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How Much Should We Rely on Pre-Hire Assessment Tests?

Q: I have found that some job candidates do very well on our pre-hire assessments, but when hired their performance doesn't match their test. Should pre-hire assessments be the only measure of employment? Are we passing over qualified people because we're judging them based solely on their test results?

A: Pre-hire assessments should never be the only determining factor in your hiring decisions. Not only are you passing over qualified people, but your actions may be interpreted as discriminatory. Organizations with the most effective hiring policies are more likely to:

Use valid assessments that accurately predict job performance. Organizations must use the right kinds of tools for each job. An ability test for a worker in a manufacturing plant is a far cry from the complex assessment tools needed to evaluate top executives. Assessments that do not demonstrate a reasonable measure of job performance waste time and money and expose your company to litigation risks.

Ask candidates during job interviews to give examples of their skills. Develop interview questions to identify specific skills and ask applicants how they applied those skills. Know which answers you are looking for from each question and don't be afraid to challenge any answers to make sure you have made job qualifications clear.

Use simulations to gauge job-related abilities and skills. Job applicants can be asked to actually perform specific tasks relating to the job or take a multiple-choice online test featuring video simulations of various situations. These force candidates to demonstrate the skills they claim to possess. A simulation often serves as a good predictor of job performance. Carefully consider language and other barriers, including timed simulation, which may adversely affect protected classes of applicants.

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