High-Performance Assessment Practices: A Framework for Success

Framework Paper

Brandon Hall GROUP

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Introduction

Talent assessments are used by almost all employers, though not in a consistent, strategic manner that delivers on the potential to improve hiring, development and retention of talent. Only one-fifth of organizations have a formal strategy that consistently leverages a range of assessments, from pre-hire to departure.

The scarcity of assessment strategies results from most employers lacking a well-defined talent-development strategy to build around. In addition, the sheer number and types of assessment providers make it difficult for employers — especially large, dispersed ones — to understand the differences in offerings, the language in which assessment results are delivered, their validity and how they should be applied.

Without consistent use of assessments, employers lack reliable, credible insights on talent to counter the biases that permeate hiring and the evaluation of employee performance and potential. Assessments — used consistently — help defend against claims of discrimination and other legal challenges. But used ad hoc — as is done most frequently — assessments can add to the risk all employers face.

How can employers make better use of assessments to reduce liability and capture validated insights to drive hiring and talent development? The solution starts with a well-defined talent-development strategy. Assessments are a severely undervalued and misunderstood tool. Organizations that thoughtfully craft their strategies to hire, develop and retain capable, motivated employees will recognize the enormous business value of assessments throughout the employee lifecycle.

Current State

Assessments provide a contextual understanding of a job candidate or employee's current state and potential. Assessments can deliver important insights for making critical talent decisions, especially around hiring, development priorities, high-potential identification and succession.

While most employers use assessments in some manner, only about 20% have a formal strategy that leverages a range of assessments from pre-hire to departure, according to Brandon Hall Group's 2019 Assessment Practices Study.

Assessments enable employers to evaluate aptitude, personality, behaviors, cognitive abilities, skills and potential in ways that other methods — especially performance evaluations and interviews plagued by human bias — cannot.

Potential must be measured in three dimensions: aspiration (dreams, goals and milestones), engagement and capacity/ability, so the measuring model must be a combination of approaches that capture all dimensions.

Top 5 Drivers of Assessments Use

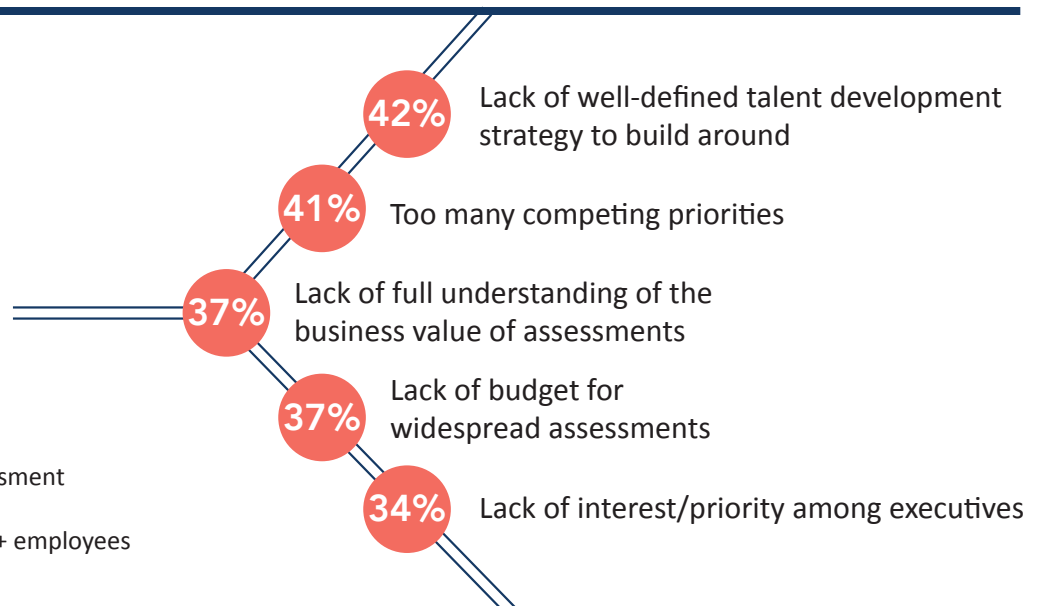|	
76%	Assessing development needs
62%	Improving top-line performance
59%	Assessing future leadership potential
56%	Predicting job performance
56%	Determining "fit" between employee, organization

Source: Brandon Hall Group Assessment Practices Study.
Results for organizations with 500+ employees

Assessments are critical tools for understanding multiple aspects of a person's capabilities and motivations. They should not be the sole decision-making tool; most organizations use them to narrow the field of candidates for employment, promotion or high-potential identification, not as the final say.

