

NEWS HELM AND ASSOCIATES, INC. BULLETIN

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The NEWS BULLETIN is a publication of Helm and Associates, Inc. It is published to provide a forum for discussion of issues relating to the use of employment tests in banks and credit unions. Helm and Associates, Inc. develops and validates employment tests and provides psychological assessment services to clients throughout the world.

Employment Testing In Banks And Credit Unions

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This Month's Subject: What To Say To Applicants About Testing

Once you make the decision to use an employment test in your selection process, it's a good idea to make sure that you plan *what* to say to applicants about the test, *when* to say it, and *how* to answer applicants' questions. Let's use this newsletter to talk about planning for the *what*, *when*, and *how*.

The Golden Rule of Testing

Treat every applicant with respect and consideration, just as you would want to be treated if the situation were reversed. This rule is so basic that it should be the underlying principle of your entire hiring process, and you should consider – *from the applicant's point of view* – every step of your process with it in mind. The simple guideline of treating applicants with respect and consideration means that the applicant will be better able to understand and accept what you ask him to do.

Before You Start Testing

Before you start telling applicants about the test(s) you will ask them to take, you have to make some basic decisions. At what point in the selection process will you use the tests? Will the test results be used to decide whether an applicant goes any further in the process? Who will see the test results, and how will that person (those people) use the information?

U. S. employment law and regulations say that applicants must be treated the same. That doesn't mean that everyone has to go through the entire process, but it does mean that every applicant that reaches each stage in the process must be treated the same at that stage. If you are using an employment test that measures a critical skill, then you may want to administer it fairly early in the process – perhaps right after an applicant has completed an application process and appears to possess minimum qualifications. On the other hand, you may not need to administer certain kinds of employment tests, such as personality assessments, until later in the process, after you have narrowed your list of applicants to those in whom you are seriously interested.

It helps if you think of the process of recruiting and selecting among applicants as somewhat like using a funnel: the larger the opening at the top of the funnel, the larger the pool of applicants among whom you will select. As applicants move down the funnel toward the neck of it, they pass through a series of checkpoints that are designed to progressively narrow the number to the best-qualified applicants for the

job(s). *Wherever in that process that you decide to administer the employment test(s) you are using, everyone who reaches that point must be administered the test(s).*

Once you begin thinking of hiring as a *process*, it becomes easier to see that the results of the employment test(s) are not the only factor that you will use to make the final hiring decision. That decision, instead, will be based on all of the information that you gather about the applicant.

Who will see the test(s) results, and when will they see them? The answers to those questions depend a good deal on what the test(s) measures and how the results are presented. Remember that all information about applicants, including test results, should be treated as confidential, and should not be discussed in front of other applicants.

Finally, be sure that you understand what the results mean and how you can get more help understanding them, if you need it. Take the time to be sure that you can explain the test clearly; you may even want to take the test yourself as a practice!

Talking To Applicants

Applicants are usually somewhat apprehensive during the hiring process; at the very least, they are exerting more energy than usual toward saying or doing the “right things” in order to make a good impression. Telling the applicant he or she must “take a test” tends to increase their apprehension.

To put them at ease you can do the following:

1. Tell the applicant that everyone who reaches this point in the selection process takes the test;
2. Tell the applicant that the test results are not the only factor in the hiring decision;
3. Reassure the applicant by explaining how to take the test and answering questions about it;
4. Thank the applicant for their cooperation and effort.

Answering Applicants Questions

Be prepared for questions about what the test measures by being familiar with the test itself. In addition, test publishers often provide information to their users about the best test-taking strategy, and they often also include tips about *what to say and what not to say*.

The most frequent question that an applicant asks is, “How did I do on the test?” Be prepared for this question by having a policy *that applies to every applicant*. You may wish to say that, as a matter of policy, results are not shared during the selection process. Some test publishers also provide a special report or set of results for the test taker.

