

# Skills, culture, vocation: finding the right recruits

*Using pre-hire assessments to ensure new recruits  
fit the role and contribute to culture*



Questionmark Viewpoint

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## Introduction: recruitment is rising again

Recruitment is ramping up. Employers in the United States (US) created 850,000 jobs in June as the economy continues to rebound from the pandemic-related recession.<sup>1</sup> More than half of firms in the United Kingdom (UK) are planning to recruit more staff.<sup>2</sup>

Now more than ever, employers need to get recruitment right. Businesses continue to face uncertainty as they grapple with changing customer habits and the shifting business landscape. Getting the right team in place is critical to navigating the new world.

Bad hiring decisions have always come at a cost, but more so now. Recent hires constitute 38% of departures.<sup>3</sup> When someone leaves quickly, it is generally a sign that they were a bad hiring choice. Replacing a departing employee costs, on average, a third of their annual salary.<sup>4</sup> In some industries, this figure is significantly higher.

Choosing the right hire is about much more than casting the net around for the most qualified candidate. Employers must consider:

- **The person-vocation fit** – whether the candidate in question wants to be, or should be, on a particular career path.
- **The person-job fit** – does the candidate have the skills, abilities and qualifications for the role?
- **The person-organization fit** – a candidate may be qualified, but are their values and goals aligned to those of the organization?

Having real information on a candidate's skills, values and goals means employers can recruit staff who will boost productivity and contribute to culture. This report explores how staff assessments can help employers make the best possible hiring decisions.

### Questionmark Viewpoint

Questionmark Viewpoint is a series of white papers and reports that we produce to explore the challenges that our customers are facing, and which we help them address. These papers are based on what we are hearing from customers, and on research from other experts.

<sup>1</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/jobs-report-june-19c34ac90dbfa0f45bc9dac2a086cbfc>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56149661>

<sup>3</sup> <https://info.workinstitute.com/hubfs/2020%20Retention%20Report/Work%20Institutes%202020%20Retention%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ere.net/getting-ahead-of-the-looming-employee-exodus/>

## The person-vocation fit: anticipating and avoiding a career crisis

The question of whether someone is pursuing the right career path is ultimately one for the individual. But employers also have a vested interest in ensuring that their potential team members are on the right track.

When a worker experiences a “career crisis” it can impact their motivation and dent productivity. When such a feeling is widespread, it creates the risk of an employee exodus. Research before the pandemic revealed that half of British workers fear they are in the wrong job. Some 40% said they would consider a pay cut to find the right role.<sup>5</sup> Now that confidence has returned, post-pandemic, a career change is a real possibility. As many as 52% of workers could be looking for a new job according to research agency the Achievers Workforce Institute.<sup>6</sup>

### ***What can employers do?***

1. Check vocation fit in the hiring process – hiring people suited to their chosen career path helps employers reduce the risk of career crisis-related departures later down the line.
2. Ensure candidates understand the role – some candidates, particularly recent graduates may not know as much about a particular career path as they think they do. The right assessments can reveal not just whether they have the immediate skills for an entry-level role, but whether they really understand what would be expected of them.
3. Check that candidates have “development potential” – those at the beginning of their career may not fully understand what the future holds. The right assessments can measure their aptitude and indicate their potential for career development within the organization.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.studyfinds.org/ready-for-a-career-change-1-in-2-people-fear-theyre-working-in-the-wrong-profession/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/turnover-tsunami-expected-once-pandemic-ends.aspx>

## The person-job fit: hiring a skills match

It sounds simple enough. Hire someone who can do the job well. But practice is harder than theory.

To start with, the skills an employer wants are often in short supply. Companies listed 33% more skills on job adverts in 2020 than they did in 2017, according to analysis by business media company Forbes.<sup>7</sup> Workers are often unable to upskill at the same rate.

Nor are job candidates always honest about what they can deliver. Some 78% of job applicants admit to misrepresenting, or considering misrepresenting, their skills and abilities during the application process.<sup>8</sup> Employers may not discover a candidate's limits until it's too late.

### ***What can employers do?***

1. Check the skills of job candidates – resumes do not always tell the truth. Tests and assessments give real information about the current skills base. To test some skills employers may be able to use ready-made assessments, such as Questionmark Thinking Skills by Cambridge Assessment. But for a lot of organizations, ready-made assessments will not be an option. In this case, Questionmark provides the platform to build and deliver bespoke tests for a wide variety of needs.
2. Identify immediate training need – understanding a new recruit's immediate weakness enables managers to prepare more meaningful onboarding programs.
3. Measure potential – an employee might not have all the skills they need just yet, but they may have the aptitude to learn. Measuring critical-thinking skills, that would enable them to approach a range of problems, can indicate a candidate's development potential.
4. Test for judgment – almost all job roles require judgment. But it can be hard to see whether a recruit has the professional judgment they need for the role they are going for. Situational Judgment Assessments (SJAs) are a way of asking questions to measure that judgment.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://hbr.org/2021/01/9-trends-that-will-shape-work-in-2021-and-beyond>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/19/how-many-job-seekers-lie-on-their-job-application.html>

## The person-organization fit: building the right culture

Given the limited availability of crucial skills, many employers are understandably keen to snap up talent when they see it. This can be dangerous.

