Guide to Psychometric Testing & Assessment Centres

Viren Thakrar
Consultant
SHL Australia & New Zealand
Who are SHL?

- Occupational Psychologists and world leaders in the objective assessment and development of people
- Operate in more than 40 countries and 30 languages
- All assessment tools developed specifically for use in the world of work
- Strong focus on research and ensuring defensibility of tools and practices
This afternoon...

- Why assessments and testing are useful
- What the different types of assessment are and what they tell us
- How you can prepare for them
Why Test?

Testing benefits you because:

- Ensure decisions are evidence based
- Provides each person with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their ability and potential
- Can measure certain aspects of job performance more accurately than can be done in an interview for example
- Are some of the best predictors of job performance and give a better understanding for fit to role

“Remember that selection is a two way process in which both you and the organisation make a choice - and the choice has to be right for both of you.”
Different types of tests & assessment employers' use:

- Ability/aptitude tests
- Personality questionnaires
- Structured interviews
- Assessment Centres
Ability/Aptitude tests

- Help organisations understand your potential or capacity in a given area

- Typically cover a broad ability area (e.g. verbal/numerical skills), **not** knowledge (e.g. accounting)

- There are “right” and “wrong” answers and tests are normally timed
In many organisations, middle management positions can be difficult, especially during periods of significant change. While trying to do their best to implement changes imposed by senior management, they may realise that promoting the interests of the organisation often conflicts with their own best interests, and those of their colleagues and subordinates. Such realisations can sometimes result in high levels of additional stress for those managers. No effective solution to this problem has been found and, if the way in which most organisations operate does not change in some relevant way soon, it is likely that we will see an increase in absenteeism and turnover amongst middle managers.

Question 2
Middle managers who realise that they have to implement changes that are imposed upon them that are not in line with their own best interests, will always experience stress as a result.

- [ ] True
- [ ] False
- [ ] Cannot Say

Remember to base your answers only on the information given in the passage.
### Example Numerical Test

**Question 5**
If all staff, both operations and admin, were required to wear trousers, shirts and shoes, how much would this cost the company?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Type</th>
<th>Dress Code*</th>
<th>Purchase Quantity</th>
<th>Cost to Company per item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trousers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>1–10</td>
<td>£13.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>11–25</td>
<td>£8.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>26–50</td>
<td>£8.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>51–99</td>
<td>£7.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>£7.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Operational workers are only entitled to shirt, trousers and shoes. Admin workers are only entitled to suits with shoes.*
Example Abstract/Inductive/Logical Reasoning Test
PREPARING FOR AN APTITUDE TEST

You can’t really “prepare” for an aptitude test...
> It measures your potential/aptitude
> However, everyday exposure to those types of skills may help enhance and develop those skills (reading more complex journals, completing crosswords, Sudoku etc)

You can do practice tests to familiarise yourself with the types of questions that may be asked
> Ask the organisation who is conducting the testing for practice questions
> Shldirect.com provides you with full length practice tests, example questions and also includes some advice on completing psychometric tests
• Help organisations understand your preferences/behavioural style
  > We don’t measure ability/capability with a personality questionnaire!
  > Understanding your natural preferences/style can help organisations determine whether you are a good “match” to them

• Very different to internet quizzes, personality questionnaires designed for clinical use or other personality questionnaires which are just not valid!
  > Often, organisations use a personality questionnaire to simply inform other aspects of the selection process
  > Also, organisations often take in candidates from a huge range of different “personalities”!
  > It is in your best interests to respond honestly to the questionnaire as it will ensure you are going to be a good fit to the role, and more importantly, enjoy the work!!
Personality Questionnaires... what they shouldn’t be...

- **If you were a fruit, what would you be?”**
  - A grape
  - A banana
  - A pineapple

  *Best answer: A grape - good in a bunch but also pretty nice on its own.*

- “I cross the street to keep from meeting people I don’t like”

- “I feel people are laughing at me behind my back”

- “When I am on a high place I feel like jumping off”

- “Sometimes I smell strange odours”
Choose which of these statements is most like you, and which is least like you:

- I avoid showing how I feel
- I find routine tasks boring
- I feel the future looks particularly good
- I prefer established methods

Least

Most

Help
Another Example...

