Personality Test

The following is some information compiled from various online sources. It should be used for **guidance purposes only** and to help you understand the personality testing process.

We are happy to discuss the preparation you require but our first and most important piece of advice before taking any personality test is to get plenty of rest before the test and do not alter your normal routine (i.e. do not drink more/less coffee than normal, or decide a 10k run before the test would be a good idea!). You will want to avoid anything that throws you off your normal physical/mental condition. There are plenty of online sources for further research if you wish to take your study further. In our experience, it is enough to understand the process you will be participating in and to have taken some sample tests beforehand. Rather than worrying about practicing approaches to the answers, your objective should simply to understand how these tests work and avoid any basic confusion at the test centre/employer offices if you've never taken a test before.
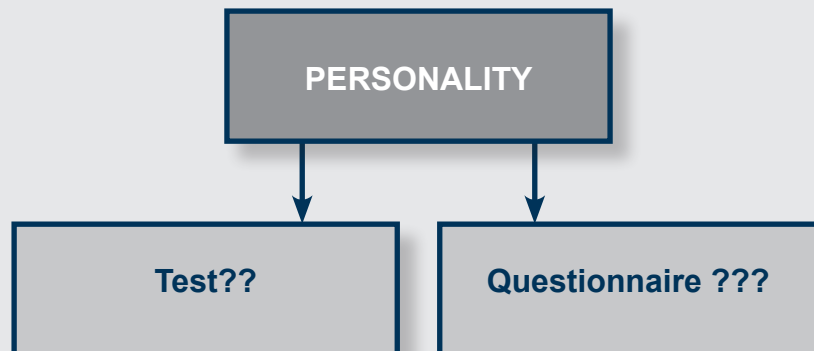
Finally, Good Luck!!

Why should you prepare for the personality test?

Key to your success in the personality test is the understanding of the job requirements and how they are measured in the personality test. This will assist you to demonstrate to your employer that you have the relevant personality traits to perform in the job.

There are several popular personality tests used in the market. Each test measures different personality traits or behavioural styles. Therefore, understanding what your personality test measures, how it measures your personality, and what type of personality traits are important to your employer, is vital in getting you through the personality test and getting your dream job.

The companies that produce personality tests and the human resources staff who use them invariably refer to these tests as personality 'questionnaires' rather than 'tests'. This is done to avoid giving the impression that there are right and wrong answers and that the test can be either passed or failed. Obviously, no one type of personality is necessarily better or worse than any other. However, remember that you are being given this test for a reason, the employer is plainly looking for something otherwise they would not be wasting time and money on the testing process.

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        PERSONALITY
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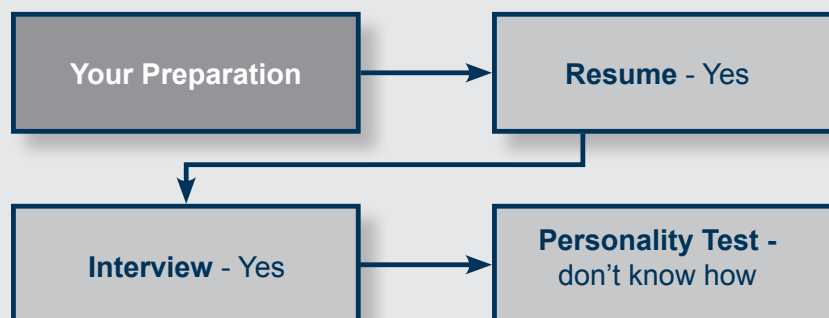email: emeajobs@flagshipmgt.com

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It is worth taking a few steps back and looking at the selection process objectively. What is the recruiting organization trying to achieve? In simple terms, having received tens or hundreds of applications for a job, they are faced with the considerable task of rejecting all but one of them. Most applicants are rejected on the basis of their resume, but this will usually leave about 10 or so who need to be rejected for other reasons.

Looking at the recruitment process like this makes a lot of people uncomfortable – the idea of lots of losers and only one winner makes the whole thing seem brutally competitive. And of course it is. A medium sized organization may need to fill several job vacancies every week and this means that lots of applicants need to be screened and nearly all of them rejected, without the whole process costing too much in terms of cash and manpower. In the context of selection, personality questionnaires are just another hurdle that you need to get over to get the job.

Lack of Good Advice

It is interesting to see how little real advice there is, either in books or on the web, about how to approach the personality questionnaires used in selection. For example, most of the job sites on the internet have several pages of advice for job-seekers on how to prepare their resume or how to answer 'tough' interview questions. However, when it comes to preparing yourself for a personality test, the advice is usually limited to 'just be yourself'. This is a very inconsistent position to take. After all, if you're going to spend considerable time and effort preparing your resume and preparing for the interview, then why not prepare yourself for the personality questionnaire?

Your Preparation	→	Resume - Yes
Interview - Yes	→	Personality Test - don't know how

To understand where this 'just be yourself' advice comes from it is necessary to look at where these job sites get their content from. The advice that these sites do give is usually little more than a reworking of material that can be found on their competitor's web sites or in any one of dozens of books on these topics. Much of it is written by professional copywriters who may not have much interest in the recruitment and selection industry.

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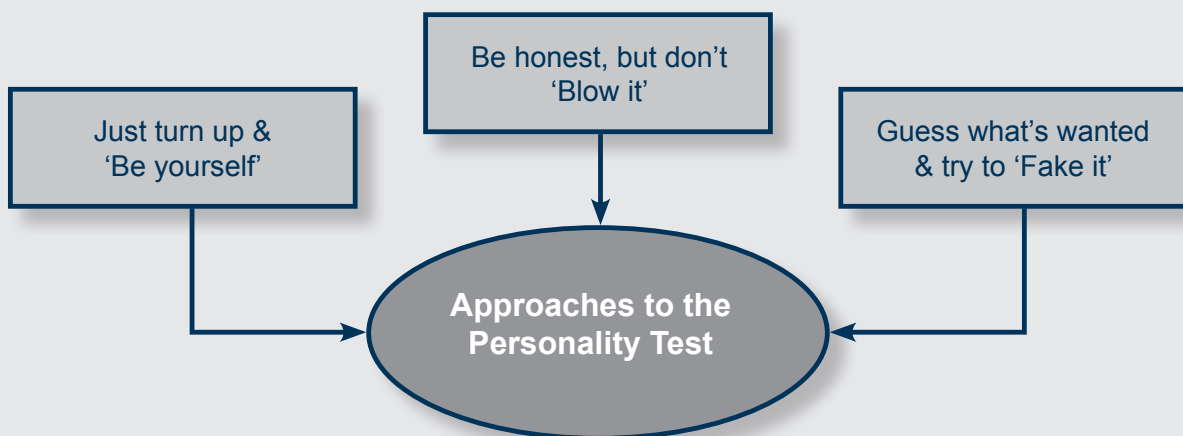email: emeajobs@flagshipmgt.com

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This shouldn't be surprising, job sites make their money by putting numbers of candidates forward, not by successfully getting individual candidates jobs. They are not experts in the workings of the selection process, but they do feel as though they should have some advice on their web sites to bring in traffic and to add some credibility.

