

Why integrity testing should be a routine assessment

By [Kirsten Halcrow](#)

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The scope of integrity testing as a pre-employment assessment tool reaches far beyond ascertaining a candidate's propensity to lie, steal or "wheel and deal". In fact, measuring integrity should form part of the holistic assessment process and be a key indicator for determining competencies such as trustworthiness, work ethic, values, reliability, dependability, and manipulation tendencies.



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Quite a mouthful at first glance, but fortunately the proliferation of test batteries and assessment technologies enables integrity valuations as part of pre-employment screening activities.

Regrettably, the majority of organisations, especially medium and small enterprises have not adopted integrity assessments into their screening and shortlisting processes as of yet. We test for IQ, EQ, competencies, personality types and leadership skills to ensure culture fit, skills match, aptitude and ability to certify that we "hire right", and yet, a crucial variable impacting on employing the most suitable candidate, namely integrity, is most often not measured or assessed.

Integrity squared (I²)

The intrinsic value of integrity tools lies in the management of employee risk by assessing the probability that an applicant will adhere to rules and be a reliable resource for the organisation.

Integrity tests are split into two main categories:

- **Covert Tests**, which refers to personality-based assessments which determine traits linked to rule abidance, following protocols and adhering to managerial direction.
- **Overt Tests** evaluate candidates' attitudes towards Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWBs) for example from tardiness, absenteeism, and time-wasting to theft, fraud, drug use, and safety violations.

A combination of both measurements will provide the most accurate predictor of whether candidates are prone to engage in negative activities or are predisposed to inappropriate behavioural tendencies.

When matters of integrity... matter!

Employing a rockstar ticking all the boxes relevant to qualifications, competence and experience is seemingly a "win" for HR and the appropriate hiring manager. However, omitting integrity tests from the recruitment process may very well result in either unleashing a bull in a china shop, toxifying company culture or, having to contend with a *laissez-faire* scenario where nothing seems to matter, and less than nothing gets done.

Ambitious Andy, without regard for safety legislation may take shortcuts in a factory to achieve production targets, endangering the lives of fellow colleagues by failing to adhere to a maintenance shutdown schedule. In a similar notion, Idle Ida taking a pseudo sick day to sort out personal admin at the bank with no appreciation for the tender document deadline, could cost the company a big contract with her absenteeism.

These scenarios may sound extreme, but they occur more frequently than we would like to admit to ourselves. Thus, when the petty cash mysteriously disappears or an employee is AWOL for a few days in a row, and we try and figure out where it all went pear-shaped... the answer is usually quite simple: Failure to test for integrity.

Therefore, beware of the 90% job fit scores, as fit for the role does not guarantee employee success.

Benefits of pre-employment integrity tests

Back in the day, Henry Ford used to send committees to his employees' houses to check up on their behavioural conduct at home to get a feel for their integrity and reliability. Imagine a dirty kitchen or too many beer cans in the trash could get you fired for not living the "American Dream". Luckily innovation in HR tech allows us to do integrity screening in a more honourable fashion without resorting to Sherlock Holmes antics.

Additionally, these assessments may be used as precursors of integrity measurement, before exerting efforts towards admin intensive background checking, or expensive polygraph testing.

Integrity assessments conducted during the initial stages of the employment process benefit organisations on many levels:

- Offers increased reliability in predicting job performance compared to standard personality tests or unstructured interviews.
- Valid predictors of absenteeism and counterproductive behaviours tendencies which may impact negatively on business costs.
- Less biased than other forms of testing regarding results deviations caused by gender and race variables.
- More cost-effective than competency testing because automated mass-assessment can be done without facilitator supervision required.
- Allows for better culture fit matching in assessing resistance to managerial direction and accurate measuring of predispositions toward rules of engagement.

The value of integrity testing is also visible in the long-term - decreasing staff turnover rates, escalating productivity, improving employee morale and solidifying employee engagement levels.

Everything keeps “going right” when we “hire right”, and integrity assessments should form part of this quest to employ only the best.

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