Complexities

Top 5 Barriers to a Formal Assessment Strategy

42%	Lack of well-defined talent development strategy to build around
41%	Too many competing priorities
37%	Lack of full understanding of the business value of assessments
37%	Lack of budget for widespread assessments
34%	Lack of interest/priority among executives

Source: Brandon Hall Group Assessment Practices Study.
Results for organizations with 500+ employees

Assessment use is constrained by many barriers. The common denominator is a lack of understanding of their business value, demonstrated by many organizations citing disinterest among executives, too many competing priorities and lack of budget for widespread use.

However, highly regulated industries with strict hiring requirements are far more likely to use assessments consistently and strategically, which proves their value and necessity.

Even when organizations embrace assessments, it's difficult to gain consensus on how they should be used. Businesses struggle to understand the differences in providers and assessment types, the language in which results are delivered, the methodologies and science involved in their development and how results should be used for making talent decisions.
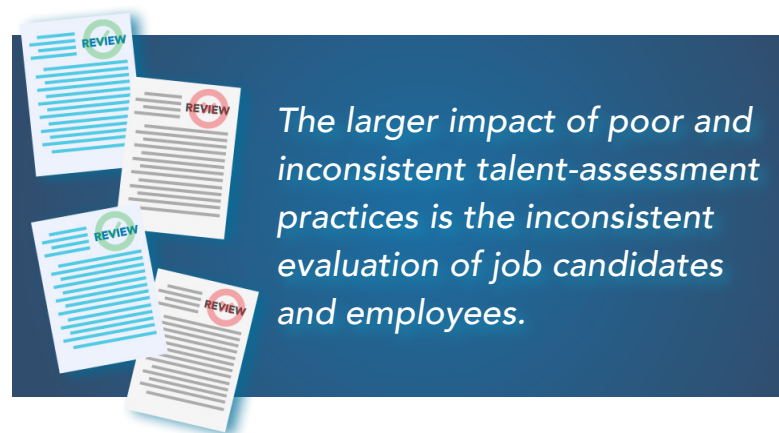
In almost all interviews conducted for this research, talent leaders cited ongoing conflicts among business units or business locations over how assessments should be used. Organizations usually had policies and guidelines in place but they were often ignored or changed based on concerns about validity, difficulty in deciphering results or vendor and assessment types. Assessments were still used, though not always as intended.

More than half of employers lack a well-defined talent-development strategy to build around. Consequently, a major reason for inconsistent assessment use is that they are not part of a larger effort to coordinate and integrate talent processes for hiring, developing and retaining top employees.

Consequences

Organizations that fail to leverage assessments in a consistent, strategic manner miss the opportunity to gain deeper insights on job candidates' attributes, cultural fit and the interests and potential of current employees.

In addition, assessments conducted in an ad-hoc manner — which is the most frequently used approach — don't evaluate candidates nor employees using the same criteria. This undermines the process and raises the level of legal risk.

The larger impact of poor and inconsistent talent-assessment practices is the inconsistent evaluation of job candidates and employees.

It is difficult to build a culture of trust and collaboration when employees' capabilities and potential are evaluated and judged differently depending on where or for whom they work.

No talent process can be completely free of bias and subjectivity but science-based assessments from trustworthy vendors are a critical tool for ensuring talent processes are as objective as possible. Organizations that fail to understand and embrace the business value of assessments expose themselves to unnecessary risk and flawed decision-making.

Critical Questions

Though they have many attributes, assessments are prone to controversy. Organizations must address a variety of questions:

Q **How do we leverage assessments?**

- What is not working now and how can we change that?
- Can we deploy an organization-wide strategy or do use-cases in each business unit or department require different strategies?

Q **Which assessments and assessment providers are the best fits for our organization?**

- Who should be involved in vendor selection?
- Who should "own" assessments in our organization?
- How should governance for assessments be established?

Q **How should assessments be leveraged in making talent and development decisions?**

- When should assessments be conducted in the pre-hire process and in the employee lifecycle?
- How much weight should they be given?

