaining buy-in from hiring managers can be difficult, even under the best of circumstances. In a recent McQuaig Institute study, HR leaders said that finding qualified candidates was the biggest challenge in recruiting – but that getting hiring managers to participate in the process was a very close second. And yet hiring managers are often the first to point the finger at HR when things go wrong.

Many assessments today just exacerbate the problem. They’re often so difficult for hiring managers and even HR professionals to use that they practically invite the kinds of problems you’re worried about. While assessment results may well contain many valuable insights about a prospective hire, they are typically difficult to interpret without an expert from the assessment company. And even if the results are explained, it’s often unclear how they might predict whether the candidate will succeed on the job. It should not be surprising that many hiring managers, and even some HR professionals, will either blindly accept the results, or discard them entirely.

That doesn’t mean, though, that you should give up on assessments. The solution is a different type of assessment – one that puts the power of the information directly into the hands of hiring managers and HR professionals. Even the best assessments in the industry have little value if they’re not user-friendly and don’t equip managers to make better decisions.

There is now a large body of evidence demonstrating that behaviour and personality assessments can substantially and measurably reduce the risk of failed hires. A 2010 study by the Aberdeen Group, for example, found that organisations using assessments had a 75 percent year-over-year decrease in hiring costs, when compared with organisations that don’t use assessments, and a 250 percent greater year-over-year increase in profit per full-time equivalent. But assessments must be properly designed and implemented – so that HR and others can trust and use them.

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How to tame your fear

1. Choose an assessment that is tied to a specific job or role

In the recent study by The McQuaig Institute, HR leaders who have not adopted behaviour and personality assessments offered a variety of reasons, but nearly a third of those echoed a common complaint: hiring managers are unlikely to use assessments because they don’t predict the likelihood of success in a specific role. This reflects the fact that many traditional assessments provide detailed psychological information about the candidate, but don’t connect that information to the job the person is applying for, or any job. It’s essentially up to the hiring manager and HR to guess, from the assessment results, how the candidate will actually perform.

If you want hiring managers to buy into behaviour and personality assessments, start with ones that clearly predict whether the candidate is a match for a specific job or role. Get them to think of it in the same way you would skills. Someone who is an amazing writer has strong skills, but may not make the best sales person or accountant. The same goes for behavioural traits. Help managers see the benefit of matching a candidate’s behavioural profile to a well-defined behavioural profile of the ideal candidate.
2. Choose an assessment that is both easy to understand and definitive

HR leaders in the study also complained that assessment results are often too difficult to understand without help from the assessment company. The problem lies in the distinctly user-unfriendly nature of many assessments today – they often present their results in jargon-filled, highly technical language, and include charts and graphs with no captions or other explanations. When hiring managers don’t have direct access to the results, they’re likely to give up – and disregard the assessments or accept the results without doing their own analysis.

Assessments are often confusing in other ways. They may be overly vague about a candidate, saying that he or she “might” or “could” behave in a certain way – again leaving it up to HR and the hiring manager to guess. Or, they may only report on the candidate’s positive attributes, further hampering the ability of HR and the hiring manager to make a fully informed decision.

To get buy-in, choose an assessment that is easy to understand and implement. It should also be definitive, rather than vague, and must describe not just the positive attributes of a candidate, but the negative ones as well.
3. Choose an assessment that is not a time burden for managers or candidates

Another concern of HR leaders is that recruiters may be reluctant to administer the assessments because they take too long to complete. Many assessments have so many questions that job candidates typically spend 45-90 minutes filling them out, and many in HR fear that top prospects will balk at such a lengthy exercise. In the McQuaig Institute study, more than 14 percent of HR leaders said job candidates will not take behaviour and personality assessments because they take too long.

With assessments, longer does not mean better – in fact, industry-leading assessments and profiles can be administered in just 15 minutes – a time frame our experience has shown to be optimal for the process.

Time is also a problem for the hiring managers themselves, who often must spend an hour or more creating the profile of the job candidate they’re looking for. Many hiring managers, saying they are pressed for time, will delay filling out the profiles until it’s too late. And so, even when an assessment is designed to be tied to a specific job, the second half of the equation is never completed – and the assessment loses much of its effectiveness.

Make it easy for managers to engage in the process with an assessment tool that is easy for them to use and doesn’t slow them down.

WITH ASSESSMENTS, LONGER DOES NOT MEAN BETTER
4. Choose an assessment that builds buy-in from the start

Our in-the-trenches experience has also demonstrated that the most effective way to create buy-in is to build it into the assessment from the beginning, through a unique approach to embedding assessments early on into the talent management process. When assessments are used to create the job profile, hiring managers are engaged early on in identifying what they need in a successful candidate and the results from candidate assessments become much easier to understand and work with.

Done this way, the entire process becomes more effective and transparent. Candidate results make sense because they can be seen in context – the context that the hiring managers and HR professionals themselves have created. And because the managers and HR can understand and use the assessments – without special assistance – they can reach their own conclusions and come to a consensus. They may begin to see the behaviour and personality assessment in a new light – as a valuable aid to decision-making, rather than a take-it-or-leave-it imperative.

PROPERLY IMPLEMENTED, HIRING MANAGERS WILL SEE ASSESSMENTS AS A VALUABLE AID TO DECISION-MAKING, RATHER THAN A TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT IMPERATIVE

THERE ARE THREE PRIMARY WAYS TO CREATE A BEHAVIOURAL PROFILE FOR A JOB:

1. Individual method: one person identifies the traits that will be required to succeed in a role (usually HR or the hiring manager)

2. Stakeholder method: all stakeholders identify what they believe are the traits required to succeed and then they (or the assessment system) builds a composite. If there are major differences, this is a great opportunity to discuss the results, agreeing on a common profile.

3. Top Performer method: profile the top performers that are already in the role and use the result as the model for the ideal candidate.
ASSESSMENTS WITHOUT FEAR

When assessments are difficult to use and disconnected from the specific job being hired for, they’re unlikely to be used as intended, and all the fears of HR leaders may come to pass. If, however, assessments are transparent, understandable and easy to use for everyone – HR professionals, hiring managers and job candidates alike – then they’re far more likely to deliver value. As a HR leader, you need to have a high degree of confidence in not only the hiring and development process, but in the tools that support that as well. Choosing and implementing the right kind of assessment is a good start.
THE MCQUAIG SYSTEM:
A SIMPLE, ACCURATE TALENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

- Define Job Requirements
- Assess Candidate Potential
- Identify & Develop Leaders

- Detailed, easy-to-read and actionable
- Unlimited support
- 1-on-1 consulting
- Web-based, no installation
- Customised interview guides
- Money back guarantee on Unlimited Licences

A SIMPLE, ACCURATE SYSTEM THAT EMPOWERS YOU TO HIRE, RETAIN AND DEVELOP THE RIGHT PEOPLE THE RIGHT WAY.

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