# Personality Assessments & Other Hiring Instruments

Tools For Operators · https://jeffreysummers.com/docs/personality-assessments-other-hiring-instruments/

A candidate takes a test. Twenty minutes, a hundred questions, and a report comes back with a type, a color, a four-letter code, or a score on conscientiousness and agreeableness. Somewhere in the report is a recommendation about whether to hire.

The operator reads it and feels like he knows something. What he has is a description of how a stranger answered questions about himself, compared against a population, scored by a company that has never been in his building.

## What An Assessment Actually Is

An assessment is a comparison of one person's self-report against a general population.

Not a read of the person. A read of the answers, ranked against averages. And the population is the industry-agnostic one the instrument was built against, which is the same problem every instrument in this category has: to be sellable anywhere, it had to be built against nowhere.

The inference: **high scorers on this instrument perform well in general; therefore this candidate will perform well here.**

There is a step missing, and it is the only step that matters. Performance is a relationship between a person and a specific set of demands. Your room, your volume, your cast, your standard, the person he reports to, what he is allowed to decide, and whether the work is worth doing here. Change any of those and the same person performs differently.

## The Thing Being Measured Is Not The Thing You Need

Take the traits these instruments actually report and set them against what you need to know before you put somebody on your stage.

The instrument reports a disposition. You need to know whether this person can hold your standard at seven-forty on a Friday when the kitchen is a station short and a four-top is unhappy.

The instrument reports agreeableness. You need to know whether he will tell you the truth about something that went wrong.

The instrument reports conscientiousness. You need to know whether he does the work when nobody is watching, which is a different thing than reporting that he does.

The instrument reports a type. You need to know how he behaves with this cast, in this room, under this pressure.

None of those are self-reportable, and the instrument is entirely self-report. Every honest answer describes how the person sees himself, and every dishonest one describes what he thinks you want, and the instrument cannot tell the two apart.

## Six Problems That Cost You Real People

**It filters for people good at tests.** Some of the strongest people you will ever hire in this business are not good at that particular exercise, and nothing about being bad at it predicts anything about a Friday night.

**It launders a decision you should own.** Hiring is a ruling. When it goes wrong the operator can point at the report, which means nobody in the building is accountable and nothing gets learned. An operator who owns his hires gets better at hiring. One who defers to an instrument does not.

**It selects for sameness.** Run the same instrument against every candidate for two years and your cast converges on one profile. A cast that is all one type cannot cover the range a dining room produces, and the operation gets more uniform in exactly the way that makes it ordinary.

**It screens out the person who would have been your best hire.** The candidate with an unusual history, an odd trajectory, or an answer pattern the instrument flags is frequently the one with the most capacity. Instruments are built to reduce variance, and your best hires are variance.

**It arrives before the read and replaces it.** Once a report exists, the interview becomes a confirmation of the report. The operator stops asking his own questions.

**It has no exposure.** If the hire fails, the instrument company loses nothing. You lose a season, a training investment, and whatever that person did to your cast while he was here.

## Where They Have Legitimate Use

Two narrow places, worth naming plainly.

Skills tests that measure the actual work. Can this person execute the task, at pace, to your standard. That is not a personality instrument, it is a demonstration, and it is the most predictive thing in hiring.

Legally required or genuinely factual screening. Certifications, right to work, whatever your jurisdiction requires. Facts, and nobody's operation gets a vote.

Everything else in the category is a substitute for a read.

## What Replaces It

**Name what the role actually demands, in your building.** Not a generic position description. The three or four things this person will have to do well on your worst Thursday, written down before anybody is interviewed.

**Ask about specific past behavior, not disposition.** Tell me about a shift that went badly and what you did. Tell me about a time you were wrong in front of a Guest. The answers are checkable and the follow-up questions are where the truth shows up.

**Work them in the building.** A trial shift, paid, on your stage, at a real hour. Everything the instrument tries to predict becomes directly observable in four hours. This one move outperforms every assessment ever sold to this industry.

**Let your cast read them.** The people who will work next to this person know inside one shift. Ask them and mean it.

**Read the reciprocity.** What does this person get here that they cannot get down the street, and what are they going to put back. A hire that only works in one direction leaves.

**Own the ruling and write down your reasoning.** Why you hired this person, in a sentence, at the time. Then read it back in six months. That is how an operator actually gets better at hiring, and no instrument can do it for you.

## What Changes Tomorrow

Take your last five hires and write down, honestly, why each one worked or did not. Not the traits. The specific thing -- he could not hold pace, she told the truth when it cost her something, he never learned the room, she made the cast better.

Now look at whether any instrument you use measures a single one of those. It will not, and that is the finding.

Then change one thing in your next hire: a paid trial shift on a real night, at the hour that actually decides it, with your lead watching and reporting back. Write down what the role demands before the shift, and read the shift against it afterward.

You will learn more in those four hours than a hundred reports gave you, and the read will be yours, made in your building, about a person your cast has actually worked next to.

## Digging Deeper

Every term in my framework lives in the Knowledge Base: kb.jeffreysummers.com

Terms used here: [Sameness Machine], [Default Architecture], [Designed Architecture], [Vendor Capture], [Reciprocity Test], [Cast Contract], [Authority To Execute], [Ordinary By Design], [Measurement Lock-In], [Uncertainty Capacity], [People Constraint], [Constraint Architecture], [Five-Actor Test]

More of my work on this, all of it in the Knowledge Base:

- You Can't Hire Better Cast. You Can Hire Better People. -- the published position
- 3070 A Level Talent -- what you are actually looking for
- 3200 The Cast You Can't Develop From A Dashboard -- the read has to be in person
- 3015 Your Cast Is Your Only Asset -- why this decision carries the weight it does
- 3760 The Voice Of The Employee Program -- the same instrument problem on the retention side
- Do You Have Crabs -- what the existing cast does to a new hire

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