

**YOUR  
COMPLETE  
GUIDE TO**

# **ADDRESSING SAFETY IN THE HIRING PROCESS**

An introduction to using personality risk assessments to hire safer employees through data-driven interviewing.

## Introduction

The famous management guru Peter Drucker once said, "Trying to predict the future is like trying to drive down a country road at night with no lights while looking out the back window."

When it comes to hiring, predicting which job applicants will ultimately become top performers in the future can be difficult. Difficult, but not impossible. People just need to be using the right tools and information.

The reason so many new employees either leave or become low performers is that hiring is often left in the hands of an interviewer. The problem with interviewing is that most people think they can read people well. Time and time again, we hear interviewers say, "I trust my gut instinct."

The truth is, that approach has a very low success rate. Research shows that hiring people purely based on an interview achieves about a 50% success rate. In other words, it's as accurate as a coin toss.

## Improve Your Chances with Data

Adding a predictive analytics tool such as a personality assessment can bring the success rate of hiring top performers up to about 75%. Notice it's not 100%, because personality assessments are not a silver bullet that will fix everything. But going from 50% to 75% is a huge incremental gain, a gain that most companies will embrace.

IT'S IN THE DATA:

**50%**

SUCCESS RATE FOR  
"GUT-BASED"  
INTERVIEWING

IT'S IN THE DATA:

**75%**

SUCCESS RATE USING  
PREDICTIVE  
ANALYTICS

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## What Kind of Data to Use?

Many people know of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, along with other generic personality assessments. For decades, these tools have been used at the hiring stage for "white collar" positions in corporate office settings. A personality report gives hiring managers insight into who they are interviewing, how that person will likely perform on the job, and how to train, coach and manage that new employee.

But there is a new trend toward using specialized personality assessments designed for front-line workers in a "blue collar" environment where safety is a concern. One of the benefits of using an assessment like this is determining which workers have personality traits that make them more prone to unsafe behaviors and workplace incidents. Independent research shows that using this type of assessment can reduce incident rates, which of course impacts profitability.



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### PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT: A BRIEF HISTORY

#### Early Years (18th Century)

Focus was placed mostly on studying external features, like the skull, to identify different personality types and capabilities.

#### Modern Approach (20th Century)

Focus moved to internal capabilities, studying personalities through the means of the assessment test, which introduced the concept of the Five Factor Model.

#### Predictive Research (1980s)

The first time personality research had real world applications, allowing people without Psychology degrees to use data to predict behaviors.

#### Predicting Safety (2000s)

The first safety-related personality assessment was born, allowing managers in safety-sensitive industries to hire, train and develop safer employees.

# Hiring for Safety

During the hiring and onboarding phase of employment, there are three (3) practical uses for a quality personality assessment that focus on safety:

## 1) SCREENING APPLICANTS

If possible in a given industry, economy and region, screening applicants can help reduce the workload of hiring managers while also eliminating those who would not qualify in later stages. In addition to skills, experience and abilities, safety can also be considered in the screening process.

## 2) INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

For those who have been selected for interviews, this is an opportunity to get to know the person a little better while also verifying the accuracy of his application. Safety-related interviews focus on establishing the interviewee's level of *safety self-awareness*.

## 3) ONBOARDING NEW HIRES

Giving new hires meaningful information on themselves in orientation can go a long way in improving engagement while also reducing risk of incidents in the highest risk portion of the new workers' career - the first 3 months.

### THE COST OF TURNOVER:

The average cost of replacing a "bad hire" is 1.5 times the individual's salary. It would cost \$75,000 to replace an employee with a salary of \$50,000

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## 1) Screening Applicants

### THE SAFETY-RELATED COMPETENCIES MATRIX

As Benjamin Franklin once said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." When it comes to hiring, it is absolutely essential that leaders prepare ahead of time. They must decide what type of person they're looking for, otherwise they may end up with employees who do not fit their needs.

While one leader may want a foot soldier who quietly obeys the rules, another may be looking for a future general whom they can promote to higher level roles. Recruiters and hiring managers end up confused and frustrated, resulting in inefficiency.

The following table provides an illustration of a screening matrix for safety-related competencies (technical skills, knowledge, education and work experience should be added to complete the puzzle):

COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTION	ASSESSMENT METHODS				SCORE
		RESUME	INTERVIEW	PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT	REFERENCES & BG CHECKS	
SAFETY TRAINING	Safety Self-Awareness	☑			☑	
INTELLECTUAL	Analytical, highly intelligent, a critical problem solver		☑		☑	
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	Team player, collaborative, positive, engaging, approachable		☑	☑	☑	
FOCUSED	Not distractible, is vigilant, will focus on repetitive tasks, not be bored		☑	☑	☑	
COMPLIANT	Not a rebel, able to heed authority to follow rules and SOP		☑	☑	☑	
CAUTIOUS	Not a risk taker, is cautious and considers consequences of actions		☑	☑	☑	
EVEN TEMPERED	Not easily annoyed, able to work in stressful situations & be calm under pressure		☑	☑	☑	

TOTAL SCORE:

A matrix like this is a yardstick; it helps leaders quantifiably measure which candidates possess the soft skills to move along to the interview stage. After all, what gets measured improves.

