SENTIO

MATCHING PEOPLE TO POSSIBILITIES.

The Benefits of Assessments in Caregiver Recruitment

Frances Eve Weir

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About the Author

Frances Eve Weir is a Business Psychologist with 7+ years' HR experience for some of the world's biggest brands. She is a trained hiring professional and has considerable expertise in career coaching, organizational culture, and employee engagement.

Introduction

In an economy characterized by global competition, and increased customer expectations, the success of an organization will depend upon its ability to attract and retain the 'right' people. However, many organizations are still failing to employ foundational selection procedures, despite the cost of the 'wrong' fit leading to a potential loss of clients, increased recruitment and training costs, and a overall loss of productivity [6].

It is important to realize that for most positions, it is the psychosocial differences between individuals that is critical in predicting workplace performance [6], therefore psychometric personality assessments are a crucial tool for recruitment professionals. Certain industries call for the development of instruments that measure softer skills over more standard aptitude tests [6].

The caregiver industry in particular is one heavily reliant upon personality, therefore this is an industry which would specifically benefit from the implementation of psychometric tools. While numerous broad assessment tools have been incorporated into recruitment processes, very few have been industry specific. In addition, few companies review the motivations of current employees [6], despite the fact that this will logically differ from those of prospective candidates, as these individuals are deemed more likely to try to be the 'right' person for the job. This paper examines the rationale for the application of company specific psychometric assessments within the care setting.

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The Current Care Industry

Due to increased life expectancy and improvements in medical care, senior adults account for one of society's fastest growing segments [9]. In 1990, 12.7% of the U.S population were over 65; this will increase to 18% by 2020 [9]. Additionally, those over 75 years old are 8 times more likely to suffer from a disability than those below 45 years old; a massive 40% of all individuals with a disability are over 60 years old [9]. Long-term healthcare services therefore need to respond to increased requirements for both functional impairments, and the maintenance of an individual's psychosocial well-being [9]. \ These outcomes derive not only from severe cases such as physical abuse, but from the absences of adequate levels of caregiver protection, responsiveness and attention [7].

In response to these needs, there is an ever-growing demand to comprehend, measure and improve health service delivery in the US [3]. The Healthcare industry is one where the quality of work is favoured over quantity [3]. Due to the requirements of those supported by the industry, it is therefore important to surpass general caregiver ability, instead focussing on identifiers of safety, competence and compassion [3]. Presenteeism is a growing problem amongst care workers, creating serious concerns about patient safety and overall care, which means the industry will remain under intense scrutiny until substantial change is initiated. At present, caregivers regularly report raised stress levels; a highly detrimental state that negatively affects cognition, and productivity, while increasing the likelihood of withdrawal from patients, and the workplace altogether [3]. It is imperative that care facilities do more to identify care workers of the necessary calibre with which to provide adequate support to their clients, while publicly proving that they are willing to take action.

## Care Facilities Aim to Hire for the Following:

Safety

Competence

Compassion

" It is imperative that care facilities do more to identify care workers of the necessary calibre with which to provide adequate support to their clients.

Personality Testing

Person-organization fit denotes that individuals are attracted to certain employers based on how they perceive their own needs, norms and personality [5]. Selection follows attraction, and is a crucial element of the recruitment process, capturing elements of a candidate's personality, analyzing whether they are indeed the right 'fit', and making predictions about their future behavior [6]. The use of valid, reliable psychometric tests is therefore becoming an integral component of many organizations' recruitment processes. In a National survey of the selection practices of Fortune 1000 firms, 20% reported incorporating psychometric personality testing into their recruitment process, and a fifth of respondents declared the intention to implement some form of online testing in the future [10].

