AN ETPG WHITE PAPER
CHOOSING THE BEST TESTS FOR THE JOB:
BUSINESS SETTINGS

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ETPG'S OBJECTIVES

There are thousands of tests available internationally. Each addresses a different issue and may be intended for use in settings from schools and hospitals to prisons and multinational corporations. Different countries require different skills, knowledge, and qualifications to use formal psychological tests, yet some seem freely available on the web. Unsurprisingly given this situation, different tests action different theories with different aims. They use formats from printed answer sheets, online questionnaires to serious games This situation offers you choice, but challenges users to find the single best test for a job in hand.

ETPG is a group of publishers focused on improving the scientific, professional use of tests to impact the lives of test users and test takers positively. This document is one of a series contributing to this aim. This one looks at test use in business contexts – recruitment, development, succession planning, coaching and other people-related issues at work. It aims to provide test users with a means to evaluate the range of tests available, and chose the one that will most benefit them and their clients.

BEFORE RESEARCHING THE RIGHT TEST

Despite some claims made in marketing messages, **there is no such thing as the overall best test available**, any more than that claim is true for a car, house, financial service, or any other product. Different tests are more or less useful for a particular purpose: for instance, a specific test may be excellent for developing coaching conversations with sceptical c-suite leaders but not designed to recruit warehouse workers or address work-life balance in manufacturing. However, it is true that some types of tests can cover a number of uses: for instance normative personality tests are more adaptable than say type measures.

So, before setting out to decide which test to use with a specific client, be very precise about what you are trying to achieve: not just "I am trying to recruit a finance director" but "I am trying to create a shortlist and a set of questions for structured interviews with international applicants, working with a multinational team." You should ensure that your goal is the same as that of significant others, for instance the manager of a role; your own manager (if you have one).

Place the testing session into the wider process you are running. In a recruitment exercise this might include interviews, CVs, and post-appointment training. What is the test contributing? How does it inform other elements and ensure greater accuracy in decision-making?

INFORMATION SOURCES

Responsible publishers

Publishers should provide you with information to evaluate a test's suitability. Some offer case studies, research papers, sample reports and a manual and will respond well to enquiries. Others provide little background. Membership of a professional publishers association such as ETPG or ATP (see below) suggests publishers' commitment to testing quality. the most important evidence for a test's quality and uses are:

A Manual: publishers should supply a comprehensive manual. This manual should contain:
- How to apply, score, interpret and feed the results back. These arrangements have huge implications. If all of these processes can be done on-line it helps in international projects and also those where test takers may not have the resources to travel or be in a physical condition to do this. On-line testing may also save your time. On the other hand some situations as well as national testing guidelines demand personal interaction with clients.
- Technical information (see related section below) designed to show the test's performance.
- A statement of what the test is designed to do. Be suspicious of any test that claims to do everything within a testing domain.
- How the test was developed and by whom. Did the developers have the range of skills, knowledge, and qualifications to author a test? This sort of information is particularly important for web-delivered tests, especially those that include an automated report. It is important to understand how this was created, what sorts of expertise and skills were used in creating it.
- Check the date of the test's publication and the most recent data gathered on it. There is no absolute time lapse which makes a test out of date since psychological qualities change at different rates. But if a test's data is more than 5-10 years old, investigate further.
- Check that the test is legal – it is in copyright and is not a pirated or photocopied version. It is important to look at the publication data to check the version you are looking at is the latest one.

Case studies, research reports, updates, sample items and reports, user groups and other support material. These may be included in a manual but responsible publishers will update them, add to the library of background information, and offer evaluation materials. This material may be available on their web site, via a newsletter or in a number of other ways. For particularly widely-used and comprehensive tests, publishers may set up a user group so that customers can share good practice.

Sample reports: Publishers often offer these as downloads on their web site and they are key ways of evaluating whether a test's design, format and language are suitable for your client group. Many tests drive a number of reports, written and designed for different purposes to be used by different people (for instance the expert test administrator, feedback for the test taker and another for the test sponsor). In essence, is the test face valid, so the test taker will take it seriously.

Training options: Responsible publishers should be clear about what qualifications you need to purchase and use a test. Do you need training additional to your professional or academic qualification? Do you need an overall testing qualification or can you take training with a supplier of tests? A test which requires no training, or very short training (say half a day) without testing experience, may be of lower quality, will reflect badly on you as a professional and lead to wrong decisions about a test taker.

Diversity: It is increasingly important to check that a publisher takes seriously issues of physical, cognitive, cultural, and other diversities, factoring them into the test design and data and the way in

which the test is administered. This latter is important for test takers with debilitating physical conditions.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

- If you are working internationally, is the test available where you will be working? Who supplies it in different countries; do different international suppliers require different training? Do you have to spend some time dealing with different suppliers in different countries?

