

# Niche Update

## Special points of interest:

- Traci's back
- Anne-Marie joining Niche
- New staff Members
- Alternate IQ test for ESL
- New Workshops
- Online un-supervised ability tests
- Phone language skills

## Staff Announcements and Personnel Changes

### New people

Niche Consulting expands this year with two new members joining the team.

#### Anne-Marie MacIntyre (nee Prescott)

Anne-Marie joins Niche Consulting after a 5 year stint as Organisational Development Manager with Vector. Some of you may remember Anne-Marie from Morgan & Banks, where she and Neisha worked together for over 5 years as Principal Consultants in the HR Consulting Team. They were known as Snow White and Rose Red by their peers, and had a lot of fun getting all excited about psychological profiles and talking psycho babble to each other. Together Anne-Marie and Neisha have a significant track record of OD and HR consulting experience, and together they have 27 years combined experience. Anne-Marie will be concentrating on her favourite consulting areas including leadership development, well-being, safety, coaching and resilience training. We are delighted to welcome Anne-Marie to the team.



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#### Georgina Ellis

We are also delighted to announce that **Georgina Ellis** becomes a permanent member of the Niche team in April 2008. Georgina first worked with Neisha and Anne-Marie 9 years ago as part of the Morgan and Banks' (M&B) Career Transition team. She also worked with us as project manager for a number of large Assessment Centres, whilst at M&B. After trying her hand at film production, Georgina has decided to finish her Masters in Psychology and wants to become a Registered Psychologist. Some of you may remember Georgina as she has worked on and off for Niche between film contracts, since Niche was founded. She will take up a varied role as a Psychology Intern and we are very excited to have her back as part of the team.

*More staff News on Page 2.....*

## Traci's Back, Grace has already turned 1 yr old! & Other Staff News



**Traci Pleydell** - A belated welcome back to Traci who returned to Niche in October 2007, after taking maternity leave last year. We are loving having her back to take control of the office management, candidate care and liaising with clients in her usual efficient and friendly manner. How we managed without her is a mystery to us all. Traci's baby girl, Grace, just had her first year birthday party – how time flies...

**Jayne Cobham** - We are sad to announce that Jayne will be leaving Niche Consulting to follow a different career direction. Jayne filled in for Traci while she was on maternity leave last year, and has been in a part time role here since Traci's return. We will miss having her as part of the team, but recognise her need to follow her career interests. We wish her all the best for her future.

**Krasimira Kirova** (Krasi) - Krasi has been working with us to assist Traci with test administration and administrative support. Krasi has decided to move abroad and we wish her well in her future endeavours.



## How do you know if an Assessment is Valid or not?

For the layperson sometimes the claims of less scrupulous test publishers on the utility and validity of their assessments can seem compelling. For instance claims like *"Predicts Sales Success with 70% accuracy"* and other such claims are, at best misleading, at worst fraudulent. The role of a Registered Psychologist is to adhere to ethical guidelines that ensure they *"are prepared to justify, in terms of scientific literature, their use and interpretation of any assessment instrument or procedures. They are to avoid using instruments which are obsolete or of dubious scientific nature"* – *New Zealand Psychological Society : Code of Ethics*. There is no legitimate single psychological test, which has ever approached predictive accuracy of 70%, and we would caution any person accepting such a claim without the back-up of a published academic study in a well regarded academic journal to prove it. Researchers who are serious about making substantiated claims on the whole try to publish their studies in scientific journals where their research data, methods and conclusions are subject to peer review and therefore are to a standard that is credible and refutable. Also beware of those organisations that have done all the research on their tests in-house, as obviously they have a vested interest in showing the results only in the best possible light.

Additionally, for any test to be considered a valid and well constructed measure it should have gone under peer review and either the American Buros Institute <http://www.unl.edu/buros/> or British Psychological Society <http://www.psychtesting.org.uk/> are the test measurement standard organisations that "tests the test makers" before endorsing any new assessment. The Buros reviews go into the Mental Measurement Yearbook and this is where psychologists and others should check out the validity of an assessment prior to use.



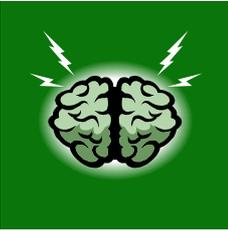
You may be surprised to learn that the following assessments have not been peer reviewed: Apollo Profile, OPQ32 (only the older version of the OPQ was reviewed), and Saville Wave to name a few. DiSC got the following Buros comment in the Mental Measurements Yearbook - *"On the surface level, it appears that the instrument is useful in personal or professional development. However, the test suffers from questionable reliability and unknown validity. The measure is also remiss in its lack of reliability and validity for diverse ethnic/ racial populations and professional occupations. Therefore, the use of the DiSC is not recommended."*

The moral of the story is to beware of companies trying to sell you assessments, unless they can meet the above criteria.

# New Assessments or Alternatives to Consider

Niche personnel enjoy discovering and researching new assessment tools and in turn want to share a couple of the more interesting discoveries with our clients.

## Alternative IQ Test—For ESL or where Literacy is an Issue



The Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) is a reliable and valid measure of General Mental Ability (GMA) and we are recommending it as an alternative to the Wonderlic IQ test for those candidates who do not have a strong grasp of the English language. This assessment measures an individual's ability to recognise, identify and match abstract patterns and shapes within a challenging time frame. All items in the test are purely diagrammatic in nature, taking away the impact of language on the assessment.

