ASSESSMENTS FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT: MYTHS VS REALITIES
Introduction

It’s widely accepted that assessments add value during talent acquisition and hiring practices, with as many as 86% of organizations using them as non-negotiable tools in finding top talent1.

By comparison, the uptake on using assessments for talent development is much lower at around 60%2.

This seems strange, given that 79% of organizations are focused on promoting talent from within, and only 37% understand their current skills gaps3.

We look at frequently heard beliefs that limit the use of assessment initiatives for employee development and check the truth on these assumptions.

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1 Aberdeen Group (2011), Talent Assessment Strategies: A Decision Guide for Organizational Performance
2 SHL (2018), Global Assessment Trends Report
3 PageUp (2018), Top 10 Hiring Trends to Watch
Assessments are only for leadership development programs.

With limited HR budgets, the traditional approach has been to focus on the top segments – high-potentials and leaders.

However, there is a finite limit to how much more our current top talent can contribute. What’s becoming visible is the bigger challenge of how to effectively get more out of the remaining 70% of the internal talent pool, to drive even stronger performance.

But organizations are unable to effectively get more out of the middle of their talent pool today, as they don’t know where to even start – they are not aware of the specific attributes that their high performers have, and that they should be looking for in this mid-performing group.

By having an objective, consistent, and clear understanding of the differentiating attributes of their top performers, they can be more precise with what they should be looking for from their middle 60-70%. Assessments then play a strong role in identifying who from that segment already possess some of the same key attributes of the top performers and inform specific individualized development plans to close the current gaps… ultimately shifting higher performance.
These are a perfect option if you’re looking for a low-touch, scalable solution for lower levels within the organization.
You don’t always need to be a trained user to interpret assessment reports – some are designed to be straightforward and intuitive for the line manager and individual, minimizing the risk of misunderstanding old-style, “technical” reports, and reducing valuable HR time. These are a perfect option if you’re looking for a low-touch, scalable solution for lower levels within the organization.

However, while a strong, easy-to-interpret assessment report with connected development suggestions and activities helps to increase self-awareness and initiate action, there’s no replacement for an accompanying face-to-face conversation to further engage people in the process to drive action and accountability. Non-technical assessment reports provide a framework for these conversations and make it easier for line managers to own them.
94% of employees say that they would stay longer at a company if it invested in their career development.
If positioned correctly, assessments can be a way to continue and enhance engagement with an organization. For this to happen, they don’t necessarily need to be high-touch; self-development assessments positioned as a benefit to help employees to become stronger professionals, with an instant reward of a development report providing actionable insights outlining key takeaways and development actions, also have positive impact.

Research shows us that 94% of employees say that they would stay longer at a company if it invested in their career development1.

There’s no mistaking the fact that employees want promotions that demonstrate progression and come with a pay increase. However, to attract and retain top talent when pay rises are not on offer, the best organizations recognize that their employees inevitably compare their development at their current organization with what they could find elsewhere.

1 Source: LinkedIn (2018), Workplace Learning Report
MYTH 4

It’s difficult to evaluate the ROI.

Overall, we know that companies who invest in development perform higher than those that don’t.

However, we also know that not all employee development yields ROI. Assessment tools help to sharpen and focus development in an individualized way, providing a detailed focus and roadmap for the specific skills and behavior gaps.

The real value of assessment is not purely in the detailed insights about an individual, but in relating these insights to what really matters for success in a specific role. Assessing against an accurate profile of a strong performer in the role – looking at skills, competencies and characteristics – will ensure the assessment results and corresponding gaps for focused development all relate back to what’s important for success. This is key to driving stronger ROI from development activities.

In addition, strong assessment programs also close the loop on ROI by measuring the degree to which knowledge and skills are actually being applied on the job. 360/multi-rater surveys are a good way of focusing on specific competencies or behaviors that the participant has worked on and provide insight on the extent to which participants have made progress plus the conditions that might support or inhibit their development.
If you’re looking to take the guesswork out of your development programs, we can help.

Our talent development assessments and programs provide the insights to:

- Sharpen the focus of development planning and execution.
- Scalably develop talent for high performance at all levels in the organization – not just leaders.
- Support line managers with a frame for targeted development discussions.
- Accelerate superior performance in role.

Click here to find out more.