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## 2) Interviewing Candidates

### THE DATA-DRIVEN INTERVIEW

Given the recurring labor shortage in safety-sensitive industries, many are forced to hire anyone who “can fog a mirror”. This would make some question the value of the interview altogether since every candidate is hired. Even in such industries, a data-driven interview has value in that it provides future Supervisors and Managers insight into the types of workers they’re hiring, including their safety-related strengths and areas for improvement. This insight that can be helpful in reducing risk of incidents in the first 3 months of work for a new employee.

The goal of your data-driven interview should be to assess the individual’s self-awareness around safety-related behaviors, looking for phrases like:

“I can’t believe I did that.”

“I caught myself taking a shortcut.”

“I need to watch that I don’t make the same mistake again.”

“I saw myself doing the same thing over and over.”

I couldn’t live with myself if I made that mistake and someone got injured.”

You’ll notice the use of the pronoun “I” in the statements above. It’s almost as if a self-aware person is able to observe himself through a video camera. In terms of safety, when we learn the correct, safe behavior, the “I” - or the part we use to observe ourselves - can help maintain those new behaviors by recognizing when we are slipping back into old unsafe habits. This is called *self-monitoring*.

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### 3) Onboarding New Hires

## PERSONALIZED ORIENTATION & COACHING

Most workers learn how to manage themselves and keep their safety risks low through experience in a particular role. However, for new workers, a personalized orientation and safety training program can leap frog their development and significantly reduce risk of personal injury within the highest risk portion of their career - the first 3 months.

To address this, organizations large and small have new workers participate in formalized orientation and safety training. Unfortunately, much of these programs are standardized, one-size-fits-all, and do not take into account different learning styles, attitudes and perceptions. To combat this, progressive organizations are encouraging new workers to complete a personal action plan that forces them to consider their own *Safety Self-Awareness*.

### Personal Action Plan

The goal of this process is to empower workers to monitor their own behavior and commit to making better choices. Rather than creating a culture where the employer plays the role of "protector" and is the sole champion of safety, the responsibility lies in the hands of the employee.

### How It Works

- 1** The new worker completes the action plan, answering situational questions to the best of his ability.
- 2** The worker sets goals and commits to making self-improvements in his on-the-job behaviors.
- 3** Throughout the worker's first few months on the job, he and his supervisor will periodically review this plan and identify any gaps between commitments and actual behaviors.
- 4** Should an incident occur, the plan is re-visited and new commitments are made in order to further improve the worker's *Safety Self-Awareness*.

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## What Is Learned

When initially completing the action plan, many will experience epiphanies, commenting that nobody has ever talked to them about who they are and what makes them tick. They'll say that they now understand why their co-workers act the way they do, which creates team understanding, cohesion, and efficiency.

But any employer program is a numbers game, one that is about winning as many hearts and minds as possible. Christian Jostlein, Safety Director at Holland Company in Chicago says, "I look at this like any other tool I provide to the guys: hard hats, vests, gloves. We can't make every single one of them use this. But enough of them will that it will make a difference."

Sometimes an organization must hire a "less than ideal" candidate, perhaps because there is a skills shortage and they have an insufficient number of job applicants. One manager in the Fort McMurray oil sands told us, "We have such a shortage of workers that we'll hire anyone who can fog a mirror."

Using a personality assessment also provides employers with insight on how a new employee is likely to perform on the job and how they can manage that person. More to the point, it arms the front-line supervisor with a practical performance-management tool, especially those supervisors who might not have had management training. In most industrial organizations, the front-line managers have gone through hundreds of hours of technical training on their craft, but have received little to no training on how to effectively lead people.

### WARNING:

Some hardened front-line workers may feel that personality awareness is not for them. They may grudgingly go through the workbook and then file it in the same place they put the employee handbook referring to harassment policies.

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A common remark is that it is nice to understand the new person in front of them and how to communicate in a way that makes the most sense for that individual, not just the entire crew. "With these reports, now I know who I'm getting," says that same Fort McMurray manager. "I know what to keep an eye on and what I need to work on with that guy."

Using the *Resistant* dimension as an example, here are coaching considerations that might appear on someone's personality assessment:

#### **Tips for Managing a Resistant Person:**

- Monitoring of compliance to rules and regulations may be necessary
- May need time to adapt to changes in routine or rules
- May need to be reminded of the consequences of ignoring regulations
- May benefit from knowing the reasons behind the rules

### **Use Data to Get Ahead**

If you use a safety-related personality assessment along with the methods described in this guide, you will greatly increase your chances of successfully hiring top performers who exhibit safe behaviors.

Preventing harm and increasing productivity are surely things that you - and Peter Drucker - approve of. As you navigate the hiring road ahead, hopefully you're now facing forward and have some headlights to light your way.

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