Percentage of Fortune 1000 Companies that Utilize Personality Testing

60%	20%	20%

■ Do not utilize psychometric personality testing

■ Plan to utilize psychometric personality testing

■ Currently utilize psychometric personality testing
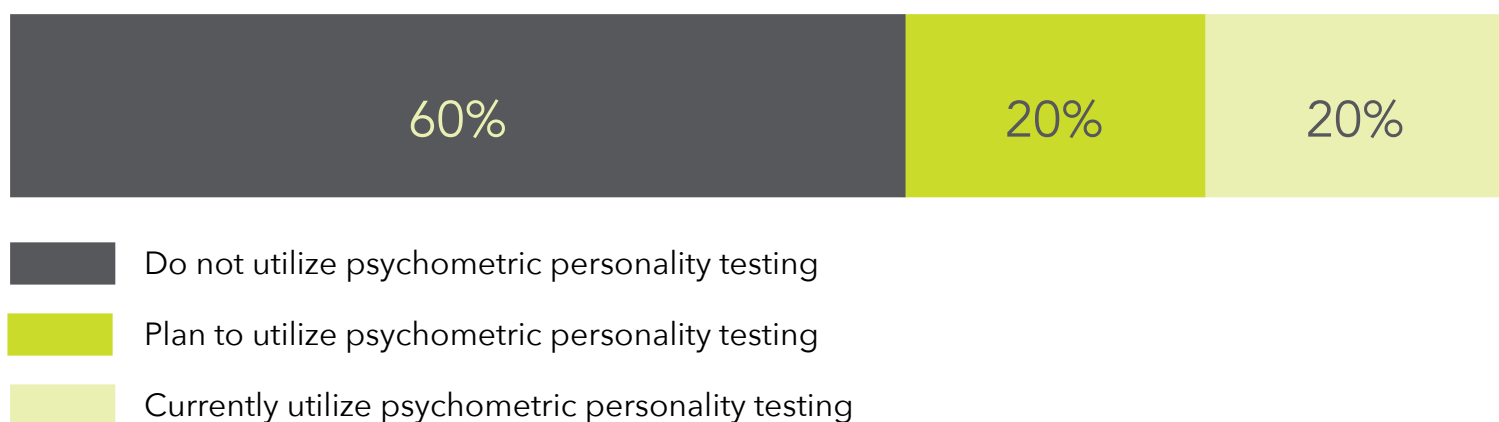
Psychometrics can be employed in two major aspects of selection:

Job Description
Where the role is defined
by the tasks, such as transcription,
answering calls, or taking measurements

Person Specification
The characteristics of the person in
the role, such as cheerfulness,
extraversion, and sympathy

Applying Psychometrics Tests to Care Facilities

Recent studies show that most companies still rely upon general methods for selection, such as screening resumes, conducting interviews, and occasionally, by measuring more general traits, such as IQ [10]. However, studies suggest that the traditional selection paradigm has been rendered obsolete, due to its basis on well-defined jobs [5]. In reality, employees are often placed in different teams, frequently changing work roles, and/or locations, which must be better reflected when establishing new recruitment norms [5].

This is especially true of caregivers, as mental and physical demands within the workplace can severely inhibit their ability to manage their time, general output, and interpersonal relations [3]. This is extremely important when considering that the social aspect of a senior's life is the greatest contributing factor to their positive quality of life and lowered rates of depression [9]. The second greatest contributing factor represents social involvement and interpersonal relationships. Senior adults benefit greatly from flexible, homely environments, and one-to-one time with caregivers, therefore it is of great importance for care facilities to employ warm, friendly individuals with good interpersonal skills [7].

It is clearly apparent that there are vital traits to be selected for within the care industry. As previously described, psychometric tests are tools used to identify components of personality; these enable an employer to determine whether or not a candidate would be a good 'fit' for the organization [10]. The care industry is heavily reliant upon person-organization fit, therefore caregiver facilities would particularly benefit from the implementation of psychometric tests in recruitment. More specifically, while the predictive validity of psychometric tests has been broadly discussed, there is less evidence for contextual performance [5]. This strongly suggests the logic of surveying current employees in order to identify future candidates. Psychometrics have often been used in Health settings, such as asking patients to fill out depression inventories [1], but there is much room for improvement when applying these same tests to employees. The concept of applying psychometrics to current employees has successfully been undertaken within the Health space before, whereby nurses were surveyed in order to create a stress scale for those in their field, enabling their employers to determine who was able to cope with the demands of the role [3]. It stands to reason that the same logic be applied within the care industry. By surveying current employees for traits that correlate with favoured behavior, care facility leaders would be provided with an objective predictor of behavior for future employees.

