

## How would you describe yourself ... honestly?

### 1 Warmer

#### a. Discuss these questions.

1. What different traits make a 'personality'? Add your own ideas to the word cloud below.

conscientiousness  
agreeableness dominance  
decision-making emotionality intuitiveness  
honesty extroversion openness to experience  
introversion influence steadiness  
humility

2. Have you ever completed a personality test? Do you think these can accurately identify your personality traits?
3. Do you think using personality assessment tools in recruitment is a good idea? Why (not)?
4. How accurately do personality tests predict an individual's potential?

### 2 Key words

#### a. Read the definitions and find key words in the article that match them. The paragraph number is given in brackets to help you.

Check your answers and your understanding of the words by using them to complete the example sentence immediately after each definition. You may have to change the form of the word.

Then, read the complete article to see how each of the key words is used in context.

1. a natural ability that makes it easy for you to do something well \_\_\_\_\_

(paragraph 1)

*I had no \_\_\_\_\_ for chemistry, which is probably why I dislike it so much.*

2. based on situations or events that seem possible rather than on actual ones

\_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 1)

*Our crisis management plan is a document that outlines different \_\_\_\_\_ challenges.*

3. behaviour that is caused by your genes and the way that your brain is made, rather than learnt from experience \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 1)

*I don't think we are \_\_\_\_\_ to deal with conflict; it is something that we need to learn from our environment.*

4. in a way that shows a quality or ability that you have always had \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 2)

*Some studies have concluded that humans are \_\_\_\_\_ social creatures, and this should be considered when creating organisational structures and systems.*

5. something that completely changes the way something is done, thought about, or made \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 3)

*A new start-up is farming a plastic-eating worm, which might be a \_\_\_\_\_ for plastic waste management.*

6. very common in a particular place or among a specific group \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 4)

*According to the headhunting firm, dishonest CVs have become more \_\_\_\_\_ in the last decade.*

7. the process of collecting and examining information about someone or something to get an accurate idea of what they are like \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 6)

*The app includes a \_\_\_\_\_ feature for each student and shares their learning preferences with the teacher.*

8. the quality of always behaving according to the moral principles that you believe in so that people respect and trust you \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 8)

*While not everyone agreed with her decisions, no one could question her \_\_\_\_\_ on this issue.*

9. make something more interesting by adding details, especially ones that are not entirely true

\_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 8)

*I'm not sure why Dan felt he had to \_\_\_\_\_ his narrative of the events when the truth was already flattering.*

10. show something unknown or hidden \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 9)

*The emergency \_\_\_\_\_ that most of us choke under pressure.*

11. look for someone or something, for example, by searching through a large amount of information

\_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 10)

*Her assistant has \_\_\_\_\_ through hundreds of CVs and shortlisted only twelve for her to look at.*

12. a feeling or attitude of confidence \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 12)

*Jess showed a range of skills and her depth of understanding in the interview, but she lacked \_\_\_\_\_.*

13. able to understand how someone feels because you can imagine what it is like to be them

\_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 13)

*She shows a balance between being people- and results-orientated. Her team has described her as a demanding yet \_\_\_\_\_ boss.*

14. extremely useful \_\_\_\_\_ (paragraph 14)

*Many of our competitors' new hires are recent graduates, but we find that experience is \_\_\_\_\_ and have a strict age-discrimination policy.*

## ***Psychological tests can help firms hire better – but accuracy is not guaranteed***

**EMPLOYERS ARE USING PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS TO RESOLVE DISPUTES AND DIVERSIFY THEIR WORKFORCE**

