Assessment 101

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Intro — What is the Current Testing and Assessment Landscape?

You've likely heard the words test, assessment, and evaluation used interchangeably, when in fact they each have different connotations and purpose in talent management. Quite simply, without assessments, there would be no basis for the most effective talent management programs. Presently, the language surrounding these terms is both confusing and vague. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find any consistency regarding when and where each term is to be used correctly. With this e-book, we aim to clarify the necessary terminology and provide an analysis of the benefits of implementing assessments in the workplace.
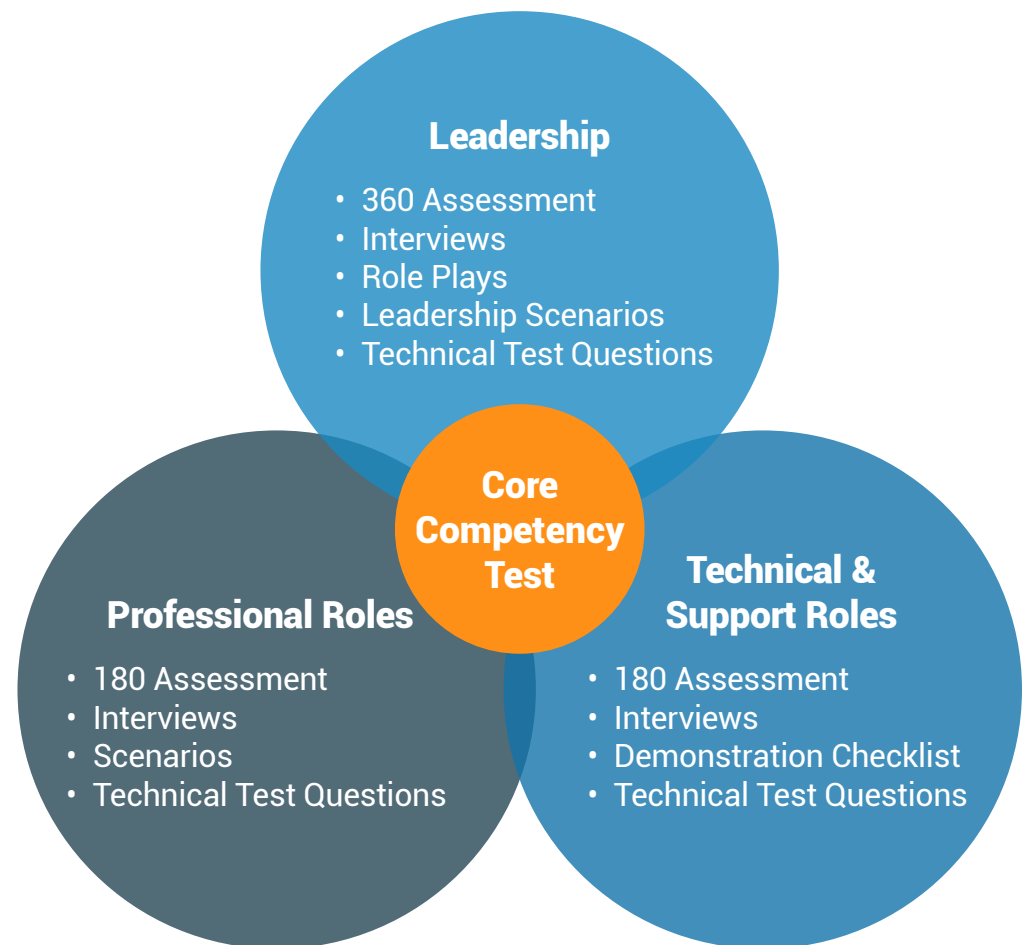
What is an Assessment?

An assessment refers to any tool that is used to measure an individual's knowledge, skill, aptitude, or competence. It can include tests, exams, simulations, on-the-job observations, interview questions, or even games. What assessments have in common is that they are based on clear job requirements and produce consistent and reliable results, therefore positioning them as accurate predictors of overall job success.

Why is Context so Important?

Understanding and recognizing the differences between assessment tools is essential to best leveraging their power. As an example, if you are looking to quickly and effectively pre-screen many candidates, it would be wise to first develop a test with closed-ended questions that is administered online. This cost effective and easy method allows you to filter out those candidates that do not meet minimum job requirements. However, if you are looking to promote a small number of people into management positions, try developing a simulation exercise or conduct a behavior-based interview. This more in-depth method examines how people have behaved in past situations to more clearly determine their levels of competence.

