

Individual Assessment: Matching Talents to Key Roles

Q What is individual assessment?

A Individual assessment consists of highlighting a candidate's strengths and weaknesses in terms of intellectual resources, behavioral competencies, interests, and personal characteristics. The assessment profile is generally based on results of standardized tests and perhaps an interview. The profile includes a summary of scores, which are used to develop a narrative description of the candidate and estimate his or her likelihood of success in the target role.

Q When would individual assessment be used?

A Individual assessment is most useful when understanding the person is critical to making a hiring, development, promotion, or placement decision. For example, it is typically used as a first step in executive coaching or in the screening process for complex roles (e.g., higher level managerial, executive, and professional positions) where outcomes and impact (not activities performed) determine success.



Q So, does a candidate pass or fail an individual assessment?

A Typically, the goal of individual assessment is more complicated than a straightforward pass/fail decision. The goal is to profile what each candidate brings to the role, and to compare his/her relative strengths and weaknesses with the requirements of the role including its performance expectations, context, and supporting team. The narrative highlights how the candidate's strengths and weaknesses will likely play out if asked to serve in the role. Generally, a recommendation is provided – such as Strongly Recommended or Recommended with Reservation – to summarize and represent perceived fit with role requirements.

Q If standardized tests are used to create the profile, how are unique role requirements taken into account?

A Standardized tests are used to measure intellectual resources, personality characteristics, behavioral preferences, and competencies. The interpretation of the scores and the interplay between them is completed by an assessment professional that has been trained in tests and measures, and configural interpretation. In PBS' case, the interpretation and the narrative report is prepared by an experienced Industrial Psychologist.

Q So, if we wanted to do individual assessments of job candidates or incumbents, what does the process involve?

A When PBS is retained to complete individual assessments, we typically begin by discussing the context with the client. For example, what is the reason for the assessment – is it to support a selection decision, develop a high potential candidate, or to enhance incumbent performance? What job is of interest? And where relevant, what are the expectations for the role, what challenges is the incumbent likely to face, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of other key team members?

We then select a battery of standardized tests that will give us the most relevant information for the job, context, and purpose of the assessment. The tests are generally administered via the

Internet and often (but not always) at the candidate's convenience. Because an in-depth report is to be prepared, the candidate is often asked to invest anywhere from about 2 hours to perhaps 5 hours in completing the assessments (where the exact amount of time can be tailored to the client, role, and purpose). If an interview with the assessment professional is to be included, the interview will generally require an additional hour or so.

The report is then written (within a day or two) to reflect the candidate's strengths and weaknesses in light of the role requirements, employment context, and performance expectations.

Q How does individual assessment add value to the hiring process?

A Individual assessment provides an objective and external evaluation of a candidate's qualifications and fit with the role. It is based on proven measures of broad-based competencies, that are clearly related to successful job performance. It provides a common metric for comparing candidates with varying backgrounds and expertise, and identifies potential risks in hiring them as well as ways to help ensure subsequent success.