**ANJLI RAVAL**

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- 1 It was the closest I've come to seeing a therapist. After several hours of personality and aptitude tests for a hypothetical job at AlixPartners, it was time to talk to Jeremy Borys, a partner at the consultancy and an expert in organisational psychology. He wanted to discuss my "hard-wired personality structure".
- 2 For 40 years, Alix has been collecting data on the core psychological needs of potential recruits – from its receptionists to its chief executive. The company's findings show that by discovering what innately drives an individual, they can hire for the long term, weed out people who would not be a cultural fit and build teams that work more effectively.
- 3 Many creators of personality assessment tools issue disclaimers that they should not be used to predict job performance. Executive headhunters say people lie, responses can change depending on the day and practice tests mean you can beat the system. Alix believes its assessment is a game-changer for the firm – it uses results to resolve problems within teams and, like other companies, believes testing helps diversify its workforce as it is not recruiting from certain schools or people with specific degrees. But even so, the consultancy admits the tests alone are not enough to hire someone.
- 4 So why are they so prevalent?
- 5 "If you make a good hire, it is a powerful and advantageous thing to do," said James Reed, chair and chief executive of the recruitment company that carries the family name.
- 6 Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, an organisational psychologist and expert in personality profiling, said that while there was huge variability in the quality of tests, a small proportion of them were very accurate. "Well-designed tests predict performance," he stressed.
- 7 Only 10–15 per cent of companies on the Fortune 500, FTSE 100 and S&P 500 indices did not use some kind of pre-employment testing, according to Chamorro-Premuzic. Even though these corporations only tested a small percentage of their total workforce – perhaps at entry level or for an executive committee – companies from PepsiCo and Boeing to Shell, Maersk and Spotify all used them, he added.
- 8 Yet there is no guarantee such hiring tools work. "That's why we're still here," Reed said. "The most important thing for hirers is integrity. Is this individual honest and trustworthy? And none of these products will do that." Reed does a lot of screening work for clients – from evaluating CVs to credit and criminal checks and getting references. "Around 40 per cent of them have an error, shall we say," he said, alluding to the fact that people embellished their work histories and qualifications.
- 9 As a truthful test-taker, the Alix assessments revealed some traits I knew I had – I am task-orientated, value-driven and work best when I have clear, well-defined objectives, and take on work with meaning. At the same time I can take on too much, struggle to delegate, become overinvested in achieving goals, and can be stubborn and overly critical. My husband would likely agree.
- 10 My results showed that even as my critical-thinking skills were superior, my ability to process masses of data quickly could have been better. I couldn't help but think that had my toddler not woken up repeatedly the prior night my performance might have been stronger. Had I trawled the internet for practice tests, I could have improved my scores.

*Continued on next page*

- 11 Chamorro-Premuzic said doing practice tests didn't necessarily mean you were gaming the system. You are showing yourself in the best light. He said prospective employees cheated less than people thought, for fear of being caught. And even if some did lie, what's the problem? "If you can tell employers what they want to hear... is that wrong? Sounds unethical, but this is the real world. You might actually be good at your job even if you lie your entire life."
- 12 Putting cynical thoughts aside, testing provides an extra level of assurance at a time when hiring badly is costly – in terms of time and money – amid a shortage of skilled workers.
- 13 It helps companies assess an individual's skills and potential for growth, as well as how well they would respond in a particular scenario. Self-reported personality quizzes aim to identify specific traits, such as how reliable or ambitious you are. Psychological tests try to measure emotional intelligence, such as how empathetic and self-aware you might be.
- 14 When individuals feel fulfilled psychologically, they are more productive in the workplace as well as healthier and happier. If testing technology improves and more accuracy could be guaranteed, the information it provided would be invaluable for all team leaders – they would be able to manage people better, individuals would be assigned work that was more suited to them, groups could function better and conflict could be dissipated swiftly.
- 15 Until that happens, companies might be wise to take note of those disclaimers.

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Anjli Raval, 23 April, 2023

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## 3 Understanding the article

a. Complete the table with key information from the article.