Equally as integral as understanding and recognizing the differences between assessment tools is understanding the target audience for the assessment. There are a variety of types of assessments that are suited to different organizational roles. The following graphic details how understanding the context in which you are performing an assessment allows you to choose the best assessment tool to implement. Whether you're conducting an organization-wide assessment with core competencies, or assessing specific professional, leadership, or technical roles, there is an assessment tool that categorically suits your needs.

Leadership
- 360 Assessment
- Interviews
- Role Plays
- Leadership Scenarios
- Technical Test Questions

Core Competency Test

Professional Roles
- 180 Assessment
- Interviews
- Scenarios
- Technical Test Questions

Technical & Support Roles
- 180 Assessment
- Interviews
- Demonstration Checklist
- Technical Test Questions

Different Assessment Types: What's the Difference? How do They Align?

Assessment is considered a 'catch-all' term, as there are numerous different types of assessments implemented for a variety of different purposes. Depending upon your goals, it is important to appreciate how these various assessments can be put to best use, as well as the benefits they provide at all stages of the talent lifecycle.
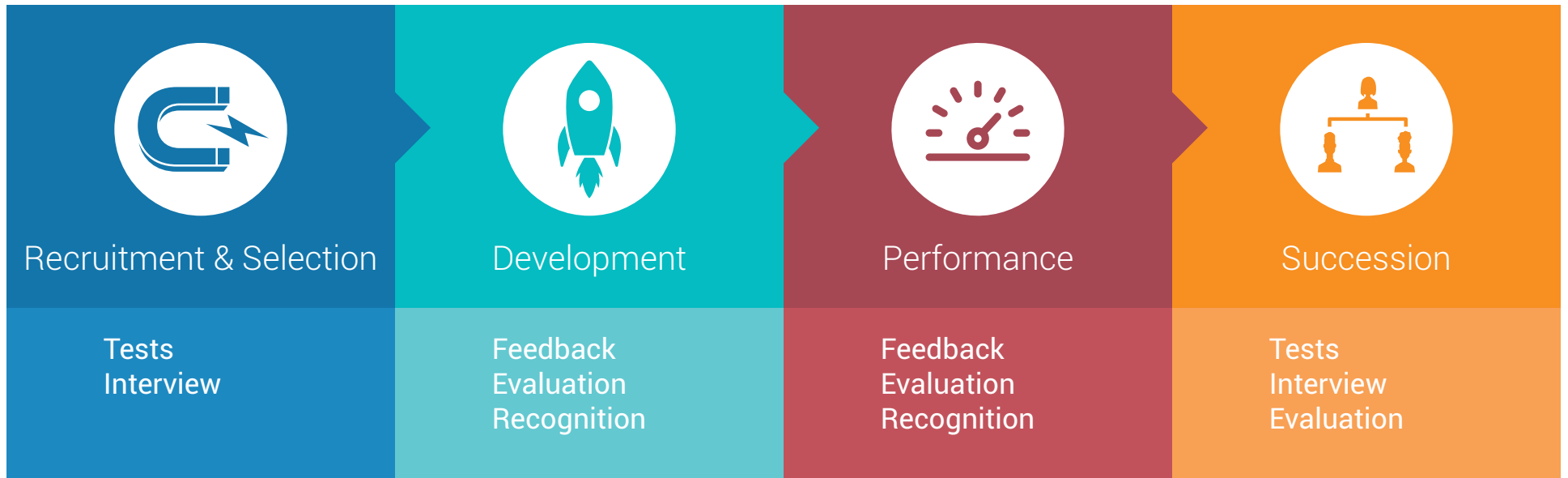
Assessment Type	Definition	Typical Applications	Benefits
Test	A test is a type of assessment used to reliably assess competencies against a pre-defined standard. Tests typically have questions with a right or wrong response such as multiple choice, true / false, matching, etc.	• Pre-employment screening • Compliance	• Easy to administer to multiple candidates. • Very effective in determining candidate's knowledge of objectively right or wrong criteria. • There are a variety of test types, easily customizable to fit your needs.
Examination	An examination is considered 'high-stakes', in that the consequences of passing or failing significantly impacts the individual.	• Certification/Licensure • Compliance	• Most often used in academic settings, as criteria for passing a course, or in a professional setting as criteria for being able to work in, or progress in, a profession.
Structured Interview	Questions are asked by the interviewer to obtain information about competencies. Structured interviews are carefully developed, standardized, and evaluated based upon job criteria.	• Recruitment • Selection into Leadership Development Programs	• Typically, an oral question and answer format allowing for gathering in-depth information about a candidate.

Different Assessment Types: What's the Difference? How do They Align?