Another reason for the 'just be yourself' advice is because the test suppliers have been very successful in getting across the message that these tests are so sophisticated that you cannot influence your result without being 'caught'. This is a case of 'sales talk' becoming accepted wisdom because it is being repeated again and again by every company that produces tests. This is after all a very competitive industry and every company selling these tests must push the message that their test is 100% reliable if they are going to stay in business.

Approaches to the Personality Questionnaire

There are three approaches that you can take to the personality test. You can either be totally honest and make no attempt to influence the outcome, you can try to determine what characteristics you think the employer is looking for and try to 'fake' the test accordingly or you can learn enough about how these tests work so that you can be honest whilst ensuring that you don't blow your chances because one aspect of your personality comes over as too extreme or inappropriate.

Be honest, but don't 'Blow it'

Just turn up & 'Be yourself'		Guess what's wanted & try to 'Fake it'

Approaches to the Personality Test

The idea of making any attempt to influence your personality profile may be difficult for some people to accept. Many people within HR and the companies that sell the tests would agree. They see personality profiling as an academic exercise which you should submit to without question. It's up to you to decide which option to take. You can either; turn up and 'just be yourself', take the tests and hope for the best or you can invest a little time and effort to understand how these tests work, and what you need to do to make sure that you're not unfairly rejected.

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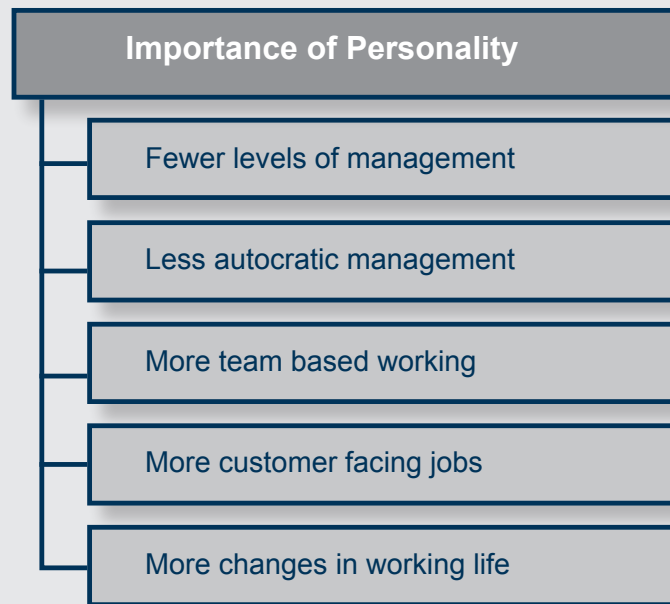email: emeajobs@flagshipmgt.com

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Before you make your decision, you need to understand what it is that the tests try to measure, how they measure it and how the employer uses this information. The topic is further complicated in that there is very little consensus outside of the personality test industry about how accurate some of these tests really are, compared to **aptitude tests** or the tests used in **assessment centers.** This is one area where you really do have to make your own decision.

There are only three questions the employer really has to answer during the selection process: Firstly, do you have the right skills and experience? Secondly, do you have the required enthusiasm and motivation? Finally, are you going to fit in, in terms of your personality, attitude and general work style?

Do you have the required...

| Skills & Experience? | Enthusiasm & Motivation? | Personality & Attitude? |

Personality has a significant role to play in providing answers to the second and third of these questions. In most working situations it's the personality of your co-workers and managers that affect the day-to-day success of the organization. If the team doesn't work well together or a manager can't motivate their staff, then productivity and quality of service will suffer.

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Importance of Personality

- Fewer levels of management
- Less autocratic management
- More team based working
- More customer facing jobs
- More changes in working life

The way that most organizations operate has also changed in the last 30 years. There are usually fewer levels of management than there were and management styles tend to be less autocratic. In addition, the move in the western world at least, towards more knowledge based and customer focused jobs means that individuals have more autonomy even at fairly low levels within organizations. The effects of these changes means that your personality is seen by a potential employer as more important now than it was in the past.

Personality Tests - Widely Used But Still Controversial

In 2009, personality testing is $500 million industry which has been expanding by about 10% per year. There are currently well over 2,500 personality questionnaires on the market and each year dozens of new companies appear with their own 'new' products. Some of these products are broad-spectrum tests designed to classify basic personality types, some are designed to test candidates for suitability for a particular job and some are designed to test for particular traits – for example, honesty and integrity.

There is a historical association with academic and occupational psychology which gives the personality testing industry a degree of credibility that it does not always deserve. Many of the well established companies who provide personality tests do operate to the highest ethical and professional standards. However, it is inevitable that such a growth industry with low barriers to entry and little official regulation has attracted entrants with varying degrees of competence and integrity.

This situation is made more difficult since most of the companies that produce personality tests are very secretive about their methodologies and refuse to make public crucial information about how their tests were developed or how well they work, claiming that this information is 'proprietary'. The usefulness and accuracy of even the most well established tests, (for example, the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** - first published in 1962 and the subject of thousands of research papers), remain highly controversial among psychologists.

The most widely Used Personality Tests

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) - assessment is a **personality test** designed to measure preferences in how people see the world and make decisions. The MBTI was originally developed in the 1940's by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, who thought that an understanding of personality preferences would help women who were entering the workforce for the first time to identify the sort of war-time jobs which would suit them best. By the early 1960's, the initial questionnaire had become refined into the MBTI.

The MBTI uses a series of forced choice questions in which the individual has to choose only one of two possible answers to each question. The choices are a mixture of word pairs and short statements and are chosen to reflect opposite preferences. Participants may skip questions if they feel they are unable to choose. The current North American English version of the MBTI includes 93 forced choice questions and there are 88 questions in the European English version.

