

The Right Questions to Ask

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You have decided that you need to hire employees who are a better fit with your organization and have the talent to do their jobs. Furthermore, you find that you do not have the expertise within the organization to develop pre-employment assessment tools that you think are necessary to identify top talent. Thus, you decide to seek help from an organization that offers these types of tools. You ask people in other organizations who they use for their assessments; it seems each company uses a different firm. So, what do you do now? As you evaluate various firms to meet your needs in this area, the following questions might be helpful. They are designed to provide you valuable information as you make the decision on which firm to hire to fulfill your requirements. The questions will help you get information about the company in various areas such as people, methodology, references, ongoing research and support, litigation experience and support, cost, constructs measured, the candidate experience interpretation of results and the types of tools available.

1. People

- Who are the people that will be involved in our account?
- What are their credentials?
- What are the credentials of the scientists that have created our assessment tool?
- What kind of educational background do the principal scientists have?

2. Methodology

- Have they done, or will they do, a job analysis?
- Is the tool customized for our job and culture or does the firm rely on data from other companies or studies?
- How are the questions and constructs measured linked to job performance?
- What are the validity and appropriate reliability coefficients?
- If creating a customized assessment tool for your organization, which person from our company will need to be involved in the creation and how much time will they need to spend?

- If an off-the-shelf assessment tool is recommended, what evidence exists that the tool will generalize to our specific organization and job?
- How is the assessment delivered?
- Does the candidate take it via the web, paper and pencil, interactive voice recording (IVR), structured interview delivered via the telephone or in-person interview?

3. References

- How many clients do they have that use a similar system?
- How many assessments do they do per year?
- Can we talk with client references similar to us?
- How many clients do not renew the contract in any given year?
- What references that are different from us can the company supply?

4. Ongoing Research and Support

- If electronic, can the system feed or accept information from our HRIS processes?
- Are there plans in place to track the results and do a predictive validity study?
- How often are predictive validity studies performed?
- What kinds of variables are involved in a predictive validity study?
- How much time will be required for people in our organization to supply data for a predictive validity study?
- What are the costs of a predictive validity study?
- Will the predictive validity study include adverse impact or discrimination analyses?
- Who are the people that will perform the predictive validity study?
- How many other predictive validity studies has the assessment provider performed?
- What are some results we could typically expect?
- What are the typical validity coefficients for a predictive study and/or a concurrent study?

- Is there a database of questions?
- Who within our company has access to results?
- What is the down time if the system is web-based?
- What is the support for a web-based system, 24/7 (Help Desk)?
- Does the system generate follow-up questions for hiring managers to ask?

5. Litigation Experience and Support

- What are their experiences with EEOC, OFCCP and various issues of discrimination?
- Have any clients from the assessment provider lost EEOC claims or other litigation on the basis of a faulty assessment tool?
- Have any clients settled out of court on the basis of a flawed assessment tool?
- Has the tool or tools ever been tested in court?
- What is the experience of the firm in answering EEOC/OFCCP charges and responding to audits?
- Are there costs involved in supporting our company in case of litigation directly aimed at the assessment tool?

6. Cost

- If a tool is going to be customized for us, what are the development costs?
- What are the ongoing costs?
- Are there per-assessment costs?
- Are there costs for training people within our organization to interpret results?
- Is there a cost for ongoing research?

7. Interpretation

- How soon after the assessment is completed will we be able to get results?
- What do the results consist of?
- Do we get a written report, graphical summary or other type of report?
- If a structured interview, are we able to consult with the analyst?
- Is there any special training necessary to interpret the results?
- Can we get results via the web?
- Are there test manuals available?
- Can the training be done via the web or does it have to be in person?
- How easy is it to administer?
- What type of reports do we get back?
- Who has access to the reports?
- Does it allow for development as well as selection?

8. Types of Tools Available

- Does our company have skills/knowledge tests that can be used?
- What other services does the vendor provide?

9. Traits and Competencies

- What is measured in the tool?
- Does it include personality?
- Does it include experience?
- Does it include situational judgment?
- Does it include cognitive ability?
- Can tests of knowledge be added?

10. Candidate Experience

- How long does it take the candidate to complete?
- If self-administered, what is the reading level?
- Can the candidate receive feedback?

Once you determine your exact needs and the type of tool that will fit your culture, some of the questions listed above will be more useful than others. Most reputable firms providing these types of services will be able to answer these questions in a very affirmative manner. Firms that are evasive about the answers are firms to steer clear of and not engage into a partnership around assessments.

If you are going to be issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP), the use of these questions can serve as a guide to writing it. Of course, some of them may not be applicable to your needs, but many will. Once responses come back from the vendor participants, you will be able to make better judgments about the quality of the answers to your chosen questions. By comparing the answers, you will be able to choose the best response. In essence, you will know a good answer when you see one. If further assistance is needed, it might be wise to invest in a psychologist consultant whose main area of expertise is in assessment. This type of consultant would ideally have experience and expertise in research, validity, litigation and assessment design. A careful analysis of the answers to these questions will allow you to choose an assessment partner that truly fits your needs. ■

About the Author

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Richard E. Harding, Ph.D., is an executive consultant, director of research and principal at Kenexa. Dr. Harding has more than 24 years of experience specializing in validity and reliability of assessments, selection and development of associates, associate surveys, multi-

rater surveys, and business outcomes modeling and linkages. He has consulted with numerous Fortune 500 companies in the United States and Europe. Before joining Kenexa, Dr. Harding was director of research for The Gallup Organization for almost 17 years. He also taught science and mathematics at the secondary school level, is an adjunct professor for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and has taught numerous research and statistics classes at the graduate and undergraduate level. Dr. Harding is the author of over 300 proprietary validity studies and has offered affidavit support and testimony for clients in legal venues.

Dr. Harding is a licensed psychologist, and a member of the American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychologists and Sigma Xi Research Society. He holds a Doctorate degree in psychological and cultural studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with an emphasis in statistics, research and program evaluation.

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