

FREE RESOURCE

# The HR Professional's Guide to Psychometric Assessments

What Works, What Doesn't, and What to Watch Out For



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## A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

# Thank you for downloading this guide.

After years of working with organisations on selection and assessment, I have seen psychometric tools used well and used poorly.

This guide is my attempt to cut through the noise and give HR professionals a clear, honest picture of what good psychometric practice actually looks like.

I hope you find it useful.

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Chartered Psychologist, OmniPsi Consulting

## INTRODUCTION

### SETTING THE SCENE

# The promise and the pitfall of psychometric assessment

Psychometric assessments have become a standard part of the recruitment and selection process in many organisations.

Used well, they provide valuable, evidence-based insights that help organisations make better talent decisions. Used poorly, they become an expensive exercise that fosters a false sense of objectivity and misses the point entirely.

After years of working with organisations worldwide on selection, assessment and development, I have seen both. This guide is for HR professionals who want to understand what psychometric assessments can genuinely offer, their limitations, and how to avoid common mistakes that undermine their value.

### WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

**Section 1** - What psychometric assessments actually measure

**Section 2** - Validity and Reliability: what every HR professional needs to know

**Section 3** - The deselection trap

**Section 4** - How to spot a dodgy provider

**Section 5** - Getting it right: a practical framework

## Section 1

A psychometric assessment is a structured tool used to measure specific psychological attributes. Depending on the tool, these might include cognitive ability, personality traits, work preferences, values, or emotional intelligence.

What they measure well is relatively consistent behaviour and stable traits likely to influence how a person performs in a given role. What they do not measure is everything. A psychometric assessment is one source of data about a person. It is not a complete picture. It cannot tell you with certainty how someone will perform in your specific organisation, team, or under your specific leadership.

### THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE

This is where many organisations go wrong. They treat the assessment as the answer rather than as one piece of evidence among many. The result is a selection process that is less rigorous, not more rigorous.

A well-executed psychometric assessment will raise useful questions and provide meaningful data. It will not make the decision for you. That is your responsibility.

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*“A psychometric assessment is one source of data about a person. It is not a complete picture.”*

# Validity and Reliability

What every HR professional needs to know

These two words are the most important in psychometric assessment, and the least understood. Before your organisation uses any psychometric tool, you need to understand what they mean.

### VALIDITY

Does the tool measure what it **claims to measure**? A valid assessment of leadership potential should genuinely predict leadership performance - not merely produce a report that sounds plausible.

### RELIABILITY

Does the tool produce **consistent results**? If the same person takes the same assessment twice under similar conditions, the results should be consistent.

These are not merely technical concepts. They are the foundation of any evidence-based selection process. An assessment tool without robust validity and reliability data is not a psychometric assessment. It is a guessing game dressed up in professional language.

### WHAT TO ASK EVERY PROVIDER

When evaluating any tool, ask the provider for their technical manual. A reputable provider will have one. It should include the research evidence supporting the tool, such as validity coefficients, reliability data, and normative samples. If a provider cannot or will not provide this, do not use their tool.

# The Deselection Trap

One of the most common misuses of psychometric assessments I see in organisations is using them primarily as a deselection tool. The thinking goes like this: we have too many candidates, so we will use the assessment to quickly eliminate people and reduce the field.

## THE PROBLEM WITH THIS APPROACH

Psychometric assessments are designed to provide insight into a person, not to produce a pass-or-fail verdict. When used solely for deselection, organisations risk eliminating candidates who would have performed well in the role simply because their profiles do not meet an arbitrary benchmark.

Research consistently shows that the most effective selection processes use psychometric assessments as part of a broader approach. This includes structured interviews, work samples, and other assessment methods. Each method provides different information. Together, they give a much more complete and accurate picture of a candidate than any single tool can provide.

Using a psychometric assessment as your primary filter is not an evidence-based selection method. It is a shortcut that can cost your organisation good people.