1. what AlixPartners research	
2. applications	
3. personality assessment tool disclaimer & reasons	
4. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic on accuracy	
5. what companies use pre-employment testing	
6. screening methods and findings	
7. writer's test results	
8. factors that influence results	
9. benefits of testing	
10. benefits of a hypothetical 100% accurate test	

## 4 Business language – collocations

a. Match the verbs and nouns below to form collocations from the article.

assess	assign	become overinvested in	collect	dissipate	diversify
embellish	issue	measure	process	resolve	trawl

- \_\_\_\_\_ disputes/problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ your workforce
- \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ data
- \_\_\_\_\_ disclaimers
- \_\_\_\_\_ your qualifications
- \_\_\_\_\_ achieving goals
- \_\_\_\_\_ the internet
- \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ an individual's skills and potential for growth/emotional intelligence
- \_\_\_\_\_ work
- \_\_\_\_\_ conflict

**b. Complete the sentences with collocations from task a.**

1. I (went through) \_\_\_\_\_ before I found a job ad that I liked and sent in my application.
2. I believe she would have got the job had she not (exaggerated) \_\_\_\_\_ her \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A corporate psychologist has been brought in to help (fix) \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ in the management team.
4. This meeting has been called to define and (designate) \_\_\_\_\_ all of the \_\_\_\_\_ involved in the next event.
5. Since we receive applications with very similar profiles, we are exploring new avenues of recruitment to (vary) \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Employees are encouraged to use open communication to (end) \_\_\_\_\_ and maintain a positive work environment.
7. A \_\_\_\_\_ was (released) \_\_\_\_\_ on the company website denying support for the controversial political campaign.
8. A 360 evaluation is a process for (evaluating) \_\_\_\_\_ performance by using many different kinds of feedback.
9. Their latest study (gathered) \_\_\_\_\_ self-reported \_\_\_\_\_ from more than 5,000 subscribed customers.
10. While it is good to focus on your goals, it is important to enjoy the process and not (be obsessed) \_\_\_\_\_ the outcomes.

**c. Identify useful vocabulary from the article related to the recruitment process. Draw a diagram in your notebook.**

## 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss the following questions.**

1. Did anything in the article surprise you? Why?
2. At what stage and how could companies most efficiently use a personality assessment tool? Should it be limited to the recruitment stage?
3. What criteria should a company use to select a personality assessment tool?
4. How do you think personality assessments vary?
5. Would you prepare for such an assessment? How?

## 6 Wider business theme – using personality assessment tools in the recruitment process

- a. You are a manager at a rapidly growing company that makes clothing from sustainably grown bamboo. Recently, you have had to hire several new staff members to meet demands. You recruited quickly but unsuccessfully from IT to design, sales, and marketing. With a high turnover and some not-so-great fits, you are now considering using personality assessment to help inform your recruitment decisions.
- b. You are attending an online meeting to decide whether to include a mandatory personality assessment while recruiting.
  1. First, list the pros and cons of each alternative. Do more research on your options, if possible. Consider biases, diversity of people who would be successful, relevance to your company's values and vision, reliability, accuracy, ease of use, cost, etc.
  2. Then, consider your pros and cons and develop an argument favouring your assigned assessment tool and arguments against possible objections. Note down reasons and examples to support your opinion.
  3. Now, work in small groups and discuss to decide.

### Different types of personality assessments

HEXACO personality inventory	DISC	The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
Measures six major personality dimensions, namely: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience	Measures four major dimensions: dominance, influence, conscientiousness, steadiness	Measures: extroversion-introversion, sensing preference-intuitive preference for processing information, decision-making by thinking or feeling, judging-perceiving way of doing things
Available in 60-item and 100-item version	Free 12-question test-question test (10 min)	Online or in-person by a professional
Results shown on the scale	Description of your natural and adapted style	Identify your personality type (there are 16 4-letter MBTI types) and verification by expert
Free online test	Full 24-question test \$39	Free for basic results, \$49.95 for online test
Test available in over 20 languages, results in English	Available in over 30 languages, as well as translated reports	Available in European languages
Pros:	Pros:	Pros:
Cons:	Cons:	Cons:

### Extension

Write an email to Human Resources summarising the final meeting outcomes.