

INDUSTRY:
Various

SOLUTION:
Integrity Assessment

Measuring Integrity in Entry-Level Environments

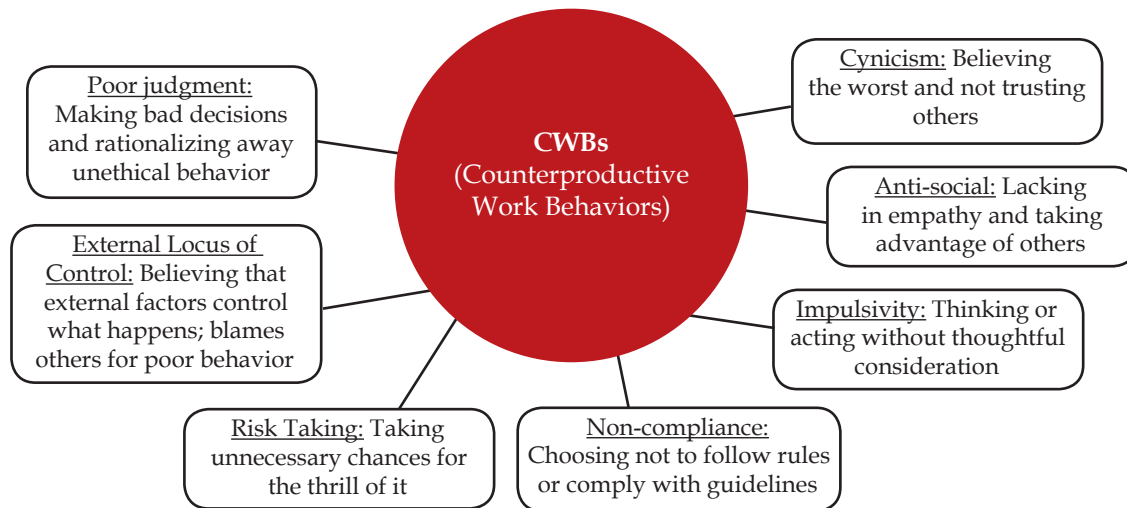
- How do I hire for integrity?
- We are having problems with theft. How can we screen for this?
- It's important that my employees are ethical and honest. How do I assess for that?

We regularly hear questions like these from our clients. No one really knows how costly employee theft is to organizations, but some estimate from \$10 to \$200 billion dollars annually¹. Theft is just one counterproductive work behavior (CWB) that organizations want to thwart. Other examples include tardiness, absenteeism, harassment, bullying, and gossiping. Industrial psychologists have been studying

CWBs to better understand how to identify individuals more likely to engage in these behaviors. This focus has led to the development of integrity tests.

Generally, it is believed that individuals who engage in counterproductive work behaviors are less honest or ethical than others. What does that mean? How do you measure honesty? Integrity researchers disagree on what exactly constitutes integrity, but they do seem to agree that it is not just one thing. Integrity is a compilation of subfactors that work together to predict counterproductive or unethical work behaviors. The following image shows some of the underlying traits that can lead people to choose to engage in CWBs.

WHAT PREDICTS LOW INTEGRITY?



MEASURING INTEGRITY

When it comes to measuring integrity, simply asking the individual directly is unlikely to lead to an honest response back. For example:

- Are you an honest person?
- Are you going to steal from your employer?
- Are you going to bully and harass your co-workers?

Measuring integrity is challenging since most candidates are not open about their past indiscretions and poor choices. Most integrity measures include two types of

measurements: overt and covert. Overt measures of integrity ask individuals direct questions about their past unethical behavior or their attitudes towards unethical behavior. Covert integrity items are typically personality-based and are more indirect in their connection to counterproductive behavior. Commonly used covert personality items might ask about one's impulsivity or general outlook on people and the world. Both types of measures have shown promise in predicting CWBs. Select International chose to develop an integrity assessment that measures all underlying characteristics shown above and includes both overt and covert measurements.

PREDICTING CWBs

To evaluate the effectiveness of our integrity measures, we conducted a study by recruiting a sample of participants from various media outlets (e.g., social media, blogs). Participants were first asked to respond to a pre-qualifying questionnaire. The pre-qualifying questionnaire consisted of 43 low integrity behaviors, including counterproductive work behaviors and criminal activity. Participants were asked to indicate whether they had ever engaged in each behavior in the past. From the prequalifying data, 200 individuals were invited to complete an assessment that included the integrity measures. Ninety-six individuals responded and were included in the final sample.

The correlation between the assessment and a variety of counterproductive work behaviors was strong and statistically significant. Our results clearly show that individuals who score low on the integrity measures are much more likely than others to engage in counterproductive work behaviors - and the strongest relationship is with theft!

Additionally, a closer look at the more deviant or “worst” CWBs, shows that individuals with low integrity scores are 3.6 times more likely to engage in these behaviors than individuals with high integrity scores. Our integrity measures differentiate and identify individuals who are more likely to demonstrate counterproductive behavior.

Behavior	Integrity Assessment
CWBs	-.41**
Theft	-.45**
Conviction	-.26**
Absences	-.21**

**p<.01

Individuals who score low on the assessment are 3.6 times more likely to engage in the most deviant forms of CWBs, including theft.

The integrity measures used to predict these undesirable behaviors are available in many Select International assessments or can be added as an extra module. The additional measurements take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. While the additional time may sound like a deterrent for candidates, our data show that a vast majority of candidates complete assessments once they begin (over 95%) and applicants who complete our assessments have favorable reactions to them - even those as long as 110 minutesⁱⁱ.

Using Select International’s integrity assessment can help your organization identify individuals who are more likely to demonstrate counterproductive work behaviors. Consider adding integrity to your assessment if your organization is interested in reducing deviant behavior.

ⁱ Employee Theft: Legal Aspects - Estimates of Cost. (n.d.). <http://law.rank.org/pages/1084/Employee-Theft-Legal-Aspects-Estimates-cost.html>

ⁱⁱ Besl, A. N., Lawrence, A. D., Skinner, J. F., Moretti, D. M., & Kinney, T. B. (2017). Applicant Reactions: Does Test Length Really Matter? Poster presented at the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) conference, Orlando, FL.