

Case study

Looking deeper into the graduate

Is it good enough to rely on one or two indicators when you are hiring a graduate?

Professional firms are discovering Selector Insight reveals more about their applicants and helps ensure they consistently select the best candidates for the role. They're finding suitability is about much more than pure ability.

Graduate recruitment is key to many organisations' success

One of the key hiring decisions for many professional firms revolves around the current year's graduates and whether these applicants will add value to the organisation's activities.

Most graduates have high costs associated with their appointment; induction and training, coaching and secondment, opportunities for real work exposure, along with a performance lag until they become proficient in the role. With this in mind it becomes very important that good hiring decisions are made.

Professional firms cannot afford the luxury of taking someone into the team who will be unsuccessful. Equally importantly, they cannot afford not to select someone who later turns out to be a star-performer—for a competing company!

It's not all about ability

Professional firm

In the past, a client of Selector had based their recruitment of graduates around academic success and, because they were a respected firm, they had little difficulty in attracting qualified and academically gifted applicants.

Using *Selector Insight*, the company analysed the behavioural characteristics of these applicants over a two year period. They looked at the characteristics that matched the most successful and suitable appointments within several roles and discovered that, while academic ability was valuable, it was far more important to ensure the applicant's personal style was well-matched to the role.

One role called for a focus on tasks, requiring orderliness, attention to detail, and the need to work in small qualified teams. Initially there was close supervision to ensure the new staff member was adhering to the rules and procedures. While this would ease off, there was an expectation that the work completed would be regularly checked upon. To ensure professional competence, the successful applicant needed a desire for continued education and learning, and to be task-focused. There was also an expectation that there would be pressure to complete work within allocated timeframes.

While the score on *Selector Insight's* Logical Reasoning scale indicated the operational focus of a candidate, it was discovered their personal characteristics and the analysis of their ideal working environment provided the pertinent selection criteria.

A second key role called for applicants to be strategically focused, competitive, and enjoy the opportunity to operate in business. It required a team player, confident around potential clients, but not too comfortable or overly-familiar.

Previous appointments, who had not been successful, had often presented well at the interview phase. While they had also received glowing reports back from the day-long assessment activities, they had proved to be too sure of themselves, too quickly, which had required management intervention.

The successful applicants, while having similar characteristics, knew when to hold back and refrain from comment. These candidates were more anxious about being successful than those who failed to work out.

On checking the high performers' *Selector Insight* assessment results, the client was able to identify behavioural characteristics around extraversion and interaction, which were often high. However, real success in the role came when those characteristics were moderated by self-confidence scores that ensured they did not 'over-do' the intensity in their interactions.

Ability and the right personality leads to success

Follow-up research found the candidate's personal style was more important than their ability levels. While the majority of high performers all had high Verbal and Numerical Reasoning scores, there were several 'star' performers who showed particular personality traits. These success stories had gained a strong reputation for being team players, being considerate of others, working hard and sharing in the success, and being willing to lend a hand at all times.

This further supports the evidence that while ability is important, without application as well, all an organisation does is to hire a bright person. It was demonstrated that when application is allied to ability this leads to great success.

Other examples

A leading software developer

A leading software development company hires graduates to develop and build new products. Many of the applicants, and the subsequent appointments, have English as a second language, so it is important that the appointment best matches the team environment and project culture.

The applicant's computer skills had been the prime consideration factor and management had been most interested in ascertaining their knowledge around programming and software development.

Later examination of the most successful candidates showed that these skills did not set them apart. What *did* set them apart was an interest in continued learning, their team chemistry, attention to detail, and being comfortable with putting in additional time to keep a project to schedule.

Ability scores indicate the 'size' of a candidate's intellectual ability, but high scores may not be the most suitable indicator for success in a role.

Scientific laboratory

An organisation that took science graduates into their monitoring department had a reputation for only taking 'A' graduates. In a year when they had more positions than applicants they selected some staff who had passed their degree with a number of C and B passes. A follow-up analysis identified the high performers in the role using a number of information sources; managers, team leaders, stake-holders, and clients.

To their shock and surprise, the staff member with the lowest academic qualifications was consistently identified as the best performer and an outstanding researcher.

It became obvious as to why she stood out so clearly when her personal style and work interests were examined. Her focus was on the people and her relationships. She was a team player, who liked to win, but expected a high level of interaction in the relationships around her work. She was confident, but not arrogant, which transferred to clients as being indicative

of an official who wished to assist, but would adhere to the necessary rules as well. Although she was working in a sole-charge role, and had considerable authority, she was someone who included others in the decisions and negotiated a win for all parties.

Conclusion

Successful companies are those that have a very clear idea of exactly who they need to hire, who know what abilities and behaviours led to past applicants being successful staff members, and who understand when it is important to have average, high or sensational achievers in the organisation.

Firms that seek good, solid, performers to fill a role that is routine and regular will find that their turnover is lower than for those that seek 'stars' and then bore them to tears with endless mundane activity! Those that understand there's more to filling a role than the pure ability to do the job will find they hire well-rounded individuals who contribute to the organisation's success.

Selector Insight

Selector *Insight* is a psychometric tool that has a very successful record of assisting Professional organisations with their graduate and technical appointments. Knowing who has been successful in the past and what characteristics are strong indicators of appropriate team behaviour means the hiring manager has the best information to make a successful graduate appointment.

About Selector

Selector Limited is a publicly owned, New Zealand based company made up of a tightly-focused team of data analysts, psychologists and software developers that has been developing psychometric assessment software for more than ten years.

Initial research into the use of software to aid the selection of air traffic controllers has evolved into a suite of personality, ability and vocational assessments delivered via the Internet and in use across the globe by a wide range of industries and organisations.

Selector not only research and develop psychometric assessments but also provide full consultation and interpretation services when required.

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