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*“Each assessment method provides different information. Together, they give you a complete picture.”*

# How To Spot a Dodgy Provider

The psychometric assessment market is large and poorly regulated. This means that alongside genuinely rigorous, research-backed tools, there are providers offering products that appear sophisticated but lack any real scientific foundation. For an HR professional, knowing how to tell the difference is essential. Ask these questions before committing to any tool:

- **Could you provide a technical manual with validity and reliability data?**

A reputable provider will always say yes. If the answer is no, or the manual is vague and lacks specific data, walk away.

- **On which normative samples was this tool developed?**

Every well-developed psychometric tool is benchmarked against a reference group. You need to know who that group is and whether it is relevant to your candidate population.

- **Is this tool accredited by a recognised professional body?**

In the UK, the British Psychological Society accredits psychometric tools that meet professional standards. Accreditation is not a guarantee of quality, but its absence is a warning sign.

## Section 4 - Continued

- **What training is required to administer and interpret this tool?**

Reputable tools require qualified administrators. If a provider claims anyone can use their tool without training, but be cautious.

- **What are the diversity and inclusion implications of this tool?**

Any well-developed assessment should include data on its performance across demographic groups. Adverse impact is a real risk with poorly developed tools and carries legal and ethical implications.

### TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If a provider is more focused on selling you a slick-looking report than on answering your technical questions, that tells you something important about how seriously they take the science behind their product.

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*“A reputable provider will always be able to answer your technical questions. If they cannot, that is your answer.”*

# Getting It Right: A Practical Framework

Using psychometric assessments effectively is not complicated. It requires clarity about what you aim to achieve, discipline in how you use the data, and a commitment to evidence-based practice.

### **01 - Start with the role**

Before you choose a tool, be clear about which competencies and attributes are genuinely important for success in the role you are filling. The assessment should measure what actually matters for that specific position.

### **02 - Choose the right tool for the job**

Not every psychometric tool suits every role or level. A cognitive ability test suitable for a graduate-entry role may not be suitable for a senior executive. Match the tool to the purpose.

### **03 - Use assessment as part of a broader process**

Combine psychometric data with structured interviews, work samples, and reference checks. Each source of information contributes something different. Together, they give you a much more reliable basis for decision-making.

### **04 - Ensure qualified interpretation**

Psychometric data should be interpreted by someone trained and qualified to do so. Raw scores, without proper interpretation, can be misleading and potentially harmful.

## Section 5 - Continued

### 05 - Provide candidates with feedback

This is both good practice and increasingly expected. Candidates who complete a psychometric assessment deserve to understand what it measures and what the results mean for them. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate your organisation's commitment to fair and transparent selection.

### 06 - Review your process regularly

Selection is not a set-and-forget exercise. Regularly assess the effectiveness of your assessment process. Are the people you select performing well? If not, something in your process needs to change.

#### THE FRAMEWORK IN BRIEF

**01** Start with the role **02** Choose the right tool **03** Combine data sources **04** Qualified interpretation **05** Give candidates feedback **06** Review regularly

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*“The goal is not to use psychometrics more. It is to use them better.”*



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## A PERSONAL NOTE

**“Psychometric assessments are powerful tools when used correctly.”**

I have seen them help organisations identify exceptional talent they might otherwise have overlooked, and help individuals gain genuine insight into their strengths and preferences.

But I have also seen them misused as shortcuts, deselection filters, and a veneer of objectivity for decisions that were never truly evidence-based. That is a waste of a valuable resource and does a disservice to the candidates who go through the process.

My hope is that this guide gives you a clearer picture of what constitutes good psychometric practice and the confidence to ask the right questions of the providers and tools you work with.

*If you would like to discuss your organisation's assessment process or explore how evidence-based psychometrics can enhance your selection and development decisions, I would welcome the opportunity to hear from you.*

## GET IN TOUCH

# Let's talk about your assessment process

If you would like to discuss your organisation's assessment process, I would love to hear from you.

- [enquiries@omnipsi.com](mailto:enquiries@omnipsi.com)
- [www.omnipsi.com](http://www.omnipsi.com)
- <https://calendly.com/draustinaloysiustay/30-minute-consultation-call>



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