General Job Search Strategies

Employment Testing

Thought you were finished with taking tests when you completed your degree? Did you think your resume would tell an employer everything they needed to know about your qualifications? Think again!

Pre-employment testing is on the rise for two primary reasons. First, employers are attempting to increase the objectivity with which hiring decisions are made, and are attempting to hire "the right person" in a timely manner to decrease the chance of a "bad hire." Second, use of the tests allows them to efficiently process applicants, thus reducing the costs associated with the hiring process.

These assessments are usually administered after your initial interview and are used to measure one or more of the following competencies:

- Customer service
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Intelligence
- Integrity
- Reliability
- Honesty
- Technical skills
- Abstract reasoning
- Job-related knowledge
- Ability to learn
- Flexibility of thought
- Assertiveness
- Math ability
- Sales potential
- Problem solving
- Verbal ability
- Empathy

The tests often take the form of multiple choice, short-answer questions, or problem-solving tasks. There is no way to study and, for some assessments, there is no correct answer. There are quite literally hundreds of assessments available to employers, so it's difficult to say which are the most popular for any given industry. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for an organization to select and administer different assessment combinations for different roles, even within the same department, at the same company.

Common Types of Employment Tests:

Demonstration Tests:

Some jobs require an interview where you actually demonstrate your skills. For example: computer sciences students may be asked to demonstrate their programming knowledge.

Case Interviews:

Students interested in business will be asked to come up with the best solutions for detailed problem scenarios.

Personality Tests:

Personality tests are carefully researched and widely used in academic and corporate environments to assess personality. If you answer carefully, you'll likely find useful new insights into yourself as you plan your career.

Psychological Interviews:

You may be asked to fill out personality inventories, to give your interviewer a sense of your ethics and natural abilities. For example: criminology majors will most likely encounter psychological interviews when interviewing for law-enforcement jobs.

Physical Ability Tests:

These tests measure the physical ability to perform a particular task or the strength of specific muscle groups, as well as strength and stamina in general. These types of tests are common for those interested in security or law enforcement.

Cognitive Tests:

These tests assess reasoning, memory, perceptual speed and accuracy, and skills in arithmetic and reading comprehension, as well as knowledge of a particular function or job.

Drug Tests:

There are several types of drug tests that candidates for employment may be asked to take. The types of drug tests which show the presence of drugs or alcohol include urine drug tests, hair drug or alcohol testing, saliva drug screen, and sweat drug screen.

Which Specific Employment Tests Might You Be Asked to Complete?

Predictive Index: an online survey that tells employers what type of person the candidate is and how he or she works with others as well as what's going in their life now.

Kolbe A Index: which measures a person's instinctive method of operation, and identifies the ways he or she will be most productive.

Occupational Personality Questionnaire: a work styles assessment for managerial and professional staff that assesses 31 behavioral dimensions.

Hogan Development Survey: identifies personality-based performance risks and derailers of interpersonal behavior that affect an individual's leadership style and actions.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: a well-known personality assessment, the use of which in hiring is currently controversial, but still widely used.

Simmons Personal Survey: measures job-related emotional and behavioral tendencies, such as energy, stress, optimism, self-esteem, commitment to work, attention to detail, desire for change, physical courage, self-direction, assertiveness, tolerance, consideration for others, and sociability.

The Executive Achiever: looks at intelligence, knowledge of leadership skills, and a variety of leadership personality traits.

Profiles: gauges cognitive, behavioral, and conative (occupational interest) attributes.

Caliper Profile: measures more than 25 personality traits that relate to job performance.

Five-factor Personality Assessments: a variety of assessments that measure the "Big Five" personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

Smart Assessment: a straightforward 4.5-hour biographical interview that captures themes related to fit for a role from childhood through all stages of education and each and every job the candidate has had. Candidates are rated according to their probability of success in a role.

DiSC: profiles four primary behavioral styles (dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness), each with a distinct and predictable pattern of observable behavior.

Business Values and Motivators: based on the premise that if the job or culture is valued, employees will be motivated; this assessment tells what employees value.

Preparing For an Employment Test

While you can't "study" for an employment test, there are some ways that you can prepare yourself for such a test:

• Take the test seriously!

• Brush up on skills that may be tested; focus on what will be needed for the job

• Exercise your brain using puzzles or brain teasers to prepare for logic tests

• Get plenty of sleep the night before

• If the test is to be administered in person, dress professionally, as you would for the job interview itself

• Avoid trying to prepare for a personality test; be yourself

Taking the Test

The following are some tips to keep in mind when taking the test:

• Tests can be administered via paper-and-pencil formats, using a computer and/or the internet, or in person with a hiring manager, human resources or a third party…be prepared for all scenarios

• Don't try to "game" a personality test, some tests are designed to identify inconsistencies

• In tests designed to gain insight into your work style or personality, keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers

• Take your time (unless the test is specifically timed)

• Don't be afraid to ask for clarification

"A significant focus of employment tests are evaluating capabilities/skills that will be part of the job or assessing the candidates fit with the type of work and culture of the company. I suggest you ensure that students are aware that the selection process may include pre-employment testing, but also let them know that they should not be overly concerned. Tests or no tests, students should thoroughly review their experiences/qualifications and how they tie to the responsibilities of any position they are pursuing."

Source: hiring expert from DuPont