  There are set procedures for translating and adapting a test so that it is actually measuring the same thing in different countries, cultures, and languages. This is particularly important when, for whatever purpose, you are comparing individual test results from across a multinational organisation (see ITC below).

- **How long** does the total testing process take?

- **Pricing:** Different companies price tests in diverse ways. Increasing delivery of tests over the web has led to the adoption of charging methods that were previously used for software. Some publishers still charge as a customer buys the test. Others ask for payment once the test is used or as a report is downloaded. In some cases, customers but 'tokens' or 'units' which can be used to but tests and related services across the publishers range.

- As with any technical product, it's important that **support** to overcome problems is available easily and quickly.

- **Customization:** You may want to customize any test fit your organisation's needs and goals. Can this be done?

- **Security and Data Privacy:** Ensure that the tool adheres to data privacy regulations and employs appropriate security measures to protect participants' personal information.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS OFFERING TEST INFORMATION

- **ETPG's** web site will increasingly offer white papers on key testing topics such as this one. You can also contact us directly to ask questions, give feedback and contact local companies.

- **ATP** (https://www.testpublishers.org) is another publishers organisation. Originally based in the USA it has linked, independent organisations in Europe, Asia, and India. Whereas ETPG is focused on the application of true psychological tests in different settings, ATP takes in areas such as testing to qualify for a job, school, and university testing.

- **The European Federation of Psychological Associations (EFPA)** gathers together representatives of national psychological associations. Its Board of Assessment (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**) is developing a revision of the model which informs test reviews created within different European countries (see below). It also reacts to and attempts to influence any policy decisions affecting testing. EFPA and certain national

psychological associations also have a role in deciding who can use tests. In some countries they have the overall role backed up law; in others, these decisions are in the hands of publishers.

- **National Psychological Associations:** will often offer advice on testing and many operationalise the EFPA model for reviewing tests. An example is the British Psychological Society's Psychological Testing Centre (https://www.bps.org.uk > psychological-testing-centre). These reviews are good places to start in considering using a test: has it got a complimentary review within this model? A revision of the model, to take in new testing developments is in preparation.

- **International Test Commission (ITC)**: (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** other things, develops useful guidelines on areas of testing – including test adaptation and computer-administered testing.

- **Other Professional Organisations**: Since some other professions in certain countries use tests, some non-psychological professional associations in areas such as education, health and HR provide useful information on testing.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The sorts of data publishers should provide answers very simple, important questions.

- What is this test actually measuring? Is it measuring what the publisher claims it is measuring?
- Does it measure consistently whoever is using it, when- and wherever?
- What are its performance characteristics? Given the answers to the first two questions, within what parameters can its results be trusted and where must they be examined further? where are there possibilities for error?
- How was it developed and what was its performance during development?

Most of this technical information is presented numerically, often in the form of simple correlations (if this happens, does that happen). This can look off-putting but, as with any technically based product (a car or a computer for instance) an effective user does not need to know **all** the technical information. The questions listed above are the key ones to ask when choosing a test. Some initial training (particularly in psychology) and developmental training in a role (provided by responsible publishers or, for instance, in HR courses) provide the skills and knowledge to answer these effectively and understand the critical information publishers supply.

The information manuals tend to supply includes:

1. **Reliability:** Does the test measure consistently over time or across different situations. Look for information on test-retest reliability.
2. **Validity:** Investigate the extent to which the assessment accurately measures what it claims to measure. Consider content validity, construct validity, face validity, ecological validity, and criterion-related validity.
3. **Norms:** Check if the assessment has established norms for interpreting scores based on relevant demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, industry). This is critical if the test is being used for comparison ("Is person x better than person y at numerical reasoning or empathy?"). Check if

norms are created from data collected in settings fitting your assessment needs (e.g. if not in competitive settings, maybe that test is not useful for recruitment purposes).

4. **Standardization:** Verify if the assessment has been standardized on a representative sample to ensure fairness and accuracy.
5. **Test Development:** Understand how the assessment was developed, including the theoretical framework, item development process, and expert involvement.
6. **Response Styles:** Examine how the assessment handles response styles: deliberately or unconsciously distorted responses by a test taker which will affect the accuracy of results.
7. **Data:** Data structure and analysis options for ongoing use in or integration into selection, assessment, or development processes.

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Take all this information into consideration. Remember though that you know your business and/or role better than anyone else and whatever test you chose must reflect well on your work, and organisation and should be absolutely fair to test takers.

Finally, be a test taker! An effective way of evaluating a test and improving your skills is to take a test yourself, have the results fed back to you and see what the experience is like. Of course this is not possible for certain tests, particularly certain clinical and educational titles. In particular this will give you an insight into how easy the test is to use once you have evaluated several and chosen this particular one.

FAQs

Interviews have always served me well. Why should I use anything else?

