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Psychometric Tests

Psychometric tests are used by over seventy-five percent of large to medium sized businesses in the UK. They also form an important part of much careers guidance and development activity, with a recent DfEE survey showing that over eighty percent of careers services routinely use tests in their guidance activities.

What are psychometric tests?

Psychometric tests are formal and standardised methods of measuring particular aspects of human behaviour. These include abilities, such as verbal and numerical reasoning, and other individual characteristics like personality and occupational interests.

What can tests measure?

In a practical sense tests measure either maximum or typical performance. Maximum performance concerns how well an individual can do something – for example reason with verbal or numerical information, and typical performance how a person is likely to behave in a range of normal everyday situations. From a test point of view the former includes all forms of ability testing, and the latter measures of personality and similar characteristics.

What are test batteries?

In many situations a number of tests, or a test battery, will be used. In graduate recruitment for example it is useful to test aptitude across the complete range of abilities, and to complement this assessment with a suitable measure of personality. Likewise in careers guidance an adviser will probably gather information by using a number of ability tests, a personality measure and an interests questionnaire.

The Morrisby approach is characterised by using a battery of tests which provide a complete psychological profile of the individual, whether this be for careers development purposes or for recruitment and selection.

Why use tests?

Psychometric tests have been shown to be the most effective way of improving a selection or assessment process. In a business context they cut down on costly mistakes by objectively matching applicants against the requirements for the job. They also provide a fairer way of assessing candidates and save a great deal of management time.

Careers advisers or staff development specialists use tests because they provide information which it is difficult to obtain in any other way. For example, clients are unable to tell you about their untapped or unnoticed potential. They know what they have done and what they would like to do, but tests can help them to discover what they would really be good at and enjoy doing.

How is test quality maintained?

The objectivity of a psychometric test is determined by how it is used and by the quality of its construction. Test construction is a detailed and lengthy process that is designed to ensure that the information produced is fair, reliable, valid and predictive of future performance.

Are tests expensive?

Once staff are trained in their use, tests represent an extremely cost effective way of obtaining information. For about £40, it is possible to purchase the consumable items of a test system, to give a candidate a complete battery of tests, and to receive a detailed report. In those circumstances where only one or two tests are used the costs are proportionately less.

What training is required to use tests?

Tests, questionnaires and other psychological measures are classified as requiring one of the following levels of training:

- No training. A number of simple tests, interest questionnaires and similar measures require no specialist training.
- Test User (Occupational, Ability). All the major ability tests require users to be trained to this British Psychological Society (BPS) standard. This involves the completion of a formal training course which leads to the Certificate of Competence in Occupational Testing.
- Test User (Occupational, Personality). All the major personality measures require users to be trained to this BPS standard. As with Ability test provisions this requires the successful completion of an officially recognised training course.
- Specialist. Some tests or test systems require specialist training in addition to generic Ability or Personality training. This applies to some test batteries, for example the Morrisby Profile, and a number of personality questionnaires.

Where can I get more information on training?

For Morrisby Profile training, please contact The Morrisby Organisation for further details.

For Occupational Test User (Ability and/or Personality), we recommend the training courses provided by Occupational Psychology Services, in Kent. These courses include exercises based on Morrisby products and provide a good introduction to ability and personality testing.

Information packs on Occupational Test User Certification can also be obtained from the British Psychological Society, telephone 0116 254 9568