- Should use of assessment results in decision-making be consistent across the enterprise or used differently depending on the type of position, level of position, business unit, location, etc.?
- How do you keep the decision-making process consistent while allowing for different needs across the enterprise?

How do we gain leadership buy-in for the strategic use of assessments across the enterprise? **Q**

- Who are the primary stakeholders?
- How can we educate stakeholders about assessments and how they are developed?
- How can we ensure assessment results are reported so internal stakeholders can understand them and feel confident in the analysis?

How can data from talent assessments be leveraged for prescriptive and/or predictive talent analytics? **Q**

- How do our assessments strategy and policies impact the validity of data from assessments?

Top 3 Reasons for Using Pre-Hire Assessments

61% Improve quality of hire

51% Identify qualified candidates in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies

42% To identify candidates who fit the organizational culture

Top 3 Reasons for Using Post-Hire Assessments

39% Identify high-potential talent

37% Skill and knowledge development

35% Identify critical skill gaps

Brandon Hall Group Assessment Practices Study. Results for organizations with 500+ employees

Brandon Hall Group POV
High-Performance Assessment Practices Framework

The framework, as illustrated below and explained in detail in the following pages, provides systemic answers to the critical questions around assessment practices. It consists of four major components:

Contextual Frame

Organizational culture, governance structure, technology environment and measurement processes, which influence how assessments are developed, deployed and utilized.

The Framework Nucleus

The goal of assessments is to drive optimal hiring and employee mobility. Each phase of assessment practices must be viewed through this lens.

The Assessment Practices Lifecycle

The four basic phases of the assessment process are built upon:

- **Alignment:** Creating a strategy aligned with the business, stakeholders and talent processes.

- **Transparency:** Educating stakeholders about assessments, marketing their value to external and internal assessment takers, and reporting results in ways everyone can understand.

- **Deployment:** Using assessments in several ways, including screening candidates, differentiating between candidates and understanding a person's development needs.

- **Discovery:** Leveraging assessment results to gain valuable insights into candidate and employee capabilities, personalities and behavior traits and potential.

Success Levers

Several factors, both internal and external, are critical for enabling successful assessment practices that drive business results.

High-Performance Assessment Practices Framework

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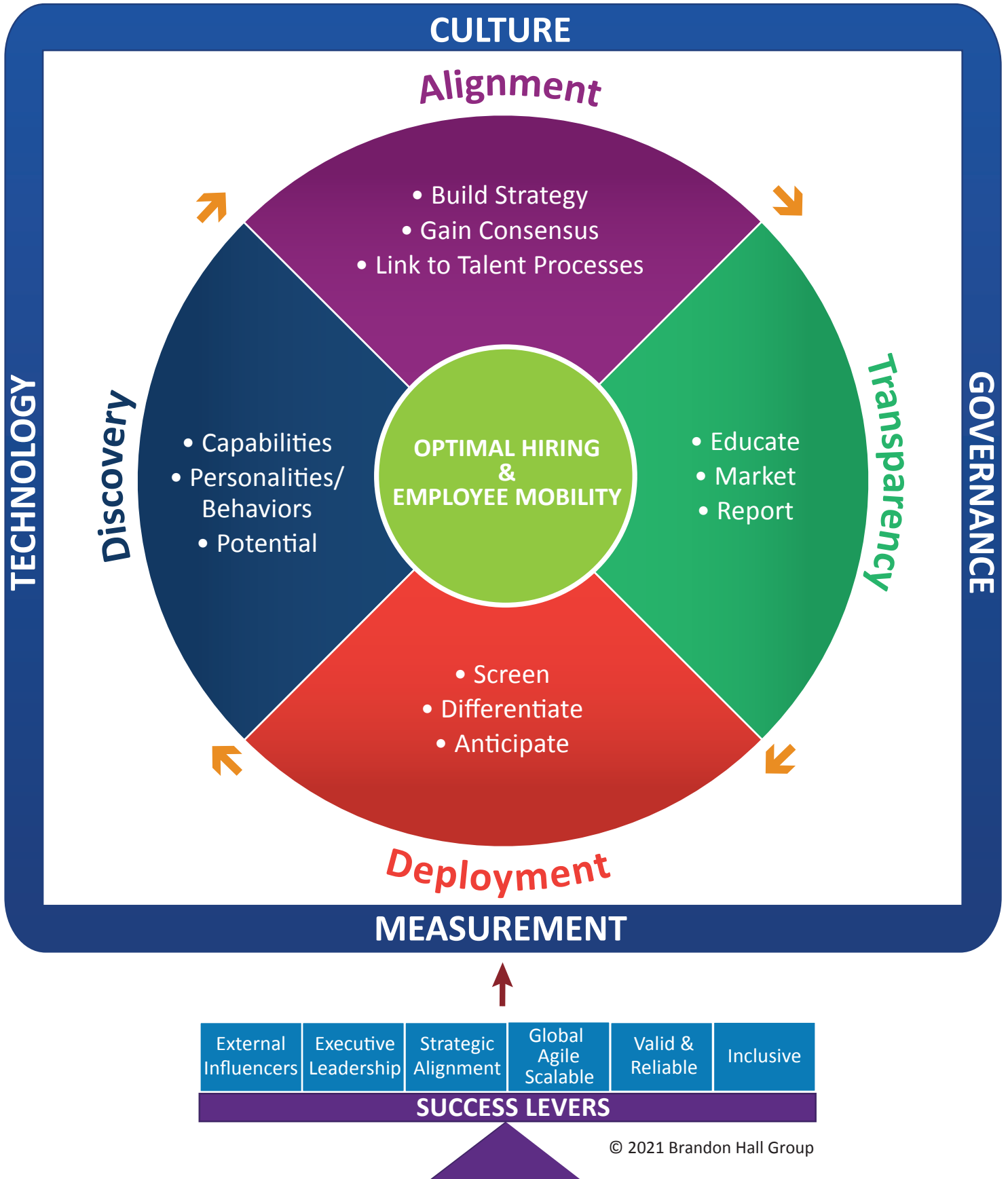
The Contextual Framework