Unstructured interviews are hugely affected by an interviewer's personal preferences, interests, and prejudices. We make up our mind about someone within seconds, based on irrelevant aspects such as their hair colour. Unstructured interviews have as little predictive power as flipping a coin.

Structured interviews are far more effective in choosing the right person for a job and many tests generate questions, based on their results, which can be used to structure interview.

But the fundamental point here is that you should never use one technique or information source to make a critical decision about a person. Tests, interviews, CVs, and work samples, among other useful techniques can be used in combination to ensure than a critical decision is as fair and accurate as possible.

My external consultants have favourite tests and won't use anything else? How do I convince them to change?

Hopefully, this document gives you some arguments. The bottom line is that no test is good for every situation and every person. The same is true if you have a particular test you use. Having a toolbox of techniques (we suggest you should have about 3-4 titles in this toolbox, more if you use tests often and widely) will help you to be able to react quickly and effectively to people issues.

Tests are over-complex. Why is that?

You do not need all the technical knowledge a test developer or academic might need in order to use them effectively. See the technical section above. The amount of technical work that goes into creating

a good test reflects how important people and the decisions made about them are in the success of organisations. It has been estimated that a wrong recruitment decision (for instance) will cost an organisation the equivalent of that role's first year costs – not just salary but all other costs, including overheads. We suggest that good tests are not complex but accurate and subtle in their interpretations of complex human beings.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK PUBLISHERS WHEN CONSIDERING ONE OF THEIR TESTS

- Is the test specifically designed for [selection / leadership / assessment / development]?
- What traits or competencies does the test measure?
- What is the reliability and validity of the test?
- Can the test results provide actionable insights?
- Is the test suitable for participants across distinct levels of leadership?
- How does the test account for potential cultural and diversity considerations?
- Can the test results help identify strengths and areas for improvement?
- Is the test adaptable to various development programs or frameworks?
- Are there case studies or success stories that demonstrate the effectiveness of the test?
- Is there someone I can speak with who uses your tests?
- What kind of support is provided for interpreting and applying the test results?
- Does the test offer post-assessment resources, such as coaching or training recommendations?
- How accessible is the test and easy to understand for participants and facilitators?
- How often can the test be administered to track progress?
- What customisation options are available to align the test with your organisation's leadership model?
- Are there any potential ethical or privacy concerns associated with using the test?
- Does the test provide insights into specific leadership styles or approaches?
- What level of technical support is available for implementing the test?
- Does the test adhere to legal and ethical guidelines for employment testing?
- Can the test predict job performance or success in the role?
- How long does it take to complete the test?
- Is training required for administrators to interpret the results accurately?
- Is the test compatible with your existing hiring processes and technology?
- What is the cost structure for using the test?
- Can I request a sample report to evaluate the type of information the test provides?
- Does the test comply with industry standards (e.g., International Test Commission guidelines)?
- What is the theoretical foundation of each test?
- What traits or dimensions of personality do they measure?
- How is the test administered (online, paper-based, in-person)?
- Is there a recommended age group for the test?
- Are there cultural adaptations for diverse populations?
- Are there specific requirements for people with special physical or psychological needs?
- Do the tests consider social desirability bias or acquiescence bias?
- What kind of feedback or reports do they provide after assessment?

- Do you have a track record of successful implementation in similar contexts?
- Do the tests require ongoing updates or revalidation?
- What access to data is provided for ongoing analysis and decision making?
- How valid is the personality data across the various aspects of the employee selection, assessment, development lifecycle?

ETPG

The European Test Publishers Group (ETPG) is a group of psychological test publishers, all based in Europe. It was formed in 1991 to: *'help create an intellectual and commercial environment which values scientific measurement in psychological testing. It supports its members and works with test customers, users, developers, researchers, academics, and policy makers to achieve this.'*

ETPG's annual conference focuses on new developments in psychological testing, looking at ways our industry can meet changing needs. We develop white papers on key testing topics and contribute to scientific and professional conferences as well as relevant policy proposals. We welcome discussions on ideas will improve testing's impact on European society.

ETPG works with other associations (the European Federation of Psychological Associations (EFPA), the International Test Commission (ITC), the Association of Test Publishers (ATP) among others) to continually improve testing practices. Its annual conference is a major forum to discuss new test developments and the needs of European test users. ETPG gathers together individuals and companies with huge experience and knowledge in all aspects of psychological testing.

The ETPG's mission is to improve European Testing by:
- raising standards in test design and use;
- progressing creative developments in testing;
- promoting professional use of tests internationally;
- developing fair systems of copyright protection to the benefit of all parties;
- increasing and promoting the benefits of applied psychology to European citizens;
- developing links with test industries outside Europe to raise overall standards.

The group's values focus on:
- Innovating
- Social Engagement
- Being evidence-based
- Using scientific methods to develop products and services.
- Being open and transparent
- Adhering to professional standards