The SHL OPQ32r - This test measures aspects of behaviour that are crucial to performance potential, which cannot easily be identified by other techniques, such as reading CVs and interviewing. The OPQ32r provides a clear, simple framework for understanding the impact of personality on job performance.

The OPQ32r is available in more than 30 languages and is administered online. The questionnaire takes the majority of people less than 30 minutes to complete and a range of reports are available, providing clear, concise, graphical summaries of performance against job competencies. Most of these reports are designed for use by line managers.

Popular reports include:
* The Manager Plus Report   * The Sales Report
* The Candidate Plus Report   * The Leadership Report.
* The Universal Competency Report   * The Team Development Report

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Why Personality Test Use is Increasing

Despite the controversy surrounding some of these personality tests, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of personality tests over the past ten years or so. The single most frequently given reason for increases in testing is the need to have a selection process which can withstand legal challenges. Increased test use can therefore be seen in part as a defensive strategy, adopted in response to regulation and legislation. Another factor is the ease with which these tests can now be delivered online. This approach has distinct advantages over paper-and-pencil tests:

- There is no need to print and distribute printed material. This has dramatically lowered the cost of test administration.
- Results can be processed immediately with no human input. The test administration software can produce very detailed and impressive looking reports.
- There has been a growing acceptance of personality testing among the general public. Many people quite happily complete online personality profiles in their own time outside of the recruitment process.
- There are now more suppliers producing a greater variety of tests. This has driven costs down even further and increased the choice of tests available to recruiting organizations.

The principle behind personality questionnaires is that it is possible to quantify your intrinsic personality characteristics by asking you about your feelings, thoughts and behaviour. You will be presented with statements describing various ways of feeling or acting and asked to answer each one on a 2 point, 5 point or 7 point scale. For example;

1. **I enjoy public speaking?**
    a) True ☐   b) False ☐

2. **I have clear personal goals?**
    a) strongly disagree ☐   b) disagree ☐   c) neutral ☐   d) agree ☐
    e) strongly agree ☐

3. **I am good at dealing with difficult people?**
    a) very strongly disagree ☐   b) strongly disagree ☐   c) disagree ☐   d) neutral ☐
    e) agree ☐   f) strongly agree ☐   g) very strongly agree ☐

The number of questions you are expected to answer varies from about 50 to 200, depending on the duration of the test.

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At first glance, these tests may seem to be both simplistic in their approach and unrealistic in their aims. After all, how can something as complex as your personality be measured and quantified in so little time and with so few questions. In addition, it is easy to see that some of the questions are imprecise and could be answered honestly in different ways depending on your particular interpretation of them on the day.

For example, take question 3 above 'I am good at dealing with difficult people? Your answer to this question depends on your interpretation of two things. Firstly 'good', does this mean good compared to other people in your office, good compared to the general public or good compared to some other group? Secondly 'difficult people', does this mean people who are abusive and violent, people who are withdrawn, people who are selfish or what?

The important point to remember is that even the best of the personality questionnaires used in selection are far from perfect. They are seriously constrained because the number of questions is limited by the time available - the personality questionnaire is usually only one of a battery of aptitude tests, interviews and possibly assessment centre exercises that make up the selection process. However, even if we accept that these tests do have some shortcomings, we still need to know what they are trying to measure and why.

What are Personality Types and Traits?

Psychologists define personality as:
"The particular pattern of behaviour and thinking that prevails across time and contexts, and differentiates one person from another."
The goal of psychologists is to understand the causes of individual differences in behaviour. In order to do this one must firstly identify personality characteristics (often called personality traits), and then determine the variables that produce and control them.

A personality trait is assumed to be some enduring characteristic that is relatively constant as opposed to the present temperament of that person which is not necessarily a stable characteristic. Consequently, trait theories are specifically focused on explaining the more permanent personality characteristics that differentiate one individual from another. For example, things like being; dependable, trustworthy, friendly, cheerful, etc.

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One of the first trait theories was developed in ancient Greece by the physician Galen who suggested that our personality was a reflection of the four humors (fluids) that were important in the human body.

Personality Type	Person is...	Associated Humor
Choleric	Bad tempered, irritable	Yellow bile
Melancholic	Gloomy, pessimistic	Black bile
Phlegmatic	Sluggish, non excitable	Phlegm
Sanguine	Cheerful, passionate	Blood

If one of these humors dominated the others then the personality type associated with that humor would be observed. The kind of strict categorization suggested by theories like Galen's suggests that there very different types of personalities.

More recently, personality theories have leaned more towards the idea that we all have similar personality traits or characteristics, but the extent to which we possess that trait differs. For example, we often classify people as tall or short, but we don't really think that people must be either one or the other. We understand that height is a trait the some of us have more of than others, but we all have it to some extent. If we accept the existence of common personality traits that we all have to varying extents, then the next stage is to agree on how to define them.

Psychologists have used a technique known as factor analysis to identify groups of items, which are strongly inter-correlated (these groups of items are known as factors), and believe that these factors provide operational definitions of personality traits. These traits are validated by correlations between scores on these factors and observed behaviour.
For example, a factor emphasizing extraversion* would be correlated with outgoing behaviour.
*Extraversion is "the act, state, or habit of being predominantly concerned with and obtaining gratification from what is outside the self". Extraverts tend to enjoy human interactions and to be enthusiastic, talkative, assertive, and gregarious. They take pleasure in activities that involve large social gatherings, such as parties, community activities, public demonstrations, and business or political groups. Politics, teaching, sales, managing and brokering are fields that favor extraversion. An extraverted person is likely to enjoy time spent with people and find less reward in time spent alone. They tend to be energized when around other people, and they are more prone to boredom when they are by themselves.

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Although many people view being introverted or extraverted as a question with only two possible answers, most contemporary trait theories (e.g. **the Big Five**) measure levels of extraversion-introversion as part of a single, continuous dimension of personality, with some scores near one end, and others near the half-way mark.

It is important to be aware that the **personality tests** used in the recruitment and selection process are the intellectual property of the companies that produce them. As a result, they may use different terminology to describe the aspects of personality that they set out to measure. This usually for reasons of copyright and to differentiate themselves in a market in which there are a large number of products that do more or less the same thing in more or less the same way.

To avoid any bias and to steer clear of any copyright issues, we will use the definitions placed in the public domain by the noted psychologist Dr. John A. Johnson of Pennsylvania State University.

The **personality traits** used in the 5 factor model are Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience.