In Summary

Remember to put yourself in the applicant’s shoes: treat each person with courtesy and respect, and explain the process to the applicants as they move through it. When applicants feel that they are being given the opportunity to present their qualifications in a fair and balanced process, they are reassured that you are treating them even-handedly. Employment tests are most fair means of obtaining an objective evaluation of the applicant’s abilities and attitudes.

A FREE Consultation

If you have any questions about these suggestions, give us a call for FREE consultation. We love to talk about how our tests can help companies like yours hire and develop the best people.

The Reason For This Newsletter is to help you select, hire, and train more effective employees. We are experts in the development and use of reliable and helpful employment tests, and we have over 25 years of experience in integrating employment test results into an organization's selection process. Please visit our website (www.helmtest.com) to learn about tests for financial institutions that we offer.

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About Us

Kurt G. Helm, Ph.D., is the founder and president of Helm and Associates, Inc. He is an industrial psychologist who has been working with organizations and businesses since 1975, helping them assess personal work-related performance preferences in manager and executive applicants. In addition, he has developed and validated many industry- and job-specific employment tests that do not require a psychologist's interpretation.

Barbara Otto is the vice-president and director of test program implementation and research for Helm and Associates, Inc. She designs and manages scoring procedures and customer service for tests, and conducts validation studies and concurrent statistical analyses of test data. She joined Helm and Associates, Inc. in 1981, and has extensive private and public sector experience in program development and management.

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Statement of Principle

Helm and Associates, Inc is dedicated to the proper use of tests to make the hiring, placement and promotion process fair and objective. It is our belief that both organizations and their employees benefit most when there is a good match between the job and the person who fills it.

Tests for the Financial Services Industry:

TELLER TEST – Measures a bank teller applicant’s general competency by focusing on the core teller competency of counting money accurately under time pressure.

BANK RELY TEST – Measures work ethic, attitudes toward punctuality, attendance and initiative. Instruct/trains for a good work ethic.

BANK CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY – Measures People Orientation, Cross Selling Ability and Complaint Handling Ability. Instructs/trains for improved customer service.

CREDIT UNION MEMBER SERVICE SURVEY – Measures People Orientation, Cross Selling Ability and Complaint Handling Ability. Instructs/trains for improved member service.

Tests for Sales, Management, Executive and Professional Positions:

PERFORMANCE PROFILE – Measures fifteen job-relevant personality and performance characteristics, and includes the General Information Appraisal and the Work Attitude Questionnaire. Instructs/trains for improved managerial effectiveness.

\$ALES \$UCCESS PROFILE – Measures 12 critical selling skills. Instructs/trains for improved sales effectiveness.

Tests for the Employment Services Industry:

RELY FOR TEMPS TEST – Measures work ethic in Temp applicants, attitudes toward punctuality, attendance and initiative. Instructs/trains for a good work ethic.

Tests for the Retail Industry:

COIN TEST – Designed for cashiers or any position involving the handling of money. Measures the ability to count money accurately under time pressure. Available in industry-specific versions.

TEEN RELY – Designed for teenage applicants. Measures work ethic, attitudes toward punctuality, attendance and initiative. Instruct/trains for a good work ethic.

JOB APPLICANT SURVEY – Measures service attitudes (helpfulness, dealing with rude customers, sales), work ethic (attendance, punctuality, initiative, reaction to authority) and risk attitudes (theft, drug use, violence).

General Employment Tests:

GENERAL INFORMATION APPRAISAL – Measures general knowledge and thinking skills. Appropriate for all jobs and employment levels.

WORK ATTITUDE PROGRAM – Measures attitudes toward theft, substance abuse on the job, workplace violence, and sexual harassment. Instructs/trains in appropriate workplace behavior.

RELY TEST and **QWIK-RELY TEST** – Measure work ethic, attitudes toward punctuality, attendance and initiative. Instructs/trains for a good work ethic.

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