

TESTING TIMES  
SKILLS TESTING

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# TESTING TIMES

HOW SCREENING AND SKILLS TESTING CAN HELP IN A RECESSION

*By Lauren Mackelden, UK Features Editor, onrec Magazine*

Screening and skills testing has become increasingly accessible and desirable as companies want quality candidates quickly and efficiently.

Testing is more critical than five years ago, due to a wider, international pool of candidates and far greater volumes of applicants, comments Paul Thompson, who is Sales Director for Voyager Software Ltd. He believes the immediate benefits of testing candidates ensures more confidence when promoting your candidates and their abilities, and also offers great speed when searching databases as you can filter far more efficiently. Combined with the right interview techniques, skill testing and screening gives you a fuller picture of the candidate profile – and ultimately makes you a more confident and capable recruiter. If you test your candidates, and your client knows this, he says they'll be more trusting of your opinions.

Gordon Barker from talentdrain explains that the banking crisis and subsequent austerity measures mean organisations are seeking far more cost effective end-to-end recruitment solutions. Gordon continues: "Ongoing globalisation means organisations need solutions that operate across all time zones, can be supported by centralised resources and without the need for expensive travel budgets. Additionally, the war for talent places an every growing requirement on speed of decisions whilst engaging new talent via mediums that they use. Online search, screening and assessment meet all these criteria. The internet reaches the entire planet instantly, constantly (i.e. you can do an online assessment at 04:00 if you want) and cheaply, and occupies the space where younger workers as so comfortable, i.e. online."

One of the most popular online tools currently are Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs), suggests Claire Parkin, Head of Assessment Services at TMP Worldwide. Claire says SJTs are designed to assess an individual's level of judgement required for solving problems in work-related situations. These tests are best designed bespoke to assess against the key competencies required for a role, advises Claire, and claims that once validated these tests are able to sift out up to 50% of an applicant pool, proving a very



## 64% of new recruits are prepared to bend the truth on their applications

Risk Advisory Survey 2009



efficient screening method. She adds that results from recent validation studies have also shown that these tests are highly predictive of future job performance.

Kenexa reports that organisations are now using a range of different tools – skills tests, ability tests, personality tests, and motivation assessments – to test candidates, all of which can be delivered online. Their Business Development Director, Stephen Croxton comments: "It was previously the case that organisations would tend to use just one type of test to assess online. These tools also help the applicants as it quickly sifts out those applying who do not have the correct skills and personality/behaviours for the job they are applying to. There is also an increase in screening tools where the applicant can self-select out of the application process, by using tools showing a realistic job preview that enables the applicant to quickly determine if the company/job they are applying for is the right one for them." Stephen says that they are also seeing organisations wanting more engaging online assessments/tests. How engaged they feel during the application process can make the difference on who people choose to work for, comments Stephen, and he also feels this can enable the organisation to reinforce their brand during the application process.

Demand is high in the marketplace for an on-demand self-service model for assessments that cover most industries and jobs, and not just for the largest companies, according to Previsor. Earlier this year, they introduced an expansion of their unified online assessment platforms to include a self-service model for off-the-shelf solutions. Dr. Ken Lahti, their Vice President of Strategy & Content, comments: "In addition to accessing a large library of individual tests, many companies wish to use off-the-shelf

industry and job specific whole-person solutions. These bundled assessments contain a combination of hard and soft skills measures that assess for a variety of industry and job-related competencies. These solutions have been validated for a specific job and have proven to be among the most predictive assessment types available in the industry."

Speed is of the essence in cost effective screening and skills testing. Sal Remtulla, Director of Employee Screening at the Risk Advisory Group says employees can provide screening data quickly with intelligent questionnaires prompting them to provide essential data. Sal comments: "This reduces the time to hire and reduces delays in background checks. Recruiters can instigate the whole process within seconds and check on progress where speedy onboarding is required. The integration possibilities are also growing with the opportunity to pull together data from HR systems, online recruitment tools as well as online screening and skills testing applications." With a Risk Advisory Survey in 2009 reporting that with 64% of new recruits are prepared to bend the truth on their applications, they say recruiters can't take information at face value. Sal says that recruiters are now able to have access to more information more quickly, which reduces the time to hire, and screening reports can be produced in 5-10 working days. Sal believes that this is crucial for businesses while not comprising on the quality of hire.

An alternative screening strategy is automated online video interviewing, which is the latest tool for recruiters and HR managers looking to improve their online recruitment processes according to Sonru, the company behind it. They say: "In essence, the interviewer creates a standardised interview, invites interviewees

# CASE STUDY

## THE RESULTS OF TESTING

(from the *PreVisor 2010 Business Outcomes Study Report*)

Sales increased \$45 million while shrinkage was reduced by \$8.3 million at one eyewear retailer.

“ROI metrics for one of our brands show how an associate who scores high on the sales component of the assessment sells on average \$13 more per hour than someone who scores low. Given a sales force of 6,000 – 8,000, raising the bar during recruiting significantly impacts the bottom line,” said the Vice President of HR Administration.

A global business-services provider found higher scoring sales associates:

- Achieved an average 22% higher percentage of their annual goal
- Were twice as likely to be rated as “definite re-hires”
- Were three times as likely to be judged “fast starters”

Turnover was reduced by 46%, saving nearly \$2 million for a healthcare organization



## A recruiter’s toolkit should be more than just a recruitment system

Paul Thompson, Sales Director, Voyager Software Ltd

by email and then logs back in after the deadline to view the repository of video interviews (completed by candidates using a webcam and computer). It’s not a live interview so the candidates don’t have to be online the same time as the interviewer so it reduces the time and hassle in scheduling time consuming screening interviews.” Sonru says it is particularly useful in assessing communication skills, technical know-how and language proficiency testing, with users ranging from multinational technology and financial services corporations to small and medium sized companies. They cite DoneDeal, Ireland’s largest classifieds website, as using video interviewing to screen 30 applicants down to seven face-to-face interviews in less than 8 man-hours.

John Warburton, DoneDeal’s Chief Operating Officer commented: “It gives applicants better odds to making the shortlist because a video enables us to view the person behind the CV.”

So what changes are we likely to see in the future? Gordon Barker says the growth of informal search is already growing dramatically via social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. He feels this is likely to explode as a quick, wide reaching and cheap search solution, as is greater use of online organisational alumni

networks. He suggests that: “Screening and initial assessment approaches may move beyond online applications and core ability testing, to include more comprehensive assessment techniques normally left until the final stages of the recruitment process (due to cost and time to utilise). Assessment will reflect the realities of the global workplace by moving into virtual, online assessment centres and assessing a wider range of the competencies and skills needed into our more technological work environments. And finally, the internet continues to challenge traditional business models. Google and Skype have pioneered the way to free services, and online assessment and development is moving in the same direction.”

The potential savings and benefits of screening and skills testing are definitely worth exploring. As Paul Thompson points out, a recruiter’s toolkit should be more than just a recruitment system. Paul recommends that embracing testing and screening as part of the service you offer your clients will increase quality, and a powerful companion to work alongside existing systems. He believes that if you then deliver a high calibre of candidates to your clients the results will prove themselves!

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