It is important to ignore the positive or negative associations that these words have in everyday language. For example, Agreeableness is obviously advantageous for achieving and maintaining popularity. Agreeable people are better liked than disagreeable people. On the other hand, agreeableness is not useful in situations that require tough or totally objective decisions.

Disagreeable people can make excellent scientists, critics, or soldiers. Remember, none of the five traits is in themselves positive or negative, they are simply characteristics that individuals exhibit to a greater or lesser extent.

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Five Factor Theory

Five Factor Theory (Costa & McCrae)	- ⬅- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ➡ +
Extraversion	
Agreeableness	
Conscientiousness	
Neuroticism	
Openness to Experience	

Each of these 5 personality traits describes, relative to other people, the frequency or intensity of a person's feelings, thoughts, or behaviors. Everyone possesses all 5 of these traits to a greater or lesser degree. For example, two individuals could be described as 'agreeable' (agreeable people value getting along with others). But there could be significant variation in the degree to which they are both agreeable. In other words, all 5 personality traits exist on a continuum (see diagram) rather than as attributes that a person does or does not have.

Extraversion

Extraversion is marked by pronounced engagement with the external world. Extraverts enjoy being with people, are full of energy, and often experience positive emotions. They tend to be enthusiastic, action-oriented, individuals who are likely to say "Yes!" or "Let's go!" to opportunities for excitement. In groups they like to talk, assert themselves, and draw attention to themselves.

Introverts lack the exuberance, energy, and activity levels of extraverts. They tend to be quiet, low-key, deliberate, and disengaged from the social world. Their lack of social involvement should not be interpreted as shyness or depression; the introvert simply needs less stimulation than an extravert and prefers to be alone. The independence and reserve of the introvert is sometimes mistaken as unfriendliness or arrogance. In reality, an introvert who scores high on the agreeableness dimension will not seek others out but will be quite pleasant when approached.

Agreeableness

Agreeableness reflects individual differences in concern with cooperation and social harmony. Agreeable individuals value getting along with others. They are therefore considerate, friendly, generous, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others'. Agreeable people also have an optimistic view of human nature. They believe people are basically honest, decent, and trustworthy.

Disagreeable individuals place self-interest above getting along with others. They are generally unconcerned with others' well-being, and therefore are unlikely to extend themselves for other people. Sometimes their scepticism about others' motives causes them to be suspicious, unfriendly, and uncooperative.

Agreeableness is obviously advantageous for attaining and maintaining popularity. Agreeable people are better liked than disagreeable people. On the other hand, agreeableness is not useful in situations that require tough or absolute objective decisions. Disagreeable people can make excellent scientists, critics, or soldiers.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness concerns the way in which we control, regulate, and direct our impulses. Impulses are not inherently bad; occasionally time constraints require a snap decision, and acting on our first impulse can be an effective response. Also, in times of play rather than work, acting spontaneously and impulsively can be fun. Impulsive individuals can be seen by others as colorful, fun-to-be-with, and zany.

Nonetheless, acting on impulse can lead to trouble in a number of ways. Some impulses are antisocial. Uncontrolled antisocial acts not only harm other members of society, but also can result in retribution toward the perpetrator of such impulsive acts. Another problem with impulsive acts is that they often produce immediate rewards but undesirable, long-term consequences. Examples include excessive socializing that leads to being fired from one's job, hurling an insult that causes the breakup of an important relationship, or using pleasure-inducing drugs that eventually destroy one's health.

Impulsive behaviour, even when not seriously destructive, diminishes a person's effectiveness in significant ways. Acting impulsively disallows contemplating alternative courses of action, some of which would have been wiser than the impulsive choice. Impulsivity also sidetracks people during projects that require organized sequences of steps or stages. Accomplishments of an impulsive person are therefore small, scattered, and inconsistent.

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A hallmark of intelligence, what potentially separates human beings from earlier life forms, is the ability to think about future consequences before acting on an impulse. Intelligent activity involves contemplation of long-range goals, organizing and planning routes to these goals, and persisting toward one's goals in the face of short-lived impulses to the contrary. The idea that intelligence involves impulse control is nicely captured by the term prudence, an alternative label for the Conscientiousness domain. Prudent means both wise and cautious. Persons who score high on the Conscientiousness scale are, in fact, perceived by others as intelligent.

The benefits of high conscientiousness are obvious. Conscientious individuals avoid trouble and achieve high levels of success through purposeful planning and persistence. They are also positively regarded by others as intelligent and reliable. On the negative side, they can be compulsive perfectionists and workaholics. Furthermore, extremely conscientious individuals might be regarded as stuffy and boring. Unconscientious people may be criticized for their unreliability, lack of ambition, and failure to stay within the lines, but they will experience many short-lived pleasures and they will never be called stuffy.

Neuroticism

Freud originally used the term neurosis to describe a condition marked by mental distress, emotional suffering, and an inability to cope effectively with the normal demands of life. He suggested that everyone shows some signs of neurosis, but that we differ in our degree of suffering and our specific symptoms of distress. Today neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative feelings.

Those who score high on Neuroticism may experience primarily one specific negative feeling such as anxiety, anger, or depression, but are likely to experience several of these emotions. People high in neuroticism are emotionally reactive. They respond emotionally to events that would not affect most people, and their reactions tend to be more intense than normal. They are more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening, and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult. Their negative emotional reactions tend to persist for unusually long periods of time, which means they are often in a bad mood. These problems in emotional regulation can diminish a neurotic's ability to think clearly, make decisions, and cope effectively with stress.

At the other end of the scale, individuals who score low in neuroticism are less easily upset and are less emotionally reactive. They tend to be calm, emotionally stable, and free from persistent negative feelings. Freedom from negative feelings does not mean that low scorers experience a lot of positive feelings; frequency Tef positive emotions is a component of the Extraversion domain.

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Openness to experience.

Openness to Experience describes a dimension of cognitive style that distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down-to-earth, conventional people. Open people are intellectually curious, appreciative of art, and sensitive to beauty. They tend to be, compared to closed people, more aware of their feelings. They tend to think and act in individualistic and nonconforming ways. Intellectuals typically score high on Openness to Experience; consequently, this factor has also been called Culture or Intellect. Nonetheless, Intellect is probably best regarded as one aspect of openness to experience. Scores on Openness to Experience are only modestly related to years of education and scores on standard intelligent tests.

