

# Essay on personality testing in employment pre-screening

[Business](#), [Company](#)



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## **Abstract**

In an effort to find better ways to hire appropriate employees, many businesses today are using personality tests as part of the pre-employment screening process. However, there are many problems involved with using personality tests as part of hiring. Personality tests are risky for both employers and employees and should not be used in the hiring process.

## **Personality Testing in Employment Pre-Screening:**

Employers have long attempted to devise ways to ensure that the most qualified candidates for the job positions they offer are the ones who they hire for those positions. This includes appropriate things such as reviewing resumes, personal interviews, or basic tests of skills such as language, math, typing, or other job-position relevant assessments. However, some employers may decide to use personality tests such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to pre-screen possible employees. There are several reasons why employers should not use personality tests as part of the pre-screening process, including faking in self-reporting on tests, some tests may contain

questions not relevant to the job or are discriminatory, and they are illegal in some states.

Personality tests may provide a flawed picture of a candidate to employers because the test-taker may not be honest in their answers. In other words, they may “fake” their answers “because the “right” or most positive answer may be apparent to the candidates” (Morgeson et. al 2007, 685). The outcome of this dishonesty is negative for both employers and potential hires. For the employer, they may find themselves placing someone in a position for which they are simply not suited. Similarly, employees who fake answers may find themselves unable to perform as an employer desires. Various studies have given conflicting results on whether faking really has any overall impact on the validity of personality tests in screening applicants, some finding that it has little impact and others finding that it has a serious impact (Morgeson et. al 2007, 686). The difference in results should lead employers to believe that personality testing is, at best, an unproved tool in pre-screening potential employees.

Another issue in using personality tests to pre-screen employees is the potential that such tests may contain information that is not relevant to the job or is discriminatory. For example, the case *Soroka v. Dayton Hudson* ended in a two-million dollar lawsuit for a security guard employer because a required pre-employment personality test asked job-inappropriate true/false questions such as “I am very strongly attracted by members of my own sex,” “I believe in the second coming of Christ,” “I feel sure there is only one true religion,” and “I have often wished I were a girl (for men)” (Boyd

2003, 2). Specific questions during interviews about religion, family plans, sexual orientation, and national background are unlawful; therefore, it should be illegal for job applicants to answer questions relating to any of these things in a personality test.

Employers considering using personality tests as part of the employment screening process need to make sure that all questions are relevant to the job and also that such testing is legal in their state. As Boyd writes in her article *Employee Testing: What to Avoid*, there are states that have outlawed personality and psychological testing except in specific circumstances (2003, 2). John McSpadden, CEO of MAC & Associates, a recruiting firm, believes that companies can invest in better HR training in interviewing as a better alternative to personality testing (Gutner ¶ 14). Companies can avoid the risks of conflicting with the law by avoiding personality tests and conducting better interviews.

It is not that personality tests are useless tools. Tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can be valuable tools in helping management build efficient teams. However, employers are better off foregoing the personality test as a crutch to lean on in the hiring process, because of the risk of faking, discriminatory lawsuits, or possibly being in violation of state laws.

## References

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