While the assessment does not require a high education level or literacy level to complete, the candidate will still need to be able to follow basic verbal instructions. GMA tools are valuable for their ability to recognise the individual's potential to quickly pick up new information i.e. learning a new language and following instructions. Recent research has GMA more predictive than job experience for predicting on the job performance. We are currently distributing the Raven's SPM to our test administrators around the country, so this will be available alongside our other ability assessments as a standard offering. We have general population norms and NZ business norms for the Ravens SPM. Please let us know if you would like us to use this tool instead of, or as well as, the Wonderlic IQ test, in any instances.

## Phone based Assessment for Verbal Fluency

We now have available an assessment that is an effective screening assessment for phone based communication skills. It can be used to help identify an individual's verbal – clarity, interpretation, comprehension, fluency and grammatical accuracy. This assessment can be done unsupervised and takes approximately 15 minutes to complete and is scored instantly by a computer. This assessment involves 5 sections that cover:



1. Reading out passages that the candidate is sent
2. Repeating sentences that the candidate hears over the phone
3. Answering simple questions such as “would you get water from a bottle or a newspaper”
4. Rearranging word groups into a sentence – so the candidate might hear “was reading” ... “my mother” ... “her favourite magazine”. And they then have to rephrase into a logical sentence “my mother was reading her favourite magazine”.
5. Open questions where the candidate is given 20 seconds to answer questions about themselves, their family life and personal choices.

The report gives an Overall communication ability score as well as 4 subgroup results which help identify development and training needs. These sub groups are Sentence mastery, Vocabulary, Fluency and Pronunciation. This tool gives a quick analysis of communication skills in a standardised, role appropriate and fair format. There is also a shorter version (5 min) which assesses verbal clarity and fluency as well as comprehension. This report only gives an overall rating of the individual's communication level against a general population.

## Now Available Online Unsupervised Ability Tests



We now have several suppliers who can provide us with ability tests that can be administered online and do not have to be supervised. We have the suite of SHL verify tests, the Wonderlic online quick test, and some other tests that can be delivered online, without supervision. In situations where either speed of turnaround is an issue or where it is cost prohibitive to do normal supervised ability tests, these are good alternatives to consider as you can still get some information about raw abilities and intellect. One note of caution however, all the suppliers currently advise that it is highly recommended that further testing is undertaken in a supervised setting to verify these scores rather than rely on these alone to make a judgement of the individual's ability.

## Safety Workshops for Supervisors in Safety Critical Roles

These workshops have been developed after extensive research by Neisha and Anne-Marie and have been successfully launched across a number of NZ businesses and industries where safety records and results are critical to the continued success and operations of a business. *The outcomes from the workshop* – Leaders within the business ensure performance evaluation and management reinforces the right behaviours which directly and positively impact on bottom line results and measures of success.

### Workshop Outline

*Leadership Introduction* – Senior management identify critical areas for improvement and set up improvement goals and reinforcement protocols.

*Supervisor Assessment* – This combines a safety survey with personality and other assessments in order to identify and target behaviours which counter and conflict with safe behaviours. Niche Consulting holds NZ Business and industry specific norms as well as international norms which are valuable as reference points for organisations to track their own results against other businesses.

*Leadership Analysis of Results* – Leaders can choose 3 workshop modules from 9 safety improvement modules and these 3 together target the organisations critical areas for development and reflect business operational goals and objectives.

*Workshop* – 2 ½ days - These are practical hands-on workshops (covering the 3 selected modules) that are customised to reflect the organisations cultural style in communicating information and setting goals and objectives.



## Niche presents Safety Research at the Adelaide IO Conference 2007



Neisha & Anne-Marie recently presented some of their research on safety critical roles and predicting safety attitudes at the Industrial/Organisational Psychology Conference in Adelaide, Australia. The research showed that the assessment tools PRB (integrity test) and NEO-PIR (big five personality assessment) could predict those who were more likely to have attitudes that would make them open to influences that would make them take risks at work and engage in unsafe work practices.

Key findings were those with low PRB results had significantly more negative safety attitudes. In addition, high NEO Conscientiousness results correlated with more positive safety perceptions.

## Health, Well-Being and Resilience Workshops

Under the current employment legislation organisations are accountable for the health and well-being of their employees during their working hours. These workshops are designed to assist companies to take affirmative action in helping employees identify potential stressors in their current working and personal environment. The workshop offers practical options and solutions for proactively countering any non-constructive behaviours that may be adding to an individual's stress and affecting well-being. *The outcomes from the workshop* – a resilient workforce who are effective and capable of managing their workload, and stressors at work and home.



### Workshop Outline

*Leadership Introduction* - Manager support of programme and setting up expectations of participants

*Resilience Assessment* – Participants fill out and mark their survey

*Workshop* – 1 day covering – Life and work stressors, identification, remedies, enabling behaviours and accountability

## Ever wanted to know how a candidate behaved in the Administration Session?

We have recently asked all our Niche test administrators in-house and around the country to give us information about how the candidate acts and behaves in the administration session. This provides us with information on any signs of test anxiety, punctuality to the testing session, any issues that may affect the candidate's performance on the test, and any other salient comments. This information will be put on the candidate file and can be utilised by the respective clients or we may comment on anything noteworthy in the report.



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