Another characteristic of the open cognitive style is a facility for thinking in symbols and abstractions far removed from concrete experience. Depending on the individual's specific intellectual abilities, this symbolic cognition may take the form of mathematical, logical, or geometric thinking, artistic and metaphorical use of language, music composition or performance, or one of the many visual or performing arts. People with low scores on openness to experience tend to have narrow, common interests. They prefer the plain, straightforward, and obvious over the complex, ambiguous, and subtle. They may regard the arts and sciences with suspicion, regarding these endeavors as abstruse or of no practical use. Closed people prefer familiarity over novelty; they are conservative and resistant to change.

Openness is often presented as healthier or more mature by psychologists, who are often themselves open to experience. However, open and closed styles of thinking are useful in different environments. The intellectual style of the open person may serve a professor well, but research has shown that closed thinking is related to superior job performance in police work, sales, and a number of service occupations.

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Subordinate Personality Traits or Facets

Each of the big 5 personality traits is made up of 6 facets or sub traits. These can be assessed independently of the trait that they belong to.

Extraversion	Friendliness, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity Level, Excitement - Seeking, Cheerfulness
Agreeableness	Trust, Morality, Altruism, Cooperation, Modesty, Sympathy
Conscientiousness	Self-efficacy, Orderliness, Dutifulness, Achievement-Striving, Self-discipline, Cautiousness
Neuroticism	Anxiety, Anger, Depression, Self-consciousness, Immoderation, Vulnerability
Openness to Experience	Imagination, Artistic Interests, Emotionality, Adventurousness, Intellect, Liberalism

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Subordinate Personality Traits or Facets cont'd

Extraversion Facets

- Friendliness. Friendly people genuinely like other people and openly demonstrate positive feelings toward others. They make friends quickly and it is easy for them to form close, intimate relationships. Low scorers on Friendliness are not necessarily cold and hostile, but they do not reach out to others and are perceived as distant and reserved.

- Gregariousness. Gregarious people find the company of others pleasantly stimulating and rewarding. They enjoy the excitement of crowds. Low scorers tend to feel overwhelmed by, and therefore actively avoid, large crowds. They do not necessarily dislike being with people sometimes, but their need for privacy and time to themselves is much greater than for individuals who score high on this scale.

- Assertiveness. High scorers Assertiveness like to speak out, take charge, and direct the activities of others. They tend to be leaders in groups. Low scorers tend not to talk much and let others control the activities of groups.

- Activity Level. Active individuals lead fast-paced, busy lives. They move about quickly, energetically, and vigorously, and they are involved in many activities. People who score low on this scale follow a slower and more leisurely, relaxed pace.

- Excitement-Seeking. High scorers on this scale are easily bored without high levels of stimulation. They love bright lights and hustle and bustle. They are likely to take risks and seek thrills. Low scorers are overwhelmed by noise and commotion and are adverse to thrill-seeking.

- Cheerfulness. This scale measures positive mood and feelings, not negative emotions (which are a part of the Neuroticism domain). Persons who score high on this scale typically experience a range of positive feelings, including happiness, enthusiasm, optimism, and joy. Low scorers are not as prone to such energetic, high spirits.

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Subordinate Personality Traits or Facets cont'd

Agreeableness Facets

- Trust. A person with high trust assumes that most people are fair, honest, and have good intentions. Persons low in trust may see others as selfish, devious, and potentially dangerous.

- Morality. High scorers on this scale see no need for pretence or manipulation when dealing with others and are therefore candid, frank, and sincere. Low scorers believe that a certain amount of deception in social relationships is necessary. People find it relatively easy to relate to the straightforward high-scorers on this scale. They generally find it more difficult to relate to the low-scorers on this scale. It should be made clear that low scorers are not unprincipled or immoral; they are simply more guarded and less willing to openly reveal the whole truth.

- Altruism. Altruistic people find helping other people genuinely rewarding. Consequently, they are generally willing to assist those who are in need. Altruistic people find that doing things for others is a form of self-fulfilment rather than self-sacrifice. Low scorers on this scale do not particularly like helping those in need. Requests for help feel like an imposition rather than an opportunity for self-fulfilment.

- Cooperation. Individuals who score high on this scale dislike confrontations. They are perfectly willing to compromise or to deny their own needs in order to get along with others. Those who score low on this scale are more likely to intimidate others to get their way.

- Modesty. High scorers on this scale do not like to claim that they are better than other people. In some cases this attitude may derive from low self-confidence or self-esteem. Nonetheless, some people with high self-esteem find immodesty unseemly. Those who are willing to describe themselves as superior tend to be seen as disagreeably arrogant by other people.

- Sympathy. People who score high on this scale are tender-hearted and compassionate. They feel the pain of others vicariously and are easily moved to pity. Low scorers are not affected strongly by human suffering. They pride themselves on making objective judgments based on reason. They are more concerned with truth and impartial justice than with mercy.

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Subordinate Personality Traits or Facets cont'd

Conscientiousness Facets

- Self-Efficacy. Self-Efficacy describes confidence in one's ability to accomplish things. High scorers believe they have the intelligence (common sense), drive, and self-control necessary for achieving success. Low scorers do not feel effective, and may have a sense that they are not in control of their lives.

- Orderliness. Persons with high scores on orderliness are well-organized. They like to live according to routines and schedules. They keep lists and make plans. Low scorers tend to be disorganized and scattered.

- Dutifulness. This scale reflects the strength of a person's sense of duty and obligation. Those who score high on this scale have a strong sense of moral obligation. Low scorers find contracts, rules, and regulations overly confining. They are likely to be seen as unreliable or even irresponsible.

- Achievement-Striving. Individuals who score high on this scale strive hard to achieve excellence. Their drive to be recognized as successful keeps them on track toward their lofty goals. They often have a strong sense of direction in life, but extremely high scores may be too single-minded and obsessed with their work. Low scorers are content to get by with a minimal amount of work, and might be seen by others as lazy.

- Self-Discipline. Self-discipline-what many people call will-power-refers to the ability to persist at difficult or unpleasant tasks until they are completed. People who possess high self-discipline are able to overcome reluctance to begin tasks and stay on track despite distractions. Those with low self-discipline procrastinate and show poor follow-through, often failing to complete tasks-even tasks they want very much to complete.

- Cautiousness. Cautiousness describes the disposition to think through possibilities before acting. High scorers on the Cautiousness scale take their time when making decisions. Low scorers often say or do first thing that comes to mind without deliberating alternatives and the probable consequences of those alternatives.

