

The Validity of Pre-Employment Assessments

Dr. John Schinnerer

With respect to pre-employment assessments, validity is an objective measure that demonstrates that the test actually measures what it purports to measure. Validation is a study sponsored by the test publisher in accordance with certain professional standards. Typically, these standards include "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing" and "Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures."

All of Infinet's assessment products and the conclusions reached by use of them are designed and validated in accordance with the procedures described in "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing" as well as "Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures." Thus, none of our assessments are, or have ever been, discriminatory. In addition, all our assessments are in compliance with E.E.O.C. and other Federal Regulations.

In the "Standards for ... Testing" validity is described as "the most important consideration in test evaluation." The concept refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test score. Test validation is the process of accumulating evidence to support such inferences. A variety of inferences may be made from scores produced by a given test, and there are many ways of accumulating evidence to support any particular inference. Validity, however, is a unitary concept. Although evidence may be accumulated in many ways, validity always refers to the degree to which that evidence supports the inferences that are made from the scores. The inferences regarding specific uses of a test are validated, not the test itself.

The five forms of validity:

1. Construct validity refers to the extent to which dimensions, or constructs, with similar names on different tests relate to one another. Two traits that correlate highly on a personality test are not necessarily the same, but the high correlation provides reassurance that they are both testing the same construct (e.g., honesty and dependability, extraversion and sociability, etc.).

2. Concurrent validity is the approach whereby people who are successful in a given job at a particular company or within a certain industry are evaluated by supervisors and grouped. Usually they are put into groups such as Top Performers (i.e., top 25%), Average Performers (i.e., middle 50%), and Below Average Performers (i.e., bottom 25%). The scores of the people who fit each of these ranges are then compiled and Benchmark Standards of the Top Performers are used to hire, train or manage. This is the type of validity most often used by Infinet in the creation of client Success Profiles.

3. Predictive validity, or criterion validity, occurs when the employer hires people for a job via normal hiring procedures (without the use of a validated pre-employment test) and, simultaneously, has them complete the pre-employment test. The results from the test are not used in the hiring decisions. The employees are followed for a period of time; say 3-6 months, to track their progress. At the end of the period, supervisors

evaluate them. Benchmarks are established using the supervisor ratings and the results of the pre-employment test. This approach takes into account those who are still with the employer and whom the employer considers successful. Infinet used this approach with tremendous success with UPS to develop standards for package handlers.

4. Content validity represents job function testing, (i.e., typing, physical work endurance, etc.). Content validity is an appropriate strategy when the job is well defined through job analysis. This means correctly identifying the essential skills, tasks, and knowledge and the assessment or test is a representative sample of KSAOs drawn from that domain.

5. Face validity is the easiest form of validity as it tells us that, according to subject matter experts (SMEs), the test appears to measure what it is supposed to measure. For example, a typing test has high face validity as a measure of success for the position of executive administrator. Infinet does not recommend using tests that only discuss their face validity. It is neither statistically sound nor legally defensible.

Infinet recommends that all organizations maintain a consistent hiring process when making personnel decisions. Information should be gathered in each step of the hiring process to have reliable and measurable data to inform the final hiring decision. The pre-employment assessment used should count no more than thirty to forty percent of the hiring decisions. The face-to-face interviews, reference check, education history, work experience and other pertinent factors should be considered for the remainder.

About the Author:

Dr. John Schinnerer is the CEO and Chief Strategist of [InfiNet Assessment](#), a psychological testing company, founded in 1997. Dr. Schinnerer is an educational psychologist and experienced test designer from the U.C. Berkeley. His areas of expertise range from ethical and moral development and training to psychometrics to the psychological constructs that influence job performance. He is a noted writer and speaker on topics such as the legal issues involved in pre-employment testing, optimizing brain functioning, and creating an ethical workplace. Dr. John serves on the Advisory Board of [Humanatek](#), a leading edge human capital company. He is a Lead coach for [Bayridge Consulting Group](#). Dr. Schinnerer is President of the Tri-Valley Human Resources Association ([TVHRA](#)) and serves on the Leadership Team of [HR ExecNet](#), a job search and networking group for HR Executives. He also sits on the Leadership Council for The Wellness Community; a non-profit designed to help cancer survivors and their families. He is a member of the American Psychological Association, Society for Human Resource Management, Society for Business Ethics, and NCHRA. Dr. Schinnerer is currently working on a book entitled "A Day in the Life of a Human Capitalist" based on interviews with elite VPs of Human Resources. He may be reached via email at John@InfinetAssessment.com.

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