Assessment Type	Definition	Typical Applications	Benefits
Evaluation & Feedback	An approach that examines an individual's performance or competencies as compared against a standard. The individual concerned can score him/herself by way of a rating scale. This information provides employers with the ability to monitor and measure performance and to provide meaningful feedback to employees.	• Career Planning • Performance Management • Leadership Assessment and Development • Training Needs Analysis	• Evaluations are customizable to align with the targeted job, specific competencies and goals. • Flexible methodology accommodating both personal self-reflection and management evaluation. • Results are easily mapped to development plans. • Feedback allows employees and managers to share insightful conversations about expectations and improvement.
Recognition	Acknowledgement of an individual or team's behavior, efforts, and accomplishments.	• Performance Feedback • Employee Engagement Programs	• Recognition increases engagement in a workplace. • Flexible and easy implementation (e.g. informal praise or formal awards). • Feedback is continuous and timely.

Assessment Across the Talent Lifecycle

In today's corporate world, the role of assessment can vary as an employee progresses through the talent lifecycle. During the recruitment and selection phase a test might be used as a screening tool prior to an interview. These tests typically adopt closed-ended multiple choice questions, well suited for high volume and easy scoring and aligned with competencies core to the organization and jobs. As employees progress throughout their careers, they might be presented with simulations, case studies or knowledge tests, tailored to their competency development needs. Should an employee be considered for management or leadership, the assessment may then become even more situation specific and involve higher order thinking skills such as judgement, critical thinking or business acumen.

Recruitment & Selection	Development	Performance	Succession
Tests Interview	Feedback Evaluation Recognition	Feedback Evaluation Recognition	Tests Interview Evaluation

The Future of Assessment

What are the trends and what does the future hold?

Assessments have been around for decades, and over time, have evolved from simple paper and pencil to online varieties. In general, the following represents some of the trends dominating the modern field of assessments:

Data Driven

With so much data at our disposal, more and more organizations are looking to creatively leverage this data to assess employees. From data available on social media, to advanced methods of data collection through talent management software, organizations now have at their disposal more information than ever from which to make educated, structured and objective decisions. This trend shows no signs of slowing down as technology develops at breakneck speed, and new software, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, become more commonplace.
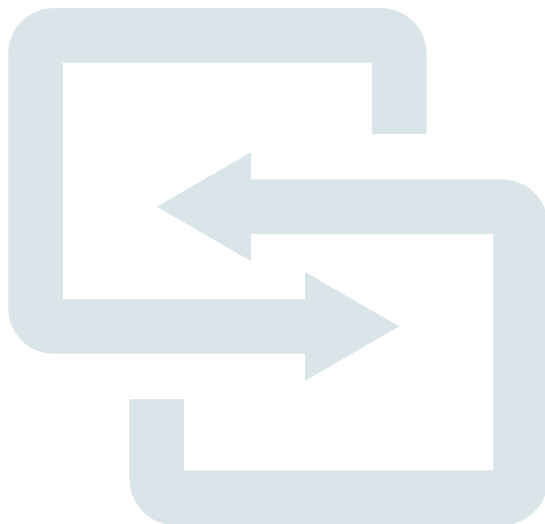
Spotlight

With the rapid and focused evolution of HRSG's products, coupled with the recent addition of a testing platform to our product suite, CompetencyCore™ is a shining example of how a talent management platform gathers tangible data from across numerous different sources. CompetencyCore, empowers you to view results from any assessment process, providing a comprehensive view of employees' results that not only highlight their development needs but also how to address them.

COMPETENCYCORE

The Future of Assessment

Engaging

Organizations ideally want employees to enjoy the testing experience and to find this experience personally useful in their jobs. Incorporating interactive challenges positions the tests closer to real-world experiences, therefore making them more meaningful and relevant.

Spotlight

HRSG developed an innovative pre-employment test to screen a high volume of candidates applying for jobs at Canada Post Corporation. These tests targeted relevant Canada Post aptitudes by delivering a combination of video, audio and text and question types such as multiple choice, ordering, drag and drop, multiple correct, simulation and spatial orientation.

The Future of Assessment

On Demand

Immediacy is fast-becoming the norm in our 24/7 world. Being able to offer online assessments that subjects want to participate in is becoming an expectancy.

Leveraging technology to encourage participation and delivering results in real time are serious considerations when designing your programs. Don't forget that there are also financial benefits to consider, with remote assessment, as opposed to traditional in-person sessions.

Spotlight

HRSG has developed and administered two certification exams for the International NGO Safety and Security Association's safety and security risk management program. These exams are administered via an online, cloud-based platform. The exam is machine-scored and the results are provided in real time. Successful candidates are then sent their certification immediately by email. Unsuccessful candidates are provided a score breakdown highlighting areas in which they need to improve.

