

Science of finding the perfect fit

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Most jobseekers want a job they love, excel at and are perfectly suited to while employers are after the right people who will prove high performers in their business.

But whittling through dozens or even hundreds of applications and resumes to find the ideal candidate who fits the role has become a growing problem for many Australian companies.

Advertising jobs online has proved a double-edged sword: while the increased reach via the internet means employers can choose from a huge pool of potential talent — the process of sorting through that pool can be very costly and time-consuming.

"Employers are being swamped with resumes and it's a real problem for them," says HR consultant Jo Attard.

In search of a solution, a growing number of businesses are turning to psychometric testing (measuring personality traits, attitudes and abilities) to pre-screen and cull applicants — before looking at a resume.

Psychometric testing is not new in the recruitment field; however, its mass application at the outset is gaining popularity.

Online software platform, Expr3ss! offers such testing at the beginning of the job application process as a way to shortlist applicants and its founders say it is a faster, more efficient, cost-effective and accurate method of identifying only the best possible candidates.

Creator Dr Glyn Brokensha, a former GP and psychotherapist who founded the company with partner Carolyne Burns, says "it eliminates 99.9 per cent of unnecessary resume reading".

"It selects very rapidly and rationally people who are likely to fit into the company; the role and even the team they are going into," he says.

Among the employers embracing this trend is Spendless Shoes, which has used the pre-screening process for

every hire "from casual store assistant to CFO".

"Our biggest problem is coping with the copious volume of applicants and then dealing with those applications efficiently to find the diamond in the rough," says general manager David Evans.

The Expr3ss! test comprises 168 customised statements which measure every applicant against the most successful and high performing employees of that company.

"If we measure what works and doesn't work in an organisation and create a benchmark ... then we can be highly predictive of whether someone will fit that role, with that employer, in that particular place," says Dr Brokensha.

The test also allows for personality traits or characteristics irrelevant to the role "so you don't end up having a cloned workforce".



Kennards Hire national people manager Marc Calwell says the company regularly fields 120 applicants for the one vacancy and says pre-screening ensures people are a good cultural fit and appropriate for the role before even reaching the interview stage. "Branch managers rave about it," Callwell says.

Online employment site Seek acknowledges high volume recruitment is a problem for some clients. Product director Doug Blue reveals the company is currently trialling candidate screening for a number of Australian clients. It requires applicants to answer "threshold questions" about their experience, achievement and formal qualifications.

He says a trial of psychometric testing is planned in its Mexico business. "We are in the build phase of a trial which will be launched in the coming months," Blue says.

Organisational psychologist Kate Juniper of Allworth Juniper Consulting cautions psychometric testing it not a perfect science and says its value lies in providing additional insight and information about an applicant that may not be obvious in an interview.

While pre-screening is useful for volume recruitment, there are other options.

"An alternative could be to assess people on literacy and numeracy skills because research tells us the best predictor of performance on the job is cognitive ability," Juniper says.

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Kennards Hire national people manager Marc Calwell (inset, with colleague Darren Curmi) says pre-screening ensures employees are a good cultural fit and appropriate for their roles. Pictures: Richard Dobson, Getty