Utilization of Assessments in the Hiring Process

Give assessments at beginning of application & hiring process

Narrow down to applicants with the best fit from assessment scores

Proceed through hard skill assessments & rest of hiring process

Hire and retain the best caregiver for your company and clients

Maximizing Organizational Performance through Psychometric Tests

Psychometric tests are ultimately useful in incorporating a fair and neutral component to a recruitment process, allowing organizations to know more about candidate beliefs, values, and attitudes [1]. Due to individual differences, it is as important to scientifically analyze and measure the differences between individuals, as it is to consider their similarities [1]. In order to determine an individual's character, one must first identify and quantify these differences; this process can only be done through the use of psychometrics [1]. Some recruiters and HR professionals still rely upon their experience to gauge a candidate's behavior and aptitude, often considering themselves to be a good judge of personality [1]. The reality is that no individual can surmise any candidate with as much accuracy as that which can be determined by standardized sets of materials.

Improving Accuracy of Selection

Avoiding Financial Costs Associated with Continuous Recruitment

Better Matching Individuals to Jobs

Promoting Better Career Management

Matching Individuals to Opportunities

Minimizing Poor Recruitment Decisions

[2]

Increasing Employee Retention Rates

Opportunities and Benefits for Care Facilities

It is rare to find psychometric tests that factor for industry. Rarer still are companies that review the motivations of current employees [6]. This presents a huge opportunity for companies wanting to identify the 'right' person for the job. Prospective candidates approach selection processes differently to current employees; it can therefore be argued that it is a better strategy to capture current employee traits that correlate to desired behaviors. By building a success profile based on current, trusted employees, it is possible to measure their characteristics; these measures can then be used as a benchmark for future candidates, meaning it is highly likely that they will exhibit the same behaviors.

For example, empathy and sympathy play hugely important roles in patient care within the Health Industry; empathy is thought to preclude career satisfaction, and personal growth, while sympathy can preclude compassion fatigue, career burnout, and exhaustion [4]. This research clearly suggests that measuring levels of empathy/sympathy is important, however, it falls short of providing a guideline for ideal levels of either trait; this data can only be provided by employees currently active within the role. This is especially important when considering the care setting, due to the necessity for patient safety, protection, and confidentiality. Understanding the personality of potential employees before they are hired is therefore a critical step in better safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

Clients and their families require information about the quality of assisted living facilities in order to make an informed decision as to their choice of provider [8].

Service quality is a function of commited, capable staff, and the attraction and retention of such employees is critical to service continuity [8].

As previously discussed, assisted living clients, as well as children, require secure, sensitive and responsive attachments with their caregivers [7]; family members and parents must therefore be assured that a facility takes full responsibility for a vulnerable individual, and protects them from risk at all times. It is clear that care facilities must do more to improve their public perception, and to convince both clients and patients that a proposed facility is safe. The introduction of caregiver specific psychometric assessments is therefore highly recommended, in order to better analyze and identify the desired behavior of future employees. Furthermore, facilities should market their efforts in improving their hiring processes, by promoting enhanced recruitment standards that go beyond simple background checks. The use of such tools can similarly be marketed to candidates as a more fair and neutral process. This is particularly relevant when considering research into the trends and challenges in personnel selection, whereby the applicant experience was revealed to be a key issue [5]. Finally, given the current economic climate, there is a heightened demand for caregivers, resulting in fewer candidates having quantifiable, experiences of quality on their resumes. It is therefore recommended that the industry adopt more rigorous approaches to recruitment until a candidate has built their performance record over time [8].

" *Understanding the personality of potential employees before they are hired is a critical step in better safeguarding vulnerable individuals.*

Concluding Statement

It is without doubt that psychometric assessments can play an important role in the attraction and selection of future employees within all industries. Indeed, many organizations have incorporated such tools within their recruitment processes, leading to reduced costs and increased productivity. The growth of certain sectors has driven interest in instruments that measure soft skills, rather than aptitude tests, which seems appropriate for care facilities due to client requirements. Due to increasing strain upon the care industry, it is highly recommended that care facilities adopt the use of psychometric tools in recruitment, and more particularly employ assessments which have been tailored to the care industry, and specific employer where possible. Individual differences must also be taken into account, just as any assessment must always be viewed by way of probability, rather than predictability. These recommendations are therefore based on the research conducted for the purpose of this paper, and the logic that measuring the common personality traits of high-performing current employees will help to identify future candidates with similar characteristics.

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