Subordinate Personality Traits or Facets cont'd

Neuroticism Facets

- Anxiety. The "fight-or-flight" system of the brain of anxious individuals is too easily and too often engaged. Therefore, people who are high in anxiety often feel like something dangerous is about to happen. They may be afraid of specific situations or be just generally fearful. They feel tense, jittery, and nervous. Persons low in Anxiety are generally calm and fearless.

- Anger. Persons who score high in Anger feel enraged when things do not go their way. They are sensitive about being treated fairly and feel resentful and bitter when they feel they are being cheated. This scale measures the tendency to feel angry; whether or not the person expresses annoyance and hostility depends on the individual's level on Agreeableness. Low scorers do not get angry often or easily.

- Depression. This scale measures the tendency to feel sad, dejected, and discouraged. High scorers lack energy and have difficult initiating activities. Low scorers tend to be free from these depressive feelings.

- Self-Consciousness. Self-conscious individuals are sensitive about what others think of them. Their concern about rejection and ridicule cause them to feel shy and uncomfortable abound others. They are easily embarrassed and often feel ashamed. Their fears that others will criticize or make fun of them are exaggerated and unrealistic, but their awkwardness and discomfort may make these fears a self-fulfilling prophecy. Low scorers, in contrast, do not suffer from the mistaken impression that everyone is watching and judging them. They do not feel nervous in social situations.

- Immoderation. Immoderate individuals feel strong cravings and urges that they have difficulty resisting. They tend to be oriented toward short-term pleasures and rewards rather than long- term consequences. Low scorers do not experience strong, irresistible cravings and consequently do not find themselves tempted to overindulge.
- Vulnerability. High scorers on Vulnerability experience panic, confusion, and helplessness when under pressure or stress. Low scorers feel more poised, confident, and clear-thinking when stressed.

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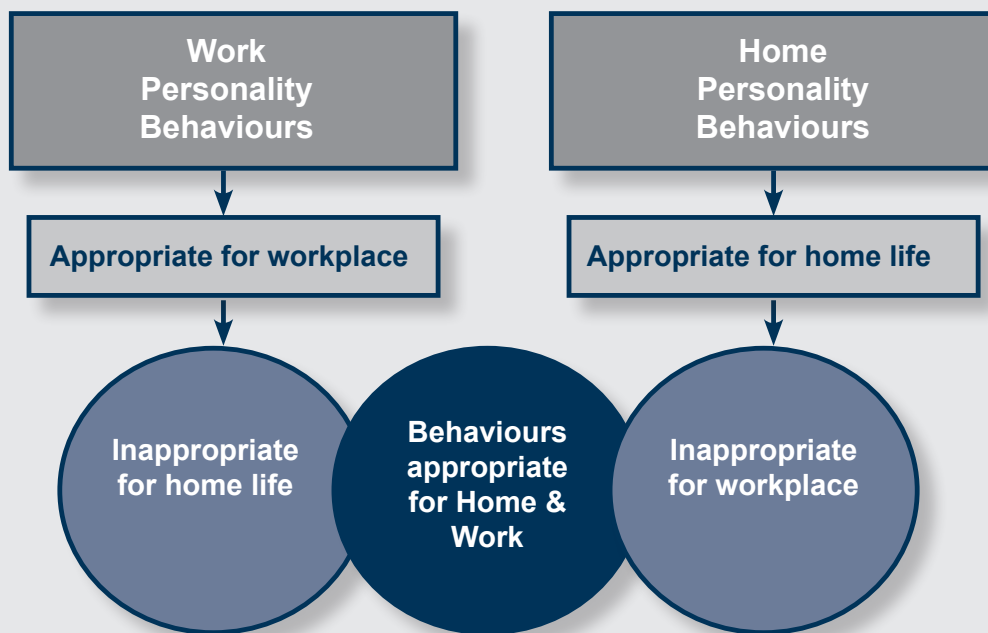## Subordinate Personality Traits or Facets cont'd

Openness Facets

- Imagination. To imaginative individuals, the real world is often too plain and ordinary. High scorers on this scale use fantasy as a way of creating a richer, more interesting world. Low scorers are on this scale are more oriented to facts than fantasy.

- Artistic Interests. High scorers on this scale love beauty, both in art and in nature. They become easily involved and absorbed in artistic and natural events. They are not necessarily artistically trained or talented, although many will be. The defining features of this scale are interest in, and appreciation of natural and artificial beauty. Low scorers lack aesthetic sensitivity and interest in the arts.

- Emotionality. Persons high on Emotionality have good access to and awareness of their own feelings. Low scorers are less aware of their feelings and tend not to express their emotions openly.

- Adventurousness. High scorers on adventurousness are eager to try new activities, travel to foreign lands, and experience different things. They find familiarity and routine boring, and will take a new route home just because it is different. Low scorers tend to feel uncomfortable with change and prefer familiar routines.

- Intellect. Intellect and artistic interests are the two most important, central aspects of openness to experience. High scorers on Intellect love to play with ideas. They are open-minded to new and unusual ideas, and like to debate intellectual issues. They enjoy riddles, puzzles, and brain teasers. Low scorers on Intellect prefer dealing with people or things rather than ideas. They regard intellectual exercises as a waste of time. Intellect should not be equated with intelligence. Intellect is an intellectual style, not an intellectual ability, although high scorers on Intellect score slightly higher than low-Intellect individuals on standardized intelligence tests.

- Liberalism. Psychological liberalism refers to a readiness to challenge authority, convention, and traditional values. In its most extreme form, psychological liberalism can even represent outright hostility toward rules, sympathy for law-breakers, and love of ambiguity, chaos, and disorder. Psychological conservatives prefer the security and stability brought by conformity to tradition. Psychological liberalism and conservatism are not identical to political affiliation, but certainly incline individuals toward certain political parties.

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It is possible, although unusual, to score high in one or more facets of a personality trait and low in other facets of the same trait. For example, you could score highly in Imagination, Artistic Interests, Emotionality and Adventurousness, but score low in Intellect and Liberalism.

Most of us find some aspect of our jobs that require us to modify our preferred behaviour. Perhaps you're more assertive at work than you really feel comfortable with or maybe you're more 'inclusive'. The point is that we can and do deal with the demands of the workplace by adopting a 'work' personality. Most of us do it fairly effortlessly. We accept that the world of work is not about living within our 'comfort zone' all of the time and we all have the ability to step outside of our natural behavioral preferences in order to get something done. The problem is that the way **personality questionnaires** are applied in the real-world takes no account of this.

