# 5 Reasons Why Personality Assessments Can’t Predict High Performance

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In this tight labor market, hiring managers need all the help they can get to find a potentially game-changing employee. Managers and HR departments are using pre-hire assessment platforms like never before, believing the data will tell them which candidate will be high performing. Unfortunately, there are limits to what you can accomplish with a pre-hire assessment.

Too many assessment providers claim their personality assessment platforms can predict job performance, but that’s not totally true. They will tell you they’re better than their competitors, but they all rely on the candidate to provide feedback that requires complete honesty. They ask candidates to select the words from a list that best reflect their personality, or they ask for their input on how they feel about a current social topic. With a desired job waiting on the other side of the test, candidates will answer those types of assessment questions in the way they think the hiring manager wants. For that reason, I recommend using these assessments before their first interview, not at the end of the selection process. Even still, there are five key areas where assessments fail to predict future performance:

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# 1. Psychiatric issues

While they can reveal emotional control and lack of attentiveness, pre-hire assessments cannot diagnose psychosis, which can play a significant role in one's job performance. Experts estimate that 9.1% of the U.S. general population has some form of personality disorder, including psychopathy, sociopathy and borderline personality disorder. And most of them, at the time of the study, were untreated.

That said, assessments can reveal several red flags. For example, they'll indicate which candidates may exhibit toxic behavior in certain work situations. Managers who are considering hiring candidates with a tendency to turn into a taskmaster or an exploiter should dig deeper into these issues by checking references, especially previous co-workers.

# 2. Lack of integrity

Most good assessments have methods in place to determine whether a candidate is trying to "trick the instrument," but they are in no way foolproof. Lack of integrity can be a huge issue, and dishonest candidates cannot be expected to answer honestly — especially when self-reporting how and what they think on an assessment. As I learned from one unsuccessful hire, a charismatic and dishonest individual who scored well on assessments later became a wrecking ball. Over time, the employee's continuous crises stemming from personal relationships and financial difficulties impacted every aspect of their performance and caused other team members to privately, and sometimes not-so-privately, complain.

It was evident who the now-former employee reported to be on the assessments we used back then simply didn't square with reality. My experience should be a cautionary tale for managers. If a red flag appears in a candidate's assessment, you need a more complete picture of the individual. You might

want to hire them as a contractor for a few months before committing to bringing them on board.

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## 3. Relationship with supervisor

A major reason for people to leave their jobs voluntarily stems from their relationship with their boss. Standard personality assessments focus on the candidate, but the best assessment platforms analyze the candidate and their future manager. The results give the manager a heads-up about their potential chemistry with the new employee. Managers also need to know in advance about possible friction in these relationships, so they can act intentionally rather than reactively to handle problems.

## 4. Work environment

Assessments can be a great tool for finding the right person with the necessary job skills, but for retention purposes, you also want to find the right job for the person. Too often the “ideal work environment” assessment insight for the top candidate is quickly ignored in the flurry of onboarding activity. If you put a new hire who desires autonomy and independence in a cubicle farm, don’t be surprised if you don’t see optimal work performance. Be purposeful about where your new hire is working and monitor their level of contentment and output to avoid any surprise exits.

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## 5. Personal life

Assessments are a snapshot in time of how a person thinks and what motivates them. By themselves, they don’t predict future

performance; they show behavior under normal and stressless circumstances. In a period of a few weeks or months, a normally productive employee can experience stressful personal experiences that impact their ability to get the job done. Relationship problems, family illness or financial difficulties happen to everyone and find their way into our professional lives. Some people's performance will suffer more than others during times of extreme stress. What your employee needs most in these situations is your empathy and support.

As the use of assessments becomes more widespread, some hiring managers use these tools to quickly disqualify any candidate who raises red flags instead of getting curious and digging deeper.

Before you commit to a service, verify what you are paying for. A great psychometric assessment platform takes personality, motivation and skills into account and will offer insight into each candidate. You can even improve your odds by combining an assessment with an aptitude test for the type of job for which they're applying. But it's never a good idea to make a hiring decision based on assessments alone. Best hiring practices include conducting in-person interviews, asking the candidate to submit a writing sample or give a presentation, and checking personal and professional references. Even with assessments, properly vetting candidates takes time, but it's worth making that investment to find a high-potential employee that you can transform into a high producer.

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