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Are We Still Hiring and Developing People on Gut Feel?

The changing role of assessments in recruitment and people development

An Overview of 6 Trends

CVs, interviews and experience still matter. But relying on them alone to make important people decisions is becoming harder to justify.

Assessment tools are evolving rapidly, driven by AI, skills-based hiring, digital technology and a growing demand for selection decisions that are fairer, faster and based on more than instinct.

At the same time, organisations are realising that assessments don't have to end once someone has been appointed. The same insight can help us onboard better, identify development needs, build leadership capability and make more informed decisions about future talent.

Six trends stand out:

1. From CV-first to skills-first.

There is a growing move away from relying heavily on qualifications, job titles and beautifully written CVs. Employers increasingly want evidence of what somebody can actually do - through skills assessments, work simulations, cognitive measures and role-specific exercises.

2. From gut feel to better data.

Interviews are useful, but they are also influenced by first impressions, interviewer style and unconscious bias. Structured, validated assessments provide another source of information and give everyone the same opportunity to demonstrate their capability.

3. From one assessment to a fuller picture of the person.

Technical competence is only part of successful performance. Behaviour, thinking style, interests, emotional intelligence, adaptability and interpersonal capability can all influence how well someone performs in a particular role, team and environment.

4. From manual processes to digital and AI-enabled assessment.

Cloud-based and remote assessments are making it possible to assess candidates at scale, wherever they are. AI and predictive analytics are also becoming part of the assessment landscape, helping organisations

Author Details:

Sue St.Leger | Sue St.Leger & Associates | 084 205 7377 | Sue@stlegers.co.za

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process information and identify patterns faster. The challenge will be to use the technology responsibly rather than allowing technology to replace human judgement.

5. From recruitment tool to development tool.

One of the most useful shifts is the growing use of assessment information beyond selection. Results can inform onboarding, individual development plans, coaching conversations, leadership development, internal mobility and succession planning. Instead of putting the report in a drawer after recruitment, businesses can keep using the insight.

6. From global solutions to locally relevant decisions.

South Africa is following the global move towards digital recruitment technology and skills validation, particularly where employers need to manage large applicant pools and graduate pipelines. At the same time, locally appropriate, validated and job-relevant assessments remain important if organisations want decisions that are fair, meaningful and defensible.

So, what is the real benefit?

The research supplied makes a strong case for assessments when they form part of a structured recruitment process. **78% of organisations using pre-employment assessments reported an improvement in quality of hire**, while other research referenced showed improvements in quality of hire and reductions in first-year turnover. As with any people tool, results vary according to the assessment, the role and how well the information is used.

For me, the benefits are fairly practical:

- **Better hiring decisions** – more information about capability and fit before making an expensive appointment.
- **Less reliance on bias and gut feel** – creating greater consistency and objectivity.
- **Better interviews** – assessment results highlight areas worth exploring rather than relying on generic questions.
- **Better development conversations** – people gain insight into strengths as well as areas they can actively develop.
- **Better use of existing talent** – organisations can identify potential, development opportunities and future career pathways.

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Assessments shouldn't make the decision for us. **They should help us make a better decision.**
And perhaps that is the biggest shift.

The question is no longer only:
"Should we hire this person?"

It is also:

"What do we now understand about this person that will help them – and the organisation – succeed?"

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