

## Research update...

## Psychometric tests used for staff development

by Nadia Williams

While the use of psychometric testing is most commonplace during the recruitment and selection process, according to a recent survey by *Personnel Today's* sister organisation, pay specialist IRS, firms are also using the tests to help develop existing staff.

The survey of 88 employers – with a combined workforce of just over 300,000 people – showed that 94% use such tests when recruiting and selecting staff. However, psychometric tests are also widely used to help existing staff better understand their skills, abilities and personalities, with almost half (49%) using the tests for developmental purposes, and 35% using them as part of career coaching and career management.

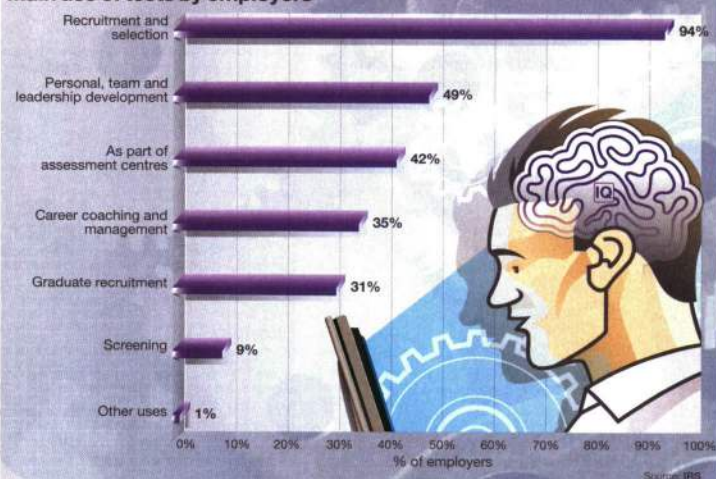
The internet has had a big impact on the administration of tests, with 65% of employers now choosing to conduct their tests online.

However, while many employers believe internet-based testing is easier to use (91%), faster to administer (96%) and offers better value for money (67%), paper-based tests were still the most popular medium, being used by 78% of the respondents.

Employers tend to use a variety of tests, with 31% using four or more in tandem. But they prefer off-the-shelf products (89% of respondents).

Some (8%) prefer to use tests that are specifically designed for their own purposes. However, they tend to reserve the use of such

## Main use of tests by employers



customised tests for instances where they expect a high volume of recruitment for the same type of vacancy, or where the position is highly specialised.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) *Recruitment, Retention and Turnover* survey in 2008, tests to check specific skills are the most popular type (48% of respondents). This is followed by general ability tests (41%), literacy and numeracy tests (40%), and personality and aptitude tests (35%).

According to a factsheet on psychological testing published by the CIPD, a number of factors should be taken into consideration to ensure the best value for money, including:

- Openness: individuals should be warned about the tests in advance
- Confidentiality: access to test results should be restricted
- Screening: a single test should not be used as the basis for shortlisting candidates, but using several may be appropriate for shortlisting.

The survey results show that most employers follow this advice. Almost all (96%) warn candidates about the tests in advance. And 86% provide information on the type of test they will have to complete.

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For more information, go to [www.sperth.co.uk](http://www.sperth.co.uk)

## stat of the week

67%

The percentage of employers that believe online testing offers better value for money than other methods.

Source: IRS

## INFLATION

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell to 3% in January 2009, down from 3.1% in December 2008. Inflation has now declined for four consecutive months from a high of 5.2% in September, driven down by falls in energy costs and fuel prices. The Retail Price Index – considered to be a more accurate measure of inflation, and used to calculate benefits and wage settlements for the year ahead – fell to 0.1% in January 2009, down from 0.9% in December 2008.

→ [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

## WAGES

The rate of average starting salaries awarded to successful candidates placed in permanent jobs fell for a fourth consecutive month from 41.9 in December 2008 to 41.1 in January 2009, according to the latest *Report on Jobs* by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and professional services firm KPMG. (The survey is based on a scale where 50 means no quarterly change.) Rates of pay for temporary/contract staff also continued to fall in January 2009.

→ [www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com)  
→ [www.kpmg.co.uk](http://www.kpmg.co.uk)

## ONLINE RECRUITMENT

The Monster Employment Index dropped by 30 points in January to reach a level of 111 – the lowest reading since May 2006. The decline reflects sharply reduced online job availability in sectors including construction, engineering and environment, urbanism and architecture. HR remained the weakest area for jobs, declining for the seventh consecutive month. The index is based on a review of millions of job postings from a selection of corporate websites and jobs boards. <http://monsterworldwide.com>

## VACANCIES

Demand for staff continued its steep decline in January 2009, according to the *Report on Jobs* by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and professional services firm KPMG. The vacancies index fell from 29.5 in December 2008 to 27.7 in January 2009 (the survey is based on a scale where 50 equals no quarterly change) – a new series record for the contraction rate – with demand for both permanent and short-term staff falling significantly.

→ [www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com)  
→ [www.kpmg.co.uk](http://www.kpmg.co.uk)