

Quality Control

CAN SCREENING EMPLOYEES FOR CERTAIN PERSONALITY TRAITS HELP YOUR COMPANY'S BOTTOM LINE? BY KAREN LELAND —

How will your employees handle change? How creative can they be? Are they impulsive? Action oriented? How much recognition and feedback do they need from others? The answers to these questions, and more, are useful to know when you're hiring. And personality tests - a staple in the industrial psychologist's toolbox for decades - are often thought to be the best means to determine the answers. But are these personality profiles all they're cracked up to be?

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Successful hiring is based not only on a person's ability to do the job, but also on the degree to which they will fit in with the company culture, the people they are going to work with and the person they are going to work for. The more information an organization has about an applicant, the better off it is going to be. Over the past 30 years, I have found that personality tests, in combination with interviewing, are an invaluable tool in gathering this information.

When properly used, these assessments can help a company identify a candidate who not only has the skills necessary for the job, but also the temperament needed to fit into the corporate culture. For example, a large health care distribution company I know gives all potential candidates at the director level or above a battery of four personality tests (including the popular Myers-Briggs and The Five Factor Model) to determine if they possess the degree of team orientation required by the company.

They have been conducting this testing for the past 10 years. The result is that they are growing by leaps and bounds, their retention rate is high and the people they hire turn out to be a good fit for the organization.

For these tests to be successful, it is critical that the company conducts them in a professional way, including using ones that have been researched and validated; using a professional who is credentialed to administer them; and using several tests (rather than one) to pinpoint a bigger picture of who the person is.

When all of these factors are in place, personality tests can be extremely effective. One study by Hogan, Hogan and Roberts, presented in an article in *American Psychologist*, made a strong argument for the use of psychological tests in selection, screening and training, saying that, "The data are reasonably clear that well-constructed personality measures are valid predictors of job performance, and they can enhance fairness in the employment process."