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How are Pre-Hire Assessments Contributing to Unbiased and More Targeted, Successful Hires?

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Abstract

[Excerpt] New efforts to control unconscious biases are on the rise in business—some companies have already begun to transition towards removing the human element of recruiting by relying heavily on new tech platforms to help identify the right job candidates. These tools have evolved beyond the standard pen-and-paper assessment (see Appendix A) and come in new forms—gamification (e.g. Pymetrics) and AI-driven video interviewing (e.g. HireVue) just to name a few, which can provide an entirely digital recruiting experience for the candidate as well as the employer. However, this new "technology and talent" age does not come without its potential downfalls. This research will identify how companies are utilizing pre-hire assessments today while also explaining how these assessments are evolving.

Keywords

Comments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESEARCH QUESTION

How are pre-hire assessments contributing to unbiased and more targeted, successful hires?

INTRODUCTION

New efforts to control unconscious biases are on the rise in business—some companies have already begun to transition towards removing the human element of recruiting by relying heavily on new tech platforms to help identify the right job candidates. These tools have evolved beyond the standard pen-and-paper assessment (see Appendix A) and come in new forms—gamification (e.g. Pymetrics) and AI-driven video interviewing (e.g. HireVue) just to name a few, which can provide an entirely digital recruiting experience for the candidate as well as the employer. However, this new "technology and talent" age does not come without its potential downfalls. This research will identify how companies are utilizing pre-hire assessments today while also explaining how these assessments are evolving.

BUSINESS CASE

Talent acquisition is one of the most important focuses in business today. In fact, 83% of executives say that talent acquisition is very important (see Appendix B). [1] However, in a recent survey, only 20% of 520 recruiting professionals said they were fully confident in their employers' overall ability to effectively assess the skills of entry-level applicants using time-honored selection methods like interviews. [2]

Many companies, like Unilever, have already made the transition to a technology-based recruitment process for various benefits, including:

1. *"Walk the Talk"*: Tools such as Saville are playing a large role in supplementing inputs from qualitative interviews by providing behavioral attributes on how candidates would react in certain practical situations, or how they are likely to adapt to the organization's culture. [3]
2. *Skillset Match*: These advanced talent analytics tools are more accurate than human screening. The risk of a poor-quality hire is heavily reduced by bringing different candidate attributes into a single model and objectively scoring the probability of success of an individual in the organization.[3] Many organizations are also starting to use job simulation software like Skill Scout, which can improve hiring by introducing candidates to actual job tasks.
3. *New Technology is More "Human"*: Technology can be used to present a more 'holistic' view of a candidate's skills and experience. Unilever uses a gamification solution provider from Pymetrics to provide more insight into various capabilities such as problem solving, personality and communication style. Some companies are even using military translators for hiring veterans in order to understand how their previous military job code and title translate into civilian terms. [1]
4. *Focus on Skills Not Credentials*: To judge whether or not candidates will be effective, many businesses are turning towards confirming skills and away from relying on credentials.

CASE STUDIES

Procter & Gamble: Every job candidate globally must take two assessments, a personality test to assess culture fit followed by an adaptive reasoning test to assess "raw processing power." Questions are frequently recalibrated to better predict future performance, measure left and right brain styles equally, and remove demographic-based biases. P&G has seen year-over-year increases in candidate diversity and volume (over 1 million applicants per year for 10,000 full-time and intern roles) and the fewest number of available positions in recent history due to more successful job matching.[4]

Unilever: In 2016, the company implemented technology to digitally automate its North America entry-level hiring process from the resume screen until the final round, in-person interview. Upon passing the resume screen, applicants spend 20 minutes playing 12 neuroscience-based games created by Pymetrics, a science-based recruitment platform. Upon achieving passing scores, applicants move on to a video interview via HireVue, where they record responses to preset questions. HireVue analyzes and scores tone, body language, and keywords. The highest cumulative scoring candidates receive final round, in-person interview invitations. In just a year, the offer acceptance rate increased from 64% to 82%. Furthermore, the number of universities from which candidates were interviewed increased from 840 to 2,600.[5]

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Pull > Push: The assessment market will increasingly transition from the current push model—where firms require people to complete a set of assessments in order to quantify their talent—to a pull model where firms will search various talent scores to identify the people they seek to hire.[6]
Efficiency vs. Fairness: For many companies, the main attraction to implementing these new assessments is efficiency, not fairness. Automation requires a human to set criteria, and if that human is unaware of its own biases, automation can amplify biases. Creating a fair assessment requires vigilant upkeep and recalibration.[7]
Evolving Legal Compliance: Early adopters of new technology should be aware that without sufficient research behind it, an innovation might undermine rather than help an organization to make effective, defensible hiring decisions. In some countries, litigation and audits of hiring practices will lead to new standards and precedents. Organizations must be alert for these changes.[8]

CONCLUSION

Although this research lays out the benefits to an all-digital recruitment process, it is important to note that the implementation process is only as good as the individuals who are operating it. "All-digital" is not completely hands off and recruiters should understand *what* exactly they are looking for in candidates, how to interpret the information that new technology provides, and update or customize software to remain current. Many companies are investing in new talent acquisition products that will make their company stand out. By optimizing this new age technology model, companies can inherit a degree of centralization to gain the benefit of scale and efficiency and, more importantly create unbiased and successful hires.

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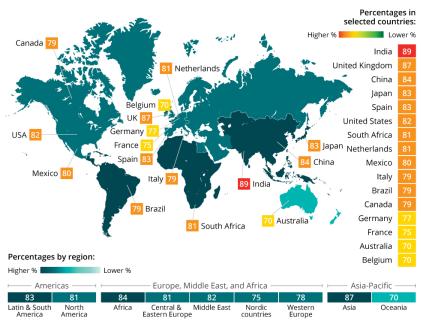
APPENIDIX A:

Table 1. A Comparison Between Old and New Talent Identification Methods

Old methods	New tools	Dimension assessed
Interviews	Digital interviews Voice profiling	Expertise, social skills, motivation, and intelligence
Biodata Supervisory ratings IQ Situational judgment test Self-reports	Big data (internal) Gamification	Past performance Current performance Intelligence, job-related knowledge, and Big Five personality traits or minor traits
Self-reports	Social media analytics	Big Five personality traits and values (identity claims)
Resumés References	Professional social networks (LinkedIn)	Experience, past performance, and technical skills and qualifications
360s	Crowdsourced reputation/peer-ratings	Any personality trait, competencies, and reputation

APPENDIX B:

Figure 1. Talent acquisition: Percentage of respondents rating this trend "important" or "very important"

Percentages in selected countries:

Higher % Lower %

Country	%
India	89
United Kingdom	87
China	84
Japan	83
Spain	83
United States	82
South Africa	81
Netherlands	81
Mexico	80
Italy	79
Brazil	79
Canada	79
Germany	77
France	75
Australia	70
Belgium	70

Percentages by region:

Higher % Lower %

Americas		Europe, Middle East, and Africa					Asia-Pacific	
83	81	84	81	82	75	78	87	70
Latin & South America	North America	Africa	Central & Eastern Europe	Middle East	Nordic countries	Western Europe	Asia	Oceania