

> Dispelling the Myths of Objective Assessment

A great deal has been written extolling the virtues of objective assessment. Many eminent psychologists support the science of psychometrics as a valid method of matching the right people to the right jobs. But, equally, there are those who remain unconvinced. In this short piece we explore some of the common myths associated with testing. Then it's up to you to decide.

A good interviewer can do the job of any test

Human beings make subconscious personal judgments. Personal bias inevitably affects interview results and interviews to large groups of unsuitable people are costly and time wasting for all concerned. Objective assessment provides in-depth information on an individual so that an informed decision can be made about an individual's suitability for a job.

Tests cost too much money

Well, they can cost as little as £1.50 each. How much does an interview cost in terms of management time? Testing can cut down a list of suitable candidates quickly and fairly, dramatically cutting the costs of hire.

Psychometric assessment is too general to test for specific jobs

SHL has over 250 tests for all sorts of job types and levels of seniority, based on 25 years of scientific research. They have been proven to help match people to specific jobs. Tests include assessments of ability, personality, motivation, competencies and even cultural fit.

Testing discriminates minority groups unfairly

Selection is all about discriminating between candidates. Fair discrimination distinguishes between people on the basis of abilities and aptitudes for a particular job. All SHL tests are designed and monitored to ensure that they are fair to people from any ethnic background, or gender, or religious group, or disability, so that there is no unfair bias.

Personality questionnaires are easy to fake

There are no right or wrong answers, but rather an indication of likely behaviour in a variety of situations. The questionnaires are structured to reveal any inconsistency in the way an individual has responded which might suggest they have described themselves in an overly positive light. In addition, the feedback session with the individual provides the opportunity to validate the information from the questionnaire. We argue that the content of a CV or the responses made at an interview are far more open to bias and therefore objective assessment can help to build a far more accurate picture of an individual to inform the decision making process.

Well then, online testing must be easy to fake

SHL pioneered the use of online testing and has been a major innovator in this field. One such innovation is an online ability test (Ability Screening Online) which draws on an item bank of over 10,000 questions so no one person receives the same test. Online testing is typically used for volume sifting so that only the very best applicants are progressed through to the final selection stage. And it is here that a more in-depth analysis would take place and where the candidate's information can be validated.

But, surely candidates can manipulate the results?

If you take the OPQ as an example, there are 32 scales used to describe an individual, each with thousands of answer combinations – that's literally millions of possible outcomes. There is a 'social desirability' scale that assesses the extent to which an individual is likely to answer in an overly positive way. We would also use the feedback process to make sure the individual can provide examples of when they have behaved in the ways in which they have described in the questionnaire.

Introducing objective assessment will take too long and will delay time to hire

Adding another stage to the selection process might seem, at first glance, to be time-consuming. But if you think that an extra hour or so at this stage might save days or weeks of delay if you make the wrong choice or focus on lots of unsuitable individuals.

Only psychologists can interpret the results. How can they know who is best?

The interpretation of test results is carried out by people within the business, sometimes with expert guidance. Either way, HR professionals are equipped and trained to understand the vital data they need to make an informed choice for their organisation.

There's no proof that these tests really work, so why use them?

SHL has carried out years of validation on tests and questionnaires all over the world. We operate within best practice guidelines laid down by all the major professional bodies. Over 5,500 clients around the world use our tests every day, year after year to achieve cost saving and performance improvement. What more proof do you need?

If you would like to know more about the reality of objective assessment and how SHL has helped organisations to achieve real impact and real results please call us on 0870 070 8000.

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