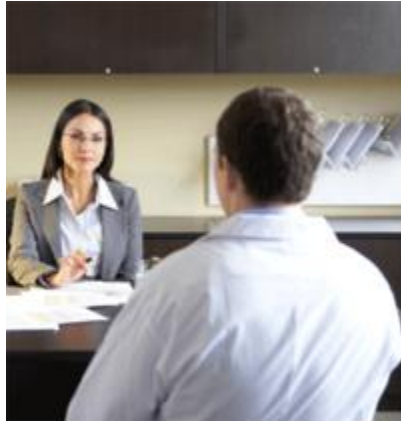


Psychological Tests: Employers Add Extra Step In Hiring Process



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What job seekers need to know about psychological evaluations.

By Kenya McCullum for HEALTHeCAREERS.com

Have you ever been hired for a [job](#) that you thought was going to be a great opportunity, but when you started working for the organization, that dream job turned into an unrecognizable nightmare because it was nothing like you thought it would be? This can be a horrible experience for any employee—and it takes a lot of time and energy to rectify.

You may be surprised to learn that organizations sometimes experience a similar kind of bait-and-switch when they hire someone they think will be a good fit for a position, but turns out to be something else entirely. And a miscalculation like this can wreak havoc on an organization: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a bad hire can cost organizations in the neighborhood of 30 percent of that employee's first year earnings.

But the expense is not entirely a financial one. A December 2012 CareerBuilder survey found that bad hires can also have negative effects on employee productivity and morale, as well as an organization's sales. In some cases, choosing the wrong person for a job can even result in serious legal issues.

Since many organizations have been trying to do more with less since the recession, these are expenses they simply cannot afford. So in order to help prevent the effects of bad hiring decisions, some companies have added an extra step to their employment process: a psychological evaluation.

How psychological evaluations in the hiring process work.

Hiring managers do their best to find the right employees by screening [resumes](#), conducting [interviews](#), and checking [references](#). But, in some cases, bad hires still fall through the cracks. That's where Dr. Kenneth Freundlich, a clinical neuropsychologist and managing partner of the Morris Psychological Group, comes in, because he administers psychological tests for organizations in order to uncover the more nuanced qualities that make someone a good fit for a job.

"Some jobs require skills that are hard to assess in just an interview," he said. "The job may require attributes that you can't easily get a handle on, so the testing allows the company a way to get that information."

Giving job candidates a psychological evaluation can also tell [employers](#) whether or not they possess qualities that are difficult to develop—such as extroversion, self-motivation, agreeableness, emotional stability, and interpersonal skills. For example, you generally need to have an outgoing personality in order to succeed in a sales position. Candidates may be able to fake this trait during an interview, but a psychological evaluation will most likely uncover their true nature.

This may sound like a scary process—especially if you struggle with certain mental health challenges like [depression](#) or anxiety. But don't worry: These tests are not designed to screen applicants for these conditions, because the Americans with Disabilities Act prevents employers from eliminating candidates based on [mental illness](#).

In addition, although the results of a psychological evaluation may be weighed when choosing an employee, Freundlich says they won't be the predominant deciding factor.

"This is never the sole basis to choose somebody for a job. It's just another piece of information," he explained. "The point of doing this is to find the person who will be great at a job and who has the background and characteristics that mesh with the job. It's good for the company, and it's good for the employee."

What to expect during a psychological evaluation.

You may have already taken some kind of test to land a job. In fact, statistics show that many organizations administer a skills test when making hiring decisions, and they are increasingly including psychological evaluations to the process.

So what can job seekers expect when asked to take a psychological evaluation? If you think you'll be lying on a couch, looking at a Rorschach inkblot and bearing your soul, think again. Freundlich says that in many cases, these tests are administered much the same way you remember standardized tests from high school: You're in a room with other candidates being given the same multiple choice or true or false questions to answer.

Other times, organizations will administer a psychological evaluation on an individual basis. When Freundlich does testing in this way, he first will ask candidates information about their background to get to know them, and then goes on to ask questions specifically relevant to the job—such as what kinds of challenges they've experienced, how they overcame these problems, and what they learned from the process that would change the way they handle their work.

Unfortunately, unlike other tests that may be required for a job, there really is no way to prepare for psychological evaluations in advance. But Freundlich does offer this advice:

"I would tell people to just be honest. That's probably the best advice because everybody has strengths, and everybody has weaknesses. There is not a single employer in the world that expects their employees to be perfect—and people who come in and try to present perfection come across as being unrealistic," he said. "Also, don't feel threatened or afraid. The idea of being sent to a psychologist can be pretty scary for people, but it really should be a good experience, not a bad one."

About the Author

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