

Niche Update

Special points of interest:

- **Assessment and Technology**
- **New Staff member**
- **Candidates' perceptions of unsupervised vs supervised testing**
- **The Peter Principle**
- **Hire on Attitude**
- **Considerations with unsupervised online ability tests**

Assessments and Smart Technology

Neisha recently attended the SIOP (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology) 2012 conference in San Diego, where there were several interesting talks on how technology is changing the world of psychometric assessments. How much has changed. Only back in 1998 there were no online tests available and only 5% were done via a computer. SHL reported that in 2011 97% of their assessments were now completed online.

The new smart phones are also now impacting how assessments are being taken. In a 2011 sample of over 1 Million test takers, 1.7% of people took the assessment on a mobile device. However the numbers doing so is forecast to grow as more and more of the population have smart phones and use them for internet based activities.



The practice of candidates using mobile devices to complete assessments had occurred before any research had been done on it to ensure it was fair and comparable to other forms of online administration.

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Fortunately, new research is showing scores for candidates doing personality assessments on a mobile device versus paper and pencil or via PC, do not differ. However, new research is clearly showing doing ability tests on mobile devices is not advised as there are significant score differences, with those on mobile devices scoring less. Again this makes sense given it is likely to take longer to complete test items when the device you are using has a smaller screen size that is not optimised for the test platform, and therefore you need to scroll up or down too much (Doverspike, Arthur, Taylor, & Carr, 2012).

We do not recommend candidates complete timed ability tests on mobile devices

Research clearly shows that completion on a mobile device disadvantages candidates

Interestingly, those using mobile phones to take assessments are not your stereotypical younger person, those over 40 were more likely to use mobile devices. The average age from assessments being done on a mobile device was 37 years old versus non-mobile users being closer to 31 years old. This makes sense if you take into consideration the demographic that could previously afford smart phones or had them supplied by employers.

Assessments have come a long way since they first went online and while technology will keep improving and innovating, it is important to ensure that these advances do not negatively impact on the fairness, standardisation and utility of psychometric assessments.

Welcome to New Team Member - Claire Scouller



We welcome Claire Scouller to the team at Niche Consulting.

Claire is an experienced administrator who will assist Traci in running the day-to-day test administration and candidate experience.

Claire previously spent 12 years at Saatchi & Saatchi and has extensive experience in roles requiring high customer focus and attention to detail.

Claire will be working part-time on Mondays and Fridays.

The Peter Principle — Are High Performers also High Potentials?

The Peter Principle comes from the belief that those who are in their current jobs should be promoted so long as they work competently in that role. However, the principle tells us that competent workers will eventually be promoted beyond their level of ability. This is because the level of ability required to be competent in one role is not the same level of ability that is needed in a higher level role.

Some recent research seems to back this up. Let us differentiate between high performers and high potential employees. **High potentials** are those who have strong potential to be promoted within an organisation. **High performers** are those who are performing strongly in their current role. How much do these two groups overlap?

- ◆ 98% of high potentials are also high performers
- ◆ 71% of high performers are **NOT** high potentials

So, what can we learn from the Peter Principle:

1. Good employees who are high performers in their current jobs should not be promoted for their efforts unless they also are high potentials. Instead of promotion we should show our appreciation for their efforts with other methods, while they remain in their current position.
2. If you are considering promoting employees, reassessing them to ensure they do have the right abilities and preferences is strongly recommended.
3. Ensure those who are promoted are sufficiently trained for the new position. Just because employees have the potential to be promoted does not mean they will not fall into some traps due to inexperience or lack of knowledge.

Only 29% of High performers are also high potentials

High Performers

Average Performers

Low Performers

Candidates' reactions to Unsupervised Internet Testing (UIT)

While there are obvious advantages to unsupervised internet testing (UIT) such as ease of administration and reduced costs, an interesting area is candidates' reactions to different testing environments. A recent US study, by Schmidt and Bucklan 2012, looked into candidates' reactions to supervised and unsupervised assessments and their research found:



Candidate Reactions to Unsupervised assessments:

- ◆ 70% felt it was easier to schedule their assessment
- ◆ 34% liked casual setting
- ◆ A number raised concerns about technical/computer issues when taking the tests unsupervised

Candidate Reactions to Supervised assessments:

- ◆ They liked the quieter test environment
- ◆ They found it convenient to have it scheduled for them
- ◆ They were more likely to recommend others to apply

There were no differences reported between supervised and unsupervised testing for:

- ◆ Ease of administration
- ◆ Opportunity to do your best
- ◆ How relaxed they were during the testing session

Interestingly, of the group who took the assessments supervised, only 17% would have preferred the assessments to be done offsite and unsupervised. The candidates said they liked the supervised client setting as it gave them the opportunity to see the organisation, network and be onsite.



However, to put things into context these candidates were doing the assessment onsite in an assessment centre context within the client's offices which is a different situation to going into a testing centre or a consultancy's offices.

At Niche we offer a choice of ability tests which include online unsupervised assessments and supervised options. There are pros and cons for each option; some of which are discussed on page 4 of this newsletter.

Unsupervised Internet Testing (UIT) - Concerns and Considerations

At Niche we recommend personality assessments be completed online unsupervised, however the decision to use unsupervised ability tests comes with drawbacks and has some potential issues. While it is convenient to get candidates to do ability testing online, there are some current problems with this administration mode and the tests available for UIT.

Candidate Related Concerns with UIT

1. Unsupervised internet based ability tests are open to cheating – we cannot verify who is completing the test online or whether they have assistance from others to do the tests. Research shows more cheating occurs when candidates complete tests online.
2. Candidates may have more technical issues when completing UIT and have limited support if they complete at night. Many of the tests only run on PCs and Internet Explorer—which can cause issues with some platforms candidates try to use from home.
3. Candidates testing unsupervised at home can have more interruptions while testing than in a standardised setting which is designed to be quiet and undisturbed. We cannot control the testing environment with UIT.



Issues with the Current Unsupervised Ability Tests that are available

1. Currently, all of the available unsupervised ability tests have few or restricted norms. Generally there will be only one managerial and professional norm to compare the candidate to. Niche has extensive norms for our supervised tests, however we cannot create norms for the UIT.
2. The results from the UIT are reported in percentiles and no raw score data (i.e. number correct and incorrect) is available. The raw score data gives valuable information on the accuracy of the candidate approach but also is needed to create new norms. The reason for this is that test makers use computer adaptive testing for these tests, but it does change how much information we can glean from the testing results.

Advantages of Supervised Ability Tests

There are some major advantages with using supervised tests and these include:

- ◆ A much wider range of tests available at different levels for supervised ability tests.
- ◆ Better control of the testing environment and conditions. This ensures the candidate has the greatest opportunity to do their best without interruptions or technical issues.
- ◆ Better control of the candidate - our administrators take time to explain the process, make sure the candidate knows what to do (and not to do) and we ask them to attempt the practice items to ensure we know they understand what is required - we know often without this guidance candidates do not read instructions well and may launch into starting a test prematurely.
- ◆ Better norms - Niche has developed over 40 different norms by job group for many of the ability tests we use - this gives our clients a clear indication of how the candidate compares to their peers, not just one norm group.
- ◆ Most of the supervised ability tests give information on both number correct and incorrect which helps assess accuracy of approach.