Work Personality Behaviours	Home Personality Behaviours
Appropriate for workplace	Appropriate for home life
Inappropriate for home life	**Behaviours appropriate for Home & Work**	Inappropriate for workplace

One argument that you may hear, is that if you try to influence the test results then you will have to operate 'outside' of your personality type for 40 hours a week. This is overstating the case to the point of absurdity; very few people would even consider applying for a job which was totally unsuitable for them. You do not need to fake a 180 degree change in your personality, but you may need to modify how one **personality trait** appears in the results of a test. This is perfectly reasonable as most of us modify our behaviour at work anyway.

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The extent to which people behave differently at work to the way that they behave outside of work is something that does not seem to have been studied in any serious way and is something that personality tests completely fail to take into account. Anecdotal evidence and personal experience suggest that a significant number of people are able to behave very differently between home and the workplace. You may even have met someone who appears very laid-back socially and who defers to their spouse regarding social and domestic arrangements but who nontheless has a high powered job which involves a lot of tough decision making. In a similar vein, many people with sedentary technical jobs prefer to spend their leisure time doing something active rather than spending it in front of a computer screen.

If you recognise in yourself this dichotomy between workplace and non-workplace behaviours, then you should answer all personality test questions from a workplace perspective.

For example, consider the following statement.
1) It's easy for people to see my moods
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Neutral
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

You should answer this question from a workplace perspective. In other words you may wear your heart on your sleeve at home, but if you are much more guarded at work then make this clear in your answer by selecting C or B rather than D.

Despite all of the platitudes to the contrary, either you have the 'right' personality or you get rejected in favor of someone who has. The idea that there are no right and wrong answers is patently untrue. The test publishers and the organizations that use the tests admit as much when they say 'personality questionnaires help to replace subjective judgments with objective ones'. If there are no right and wrong answers, then what exactly is the test replacing subjective judgments with?

If you want the job then you had better find out what it is that the employer is looking for and make sure that your personality questionnaire answers reflect it. At the very least you need to make sure that you don't blow your chances because one trait comes over as too extreme or inappropriate. Remember, almost all of the interviewees have to be rejected.

The amount of effort you need to spend on 'engineering' your personality questionnaire answers depends on two factors.

Firstly, the organization. Some organizations have a distinct personality type that they actively try to recruit. This will usually be obvious from both their marketing material and their reputation. Any organization that promotes its people as being of a certain 'type' will probably be using personality questionnaires to reject anyone who doesn't fit with the corporate image that they want to promote. This is common in management consultancies and in jobs above a certain level in big corporations.

Secondly, the job. Some interviewers suffer from a very blinkered approach to what type of personality is required for particular jobs. For example, if the profile for successful salesmen indicates that extroversion is a desirable characteristic, you had better be sure that you score highly on this trait if you want the job. Whilst you don't want to pursue jobs that you are obviously unsuited for, you need to make sure that your personality questionnaire answers won't cause any 'red-flags' to appear in selection for jobs that you feel comfortable with, or where you already have a track record.

One area that worries many candidates is the idea that **personality tests** are designed to spot any attempt to influence the results. It is true that nearly all tests of this type have impression control questions built into them. These are questions that are designed to indicate whether you are trying to create an overly favorable impression – hence the name. Unfortunately for the test designers, they have yet to develop any impression control questions which are not blindingly obvious.

Personality Tests		
Two types of questions in the tests will contain the words - 'never', 'always', 'ever', 'whatever'		
Impression Control		Honesty/Anger Stress
Designed to spot someone trying to influence test results		Focus on how you feel or think
Are unconditional statements about behaviour	Don't admit to negative behaviour	OK to admit to negative feelings & thoughts

Typical impression control questions look like this:

1. I always finish what I start.
2. I always keep other people's secrets.
3. I always tell people exactly what I think.
4. I am always full of energy.
5. I am always happy.
6. I can't remember ever being late for an appointment.
7. I have always had the perfect job.
8. I have never acted on impulse.
9. I have never arrived at work late.
10. I have never been annoyed with a co-worker.
11. I have never been bored.
12. I have never been late in anything.
13. I have never been moved to anyone.
14. I have never been tired at work.
15. I have never disappointed anyone.
16. I have never failed to complete a work assignment on time.
17. I have never failed to reach a personal goal that I set for myself .
18. I have never felt alone.
19. I have never felt angry at a supervisor or manager.
20. I have never felt sad.
21. I have never hurt anyone's feelings.
22. I have never lost a night's sleep worrying about something.
23. I have never made a mistake at work.
24. I have never made a statement that was not completely true.
25. I have never met someone I didn't like.
26. I have never used bad language to anyone.
27. I have planned ahead in everything I've done.
28. I never regret my decisions after I make them.
29. I never tell white lies.
30. I never worry if I make a mistake.
31. I'm happy to see people whatever the circumstances.
32. I've never been deliberately rude to anyone.
33. None of my close friends has ever upset me.
34. All of my work has been appreciated and valued by others.

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These questions almost invariably use the words; 'always' or 'never' in relation to something where 'occasionally', 'very occasionally' or 'usually' would be an honest response. Occasionally, you will see 'ever', as in 'None of my close friends has ever upset me' or 'whatever' as in 'I'm happy to see people whatever the circumstances'.
In all cases, you are being asked to agree to some unconditional statement – which is what gives these questions away.

You should answer these impression control questions honestly as disagreeing with a statement like 'I never tell white lies' will obviously not count against you.

The only area where there is really any room for confusion with regard to impression control questions is the honesty/anger/stress questions. These are the only other types of question where you may see 'always', 'never' and other unconditional statements and be expected to strongly agree or strongly disagree with them.
So whilst you should strongly agree with a statement like: 'I have never become angry at work', it is OK to disagree with the statement 'I have never felt angry at a supervisor or manager'. This is because the first statement is asking you if you have ever displayed an unacceptable behaviour at work, and you should obviously answer in the negative. The second statement is asking if you have EVER FELT angry at a supervisor or manager. If your answer claims that you have never felt anger, then this suggests that either you are lying or you don't care sufficiently about your job to ever feel angry, neither of which makes you look like a desirable employee.

It is worth making a list of the honesty/anger/stress questions and the impression control questions and working through these systematically until you can appreciate the (sometimes) subtle differences between the two. As a general rule it is OK to admit to negative thoughts and feelings but do not under any circumstances admit to negative behaviour in the workplace.