Choose which of these statements is most like you, and which is least like you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least</th>
<th>Most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy talking to new people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rarely keep things tidy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to help others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about deadlines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips on Completing a Personality Questionnaire

- Think of your preferred style and preference as it relates to the workplace.
  - This is what employers will be interested in, what types of things you like and enjoy doing

- Respond to the questionnaire honestly
  - This helps you be more confident that you will be a good fit to the role, and enjoy the work
  - If you aren’t a good fit to a specific organisation, there will be other organisations you will be a good fit for
  - A lot of personality questionnaires actually measure a range of different personality traits (eg: the OPQ measures 32 different personality traits!) – it’s hard to “fake” on every scale!
  - Very often, candidates “fudge” their responses, but instead end up coming across worse than if they had completed the questionnaire honestly – it’s hard to predict specifically what organisations are looking for
  - Note that some questionnaires have an in-built “faking” mechanism
Assessment centres – what are they?

- Formal assessment centres consist of a standardised evaluation of behaviour based on **multiple** inputs.

- **Multiple** in that:
  
  > Assessments are made on several dimensions related to the role (competencies).
  
  > A variety of assessment techniques are used
  
  > Several assessors or observers are involved
  
  > Several candidates or participants are observed together
  
  > The information is integrated together
  
  > If you are a successful candidate, the information can be used for development purposes in the role.
What can I expect at an Assessment Centre?

**Individual**

- In-trays
- Aptitude tests
- "Self-report" questionnaires
- Tests of Productive Thinking

**Interactive**

- Group exercises
- Interviews
- Presentations
- Fact-finding exercises
- Role plays
Interactive Exercises

Group Exercises

> Group exercises are timed discussions, where a group of participants works together to tackle a work-related problem. They are observed by assessors, who are not looking for right or wrong answers, but for how they interact with their colleagues in the team.

> e.g. **Participants** role-play a member of the marketing team for a pharmaceutical company. The team is required to discuss the launch of a new consumer product, covering issues such as advertising, ethical concerns, and packaging and pricing.

• Fact-Finding Exercises

> In a fact-finding exercise, participants may be asked to reach a decision starting from only partial knowledge. Their task is to decide what additional information they need to make the decision, and sometimes also to question the assessor to obtain this information.

> e.g. **Participants** take on the role of a Regional Manager in a holiday company, dealing with a customer complaint. They are asked to decide what further information they need in order to reach a decision, and have a time limit in which they can question the assessor to obtain this information, before presenting their fully reasoned argument.
Interviews

> An interview of some sort forms part of most assessments, although the format may vary. Traditional interviews tend to cover education and training, work history and interests. In a structured (criterion or competency-based) interview participants may be asked about examples of situations when they have demonstrated particular skills, or about how they would approach specific problems.

> e.g. The participant is asked to give an example, and talk about, an occasion when they have organised the work of a team.

Presentations

> Participants may be required to make a formal presentation to a number of assessors. In some cases this will mean preparing a presentation in advance on a given topic. In other cases, they may be asked to interpret and analyse given information, and present a case to support a decision (an Analysis Presentation).

> e.g. Participants are asked to make a decision about the proposed relocation of the head office of an electronics equipment manufacturer. They present their recommendations, fully explaining the reasoning, and are then questioned by the assessor about their decision.
Individual Exercises

In-Trays

> In-tray (or in-basket) exercises involve working from the contents of a manager's in-tray, which may consist of letters, memos and background information. Participants may be asked to deal with paperwork and make decisions, balancing the volume of work against a tight schedule.

> e.g. Participants take on the role of the Public Relations Manager of a financial services firm, who has been taken ill while organising an exhibition stand. Their tasks are based around organising the stand, touching on issues such as personnel, finance and marketing.
What can I do to prepare for an assessment centre?

• Similar to aptitude tests, there is not much that you can do to prepare for the centre

• Read any briefing information carefully and bring requested materials (e.g. photo I.D. etc)

• Understand how the assessment centre will run and how it fits into the selection process

• During the assessment centre, focus on each exercise in turn and try not to dwell on your performance on any one exercise (do that at home!!)

• Arrive on time

• Ask questions if you are not sure of anything
some things to note...

- Ask for feedback after assessments...

  > Organisations can hold off providing you with information until selection decisions have been made, and they can also withhold commercially sensitive information.

  > However, getting feedback is a good opportunity to assist you in identifying where you did well and didn’t do so well during the assessments!

    » Is it how you were perceived?
    » Are there areas for development?
    » What are you doing well? Capitalise on these!
    » Consider re-thinking the type of role/organisation you are applying to - Which roles/organisations might you be best suited to?
QUESTIONS?

Thank you!