

## **Assessment Test Just One of Many Tools**

**By Scott Hamilton, Ph.D., Senior Vice President  
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Why do companies rely on testing to help them hire and place employees?

It's a fair question, and one that is part of a "Questions About Tests" package that the Association of Test Publishers publishes on its Web site as part of its Frequently Asked Questions. I represent Profiles International as a member of the association, a non-profit group established in 1992 that serves business just like ours -- providers of tests and assessment tools.

Back to the question: Why do companies rely on testing? One important thing to keep in mind is that a test is merely one tool in the kit, just like the interview or the reference check. All help a manager decide which job applicant is most suited to the position he's trying to fill.

Tests differ from the job interview in important ways, however. They are more oriented toward impartiality because they ask the same questions of each person applying for a certain job. They usually don't take as long as a job interview, and thus can be more efficient in obtaining information specifically pertinent to the job.

The good tests have been "tested" for fairness, a lack of bias, propriety, and legality. They allow one applicant's responses to be compared with thousands of others. Research backs up the decisions made from test results.

One satisfied consumer of employee assessments is McDonald's. COO Ralph Alvarez said in a story published in the ACT newsletter that the hamburger giant looked into testing some years back when it saw the competition gaining ground. McDonald's executives examined their business practices to see what was slipping. They discovered that a changing workforce, coupled with prodigious growth, frayed the seams of the company's old hiring and training methods.

McDonald's added up the costs of training a new crewmember (\$400) and a new manager (\$8,000), and decided that it couldn't afford the high turnover it was seeing. Company executives decided on predictive testing for hiring and training.

The tests, like the employees, are a success story, Alvarez says. Turnover at McDonald's decreased by 25 percent. Executives then took their success to the supervisory level. With training and testing there, the company reduced its supervisory regional offices from 38 to 21, while improving performance.

Getting outside vendors to help test and train employees allowed the hamburger chain to get back to doing what it does best -- producing hamburgers.

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Tests are a single tool in the toolbox that includes the interview, job application, and human judgment. Put them all together when hiring, and you get a more rounded picture of the applicant.

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To find out more about assessments, call Profiles' corporate marketing department at 800-880-2909.

**Scott Hamilton is senior vice president of research and development for Profiles International, Inc., the world's fastest growing developer and publisher of tools to help companies reduce training costs and turnover by hiring the right person for each job.**