When a new recruit is not a good fit for the organization's culture, they often leave quickly. A common reason for this departure is a disconnect between an employer's and an individual's values.<sup>9</sup> Even if they stay, they are unlikely to give their all. On the other hand, employees who align with the organizational culture are 36% more productive.<sup>10</sup>

### ***What can employers do?***

1. Understand what makes their culture special – staff cultures grow organically. They can be hard to explain in a job advert. Employers should seek to discover what current team members like about the working culture and what words and phrases they would use to describe it.
2. Measure attitudes, goals and values – cultural fit is too important for a “gut-instinct” assessment. Employers should obtain real information about a prospective worker's attitudes to make an informed and objective decision.
3. Check culture is understood during onboarding – companies will typically go to great lengths to explain their working culture in the early stages of a new starter's employment. But they often fail to check that a new team member has truly understood it and to see if they are fitting in.



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<sup>9</sup> <https://blog.smarp.com/employee-engagement-8-statistics-you-need-to-know>

<sup>10</sup> <https://workplaceinsight.net/culture-fit-essential-for-personal-productivity/>

## Pre-hire assessments: get real information about candidates

Our enterprise-grade assessment platform gives employers real information on the skills and attitudes of the people they employ, or might be about to employ. Assessing candidates before deciding to recruit them helps hirers make the best choice.

To test certain skills, employers may be able to use ready-made assessments already available on the market. However, most employers may find there are not tests to measure for the skills they need. Our online assessment platform can help such employers to build and deliver the tests they need to measure the skills they require.

- **Pre-hire skills assessments** – our platform enables hirers to test the skills of candidates. Assessments reveal whether applicants have the skills they need to do the job and identify immediate training needs. We also provide a range of [ready-made assessments to test business skills](#) such as data literacy, digital marketing and customer care.
- **Measure critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities** – [Questionmark Thinking Skills Assessment by Cambridge Assessment](#) enables employers to measure the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills of job applicants. It shows how able a candidate is to break down a problem into its component parts and find a solution regardless of the subject matter. This can indicate how likely a potential recruit is to progress within an organization.
- **Attitude tests** – assessments can reveal attitudes and values. The results can indicate whether a candidate shares the organization's values and help employers decide if the potential recruit is a good fit for culture.
- **Situational Judgment Assessments** – SJAs present employees with work-relevant dilemmas so employers can see how recruits might perform under such circumstances. Using such tests helps ensure employers are testing whether recruits have the professional judgment they need for the role they are going for.
- **Get real information on culture from staff surveys** – finding out what staff value about the working culture makes it easier to explain during the job application process. Our platform enables leaders to run surveys and questionnaires to gain crucial insight.

## Conclusion: the right hiring choice for now and the future

Businesses urgently need new skills. Recruitment is an effective means of acquiring them. But a rushed or gut-instinct hiring decision can risk damaging culture, lead to higher staff turnover and undermine performance.

Before bringing someone new into the team, employers must understand whether a potential recruit has the skills to do the job and is a good fit for the organization's values. Where possible, leaders should be confident that a new team member is following the career path that is right for them.

The information from staff assessments can give employers the information they need to make better recruitment decisions. Tests and assessments can reveal which candidates have the skills to hit the ground running. They can indicate who is likely to be a good fit for culture. They can predict capacity for growth within the organization and reveal immediate training needs.

We have worked with employers all over the world helping them make the right recruitment decisions and build a winning team. If you would like to speak to us about how we can help, please get in touch.







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## About Questionmark

We help organizations and their people unlock their potential to deliver better performance.

Questionmark provides a secure enterprise-grade assessment platform and professional services to leading organizations around the world, delivered with care and unequalled expertise. Its full-service online assessment tool and professional services help customers to improve their performance and meet their compliance requirements. Questionmark enables organizations to unlock their potential by delivering assessments which are valid, reliable and fair, which can be defended.

Questionmark offers secure powerful integration with learning management systems (LMS), learning record stores (LRS) and proctoring services making it easy to bring everything together in one place. Questionmark's cloud-based assessment management platform offers rapid deployment, scalability for high-volume test delivery, 24/7 support, and the peace-of-mind of secure, audited U.S., Australian and European-based data centers.

## Working with Questionmark

To further explore how Questionmark could work for your organization, or to book a free consultation and demo, please see: <https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo/>

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