



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Know Your Employee's Psyche

Psychology provides an insight into human behavior. It is one field that is used to improve every aspect of human life. As an HR practitioner, you may have dabbled in this field without ever realizing it. Be it recruitment, performance appraisal or resolving conflicts among peers and subordinates, you are constantly using it. Of course, you are probably more comfortable with the term psychometrics than psychology.

What is psychometrics?

Psychometrics provides the backbone for psychology as an objective science. It is concerned with the design and analysis of research and the measurement of human characteristics. Originating with the work of Binet in France and Spearman in England, it has enjoyed rapid growth and development.

Today, psychometric testing is the buzzword of the corporate world. The importance of recruiting right and retaining staff, compounded with an emphasis on performance management, is pushing this novel method to the forefront. More corporations are now depending on this method of testing. The test questionnaire can be answered either on paper or electronically.

Types of tests

Organizations generally use the following types of tests:

- **Personality tests** are extensively used by organizations. They indicate basic tendencies based on one's core personality profile and assess traits such as zeal, decision-making style and temperament. The tests can be useful in predicting whether an applicant has the personality traits that are usually associated with success at a particular job. They are also useful for self-discovery, conflict prevention and resolution, and team building. Thanks to Swiss psychologist Carl Jung's enthusiasm about the problem of incompatible human personalities, the world had the Theory of Personality Tests in 1921. The theory states that we all have personality tendencies that exist throughout our lives.

These personality tendencies or traits are:

- Extroversion (motivated by and responsive to others) vs. Introversion (reliant upon internal and independent influences).
- Sensing (concrete, specific, applied) vs. Intuition (conceptual, abstract, theoretical).
- Thinking (rational, cerebral) vs. Feeling (led by emotions).
- Perceiving (flexible, accepting of change, spontaneous) vs. Judging (planned, orderly, systematic).



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The icing on the cake was provided just after World War II by the mother and daughter team Katherine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers. Widely known as Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBIT), the test they developed is easy to administer for determining personality predisposition. There is no HR professional who has not heard of it.

- **Aptitude tests** include elements of both personality and behavior in order to elicit one's style and preferences. They seek to measure and predict a person's potential for learning and performing specific skills or activities. These tests seek to measure how trainable a person is rather than how well he or she has been trained.
- **Intelligence tests** measure learning ability, particularly through the use of printed material. They can help predict who is likely to succeed in the job.
- **Achievement tests** take many forms. They range from simple typing tests to sophisticated paper and pencil tests and measure the degree of knowledge in specific fields to find out how trainable or trained a person is.
- **Honesty tests**, sometimes called "integrity tests," are designed to determine the integrity of people by measuring attitudes towards dishonesty and inclination for theft-type behavior.

Some interesting truths

Most companies make use of these tests essentially for recruiting and, to a certain extent, personality development. This is especially true for entry and middle level positions. Though interviews and group discussions are preferred, most companies do not use psychometric testing for performance appraisals or promotions, assessing training needs or career progression.

The focus areas for the tests generally differ from industry to industry.

- The areas used in **process industries** include personality, IQ / Mental Ability, technical and aptitude.
- In **discrete industries**, preferences at entry level are for technical, IQ, aptitude and personality tests.
- In the **service industry**, personality, aptitude, IQ and technical tests are common.
- The stress in **IT companies** is on IQ / Mental Ability, technical and aptitude tests.