The Future of Assessment

Focus on Learning and Development

In the corporate world, we are witnessing a shift from formalized performance evaluation assessment programs, to ongoing and informal recognition methods that focus on employee development, rather than performance evaluation. These proven tools perpetually engage and motivate employees. These informal feedback and recognition tools also work effectively when reinforcing an organization's key behaviors and values to employees.

Spotlight

HRSG employs a system of awarding badges to colleagues based on excellence related to our three core competencies, Client Focus, Teamwork and Creativity and Innovation. This strategy works both as a morale boost and a performance indicator.

How HRSG can Help

As an organization whose promise of performance is to align individual aspirations and competencies with organizational goals, solutions are focused around four key areas that maximize the impact of your talent management applications:

Define

Set the standard for top performance in behavioral terms.

Measure

Assess candidates and employees against pre-defined standards.

Match

Identify best employee-job matches according to standards.

Achieve

Empower employees to achieve their goals and build engaged teams.

How HRSG can Help

By offering an integrated solution, including competencies, software, professional services and training, we offer market-leading and targeted solutions to assist you in achieving your goals.

When examining the different approaches of implementing competencies and assessments, software solutions should be taken very seriously. By implementing CompetencyCore™ (HRSG's competency-driven talent management software platform) you are now able to provide a proven, more efficient and enhanced experience for participants by dispatching a variety of assessments for employees, composing self-assessments and much more.

The following screenshot showcases how to create an assessment within CompetencyCore.

How HRSG can Help

CompetencyCore™ and HRSG's service solutions empower the integration of competencies into any talent management and assessment program to achieve a variety of goals, such as:

- Standardizing and Organizing Job Descriptions
- Defining Employee Competencies
- Selecting Top Talent
- Engaging and Retaining Talent
- Maximizing Employee Effectiveness
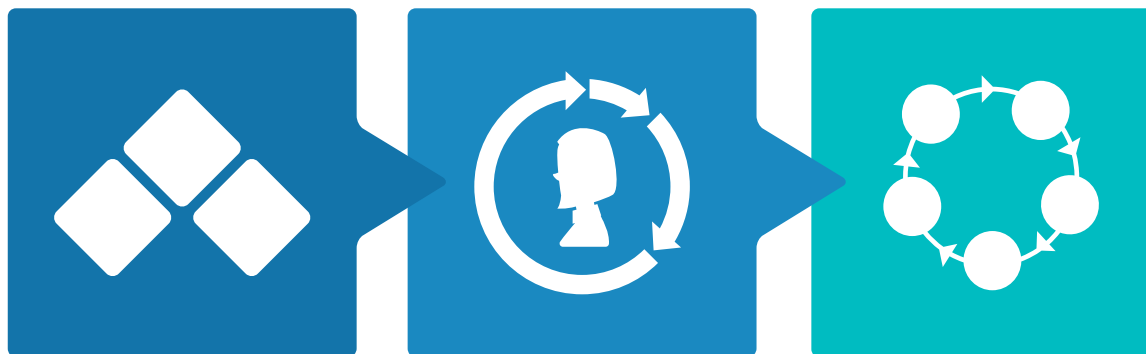- Building a Talent Pipeline

Conclusion

As the job market continues to become more and more competitive, with individuals changing jobs at an ever-increasing pace, organizations must now rethink how to leverage assessment programs to ensure they are placing the right people in the right jobs, the first time of asking.

Competencies play a huge role in successful talent management, serving as a foundation for developing more valid, reliable, and defensible assessment programs. Assessments based upon these accurate job-related competencies ensure that employees are assessed against actual job requirements.

On demand and engaging competency-driven assessments and career pathing tools work to shift power from the organization to the individual, enabling employees to take charge of their careers, self-assess against aspirational jobs and develop actionable plans for achieving their career goals.

Competency-driven assessments can also be utilized to provide more frequent feedback and support peer-to-peer input. Overall, competencies are an essential tool to enhance the effectiveness of assessments at any stage in the talent lifecycle.

To learn more about how we can help you assess your employees and grow your organization, contact us today.

Want to Learn More?

Talk to our team today, or check out more [learning resources in our resource hub](#)!

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About HRSG

HRSG provides cutting-edge software and professional services. Since 1989, we have worked with a range of industries to define talent needs, address skill deficiencies, and improve individual and organizational performance. We are a recognized leader in the field of competency-based talent management, and our flagship software, CompetencyCore™, is used by organizations around the world, to integrate competencies across the talent management lifecycle. For more information, please visit www.hrsg.ca.

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