

# Assessment Tests, Fairness, and the Law

**By Scott Hamilton, Ph.D., Senior Vice President  
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Using tests to measure an applicant's fit with your company's job opening is not only an acceptable thing to do, we encourage it.

Of course, you say. Profiles International is known as "The Assessment Company." Most people would expect us to encourage employers to use our tests.

That's true enough. However, we have much stronger reasons for assessing job applicants, reasons that are based on years of research into finding ways to help employers retain workers and improve productivity.

Consider a couple of basic reasons: assessments help you decide who is a better candidate for your position by testing interests, preferences and personality. Putting the right person in a job he or she likes reduces turnover in that job.

Assuming you are convinced so far, answer these two questions, based on the Department of Labor report on how to use assessment tests fairly. Your answers should be either true or false.

**It's acceptable to use a test for a salesman to determine which applicant should be your new sales manager.**

**If you're considering someone for promotion, it's all right to consider his scores on a proficiency test you gave him five years ago.**

The correct answer on both questions is false. Both violate accepted standards of test use. The first one doesn't work because you would not use the same criteria to measure a good salesperson and a good manager. It helps if a sales manager has a sales background, of course. But to assume a person who excels at selling knows how to manage a department, which includes direction of people, budgeting, prioritizing time and a number of other skill sets, is to make too great a leap.

The second question is invalid because most tests provide information on which you can rely only for a specific amount of time. If you want to use the scores from five years ago as one of many criteria to consider the employee for promotion, that might work, especially if you are looking at job growth.

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The Department of Labor offers 13 standards for assessment tests to meet. They include:

1. Tools must be used in an appropriate manner. You must know what you want to measure.
2. You should use a whole-person approach to testing -- a variety of tools.
3. You must use tests that are unbiased and fair to all groups.
4. Your tests must be reliable, that is, provide accurate and consistent scores.
5. The tests must be valid for the purpose they are being used.
6. The tests must be appropriate for the target population. For example, office managers and receptionists should get different tests.
7. Instructions must be comprehensive and easy-to-understand.
8. Proctors and test administrators must be properly trained.
9. Testing area and conditions should be uniform and consistent for all applicants.
10. Your test must provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.
11. You must keep your tests secured in a locked room or cabinet so access is limited.
12. You ensure test results are kept confidential.
13. You interpret scores properly.

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A professional assessment company makes sure to observe these standards because they make good sense. Ensuring quality products assures excellent results. To learn more about this subject, contact corporate marketing 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.**