Engineering Your Answers to the Personality Test

Qualities like, honesty, integrity, motivation, extraversion and leadership are only some of the personal attributes that the personality tests used for selection attempt to measure. They do however represent areas where you can easily 'blow' your chances if you don't understand what the employer is looking for. Some of the other **personality traits** or facets may be equally as important – this will depend largely on the job you are applying for as well as the employer.

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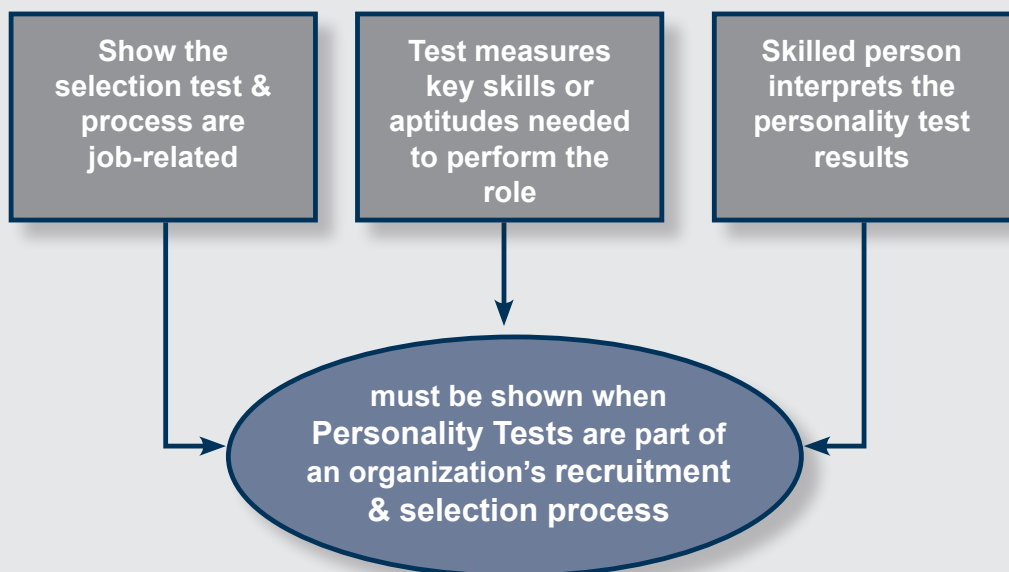Tel: +353 1 905 9100
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How much you choose to try and influence the resulting personality profile is something only you can decide. Common sense would suggest that you should not attempt to influence the results too much as they will probably be seen to conflict with your past achievements and with how you are perceived at the interview.

The use of appropriate tests can help to increase both the perceived and actual fairness of the selection process. However, there are two issues to be considered in this area, Firstly, the same tests should be used in testing for the same position and secondly, consistent of treatment for all applicants.

Where tests are being used for selection purposes they must be used to support other evidence and must not form the only basis for decision making. In addition, only professionally developed tests supported by research and kept up to date should be used.

Employment law means that organizations need to be confident that there is no intended bias or discriminatory impact on the basis of gender, race, religion, disabilities etc. For a company to legally defend its test use, it must prove that it is measuring important skills or aptitudes for effective performance in the job.

The United States Supreme Court has decided several cases which have clarified the place of employment testing in the context of discrimination law, in particular, for the discriminatory use of tests when considering employees for promotion by requiring tests beyond the education that may be required for the job. A central finding is that the employer must be prepared to demonstrate that their selection process is job-related.

Show the selection test & process are job-related	Test measures key skills or aptitudes needed to perform the role	Skilled person interprets the personality test results

must be shown when Personality Tests are part of an organization's recruitment & selection process

Personality tests may potentially be useful in personnel selection: of the **Big Five personality traits,** only conscientiousness correlates substantially with traditional measures of job performance, but that correlation is strong enough to be predictive. However, other factors of personality can correlate substantially with non-traditional aspects of job performance such as leadership and effectiveness in a team environment.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is a highly validated test generally used in a clinical psychology setting that may reveal potential mental health disorders. However, this can be considered by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as the employer having knowledge of a medical condition prior to an offer of employment, which is an illegal basis on which to base a hiring decision in the United States.

Notable situations in which the MMPI may be used, and is sometimes mandated, are in final selection for police officers, fire fighters, and other security and emergency personnel, especially when required to carry weapons. In that context, an assessment of mental stability and fitness can be argued as "reasonably related" and necessary in the performance of the job.

At the point of test delivery, or where test feedback is being given the organization should ensure that the administrators are suitably qualified and experienced.

In the UK this takes the form of 'Level A' and 'Level B' Occupational Test Users. Only personnel qualified to Level B can provide feedback on personality questionnaires and even then they need specific training to use each separate test.

Invitations to attend the test session should include a request for candidates to say whether they have a disability that may require any special arrangements or equipment. This is to ensure that their needs can be catered for and that they will not be disadvantaged. All candidates should be sent practice questions so that they can familiarize themselves with the types of question they will be expected to answer.

Before the test session candidates should be told why the company are using the tests, how the scores will be used and who will have access to their results.

All candidates should have an opportunity to receive feedback and this should be conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone and should (must in the UK) be provided by professionally trained personnel.

All test results must be stored within a secure location and should be retained for only 12 months, after which the test results will be redundant. Confidentiality of test data must be maintained at all stages of the process.

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Test results are only to be used for the specific purpose that was originally indicated and agreed with the test taker. For example, an organization will need the candidates permission to use their original test results if they apply for a subsequent job.

The HR department should continually monitor the tests being used to ensure that they remain relevant and that updated versions and norms are adopted as they become available.

Where does this leave You?

With over 2,500 personality tests available, most of which do more or less the same thing in more or less the same way, there is every incentive for the companies that sell them to make exaggerated claims to try to differentiate their own product from their competitors. These claims are usually promises to do more with less. For example, to produce a more detailed reports from fewer questions or to produce more accurate results from the same number of questions.

Common sense dictates that there is a limit to how much information can realistically be obtained from 20-30 minutes answering simple multiple choice questions. The danger is that the human resources personnel who buy these tests fail to apply the necessary degree of scepticism and job candidates have their futures decided, in part anyway, by a test which has little or no validity or reliability.

Personality tests present a challenge to those employers who want to use them fairly and well. Primarily, they need to have HR personnel, preferably with detailed knowledge of personality questionnaires, who can make realistic evaluations of the various offerings from test suppliers and then administer the tests properly and professionally.

Some websites where you can take some free online tests:

http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/

http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp

http://psychcentral.com/personality-test/start.php