The contextual frame consists of four major components: culture, governance, technology and measurement. Understanding these components is a critical first step for organizations implementing assessments because they indicate the environment in which assessments operate.

CULTURE

Culture is often hard to define but it is something that makes a company an employer of choice. It also has a huge impact on how things get done. No one-size-fits-all culture works because each industry, company and location has unique values. Using broad definitions, organizations are spread across four basic culture types. Percentages for each culture type are based on averages of all Brandon Hall Group surveys conducted over the past four years:

Collaborating Culture — 34%

Open, friendly and inclusive place to work focused on people (not short-term results) where employees share a lot of themselves. Leaders are incented to be mentors or take support roles. Group loyalty and sense of tradition are strong. The organization places a premium on teamwork, participation and consensus.

Competing Culture — 22%

A results-driven organization focused on job completion above. People are competitive and goal-oriented. Leaders are demanding, hard-driving, and productive. Winning is emphasized and incentivized. Success means market share and penetration, not innovation, flexibility and inclusiveness. Competitive pricing and market leadership are important.

Controlling Culture — 27%

A highly-structured and formal workplace. Rules and procedures govern behavior. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is incentivized. Stability, performance and efficient operations are the long-term goals and a much higher priority than flexibility and inclusiveness. Success is based on dependable delivery, smooth scheduling and low cost. Management supports security and predictability.

Creating Culture — 17%

A dynamic, entrepreneurial and creative place to work, though not necessarily inclusive. Innovation and risk-taking are embraced by employees and leaders. A commitment to experimentation and thinking differently are incentivized within the organization. Leaders strive to be on the cutting edge. Individual initiative and freedom are encouraged.

GOVERNANCE

Governance is critically important when attempting to change behaviors in any type in an organization. Support for change by top leadership, while critical, is not enough to achieve success. There must be systems for communication, change management and simply getting things done. There are many options for a governance model, but the critical elements include:

- **Background.** A clear definition of assessments goals.
- **Structure.** The configuration of the group that owns assessments, including leadership roles and how decisions are made.
- **Objectives.** Specific goals for the governance model to reach.
- **Delivery.** Definition of the processes and programs to be provided.
- **Measurement.** Metrics to measure the effectiveness of the governance model.
- **Members and responsibilities.** Identification of governance team participants, including critical roles and key responsibilities.
- **Processes and programs.** Identification of critical procedures to run through the governance process.

A leading healthcare provider in the Northeast U.S., interviewed during research for this report, has a sophisticated governance model. The company has governance at the recruiter, hiring manager, business unit and corporate levels. Committees are involved if assessment practices are changed, if assessment validity is challenged by an employee or job candidate, if new assessment providers are sought, or if assessment questions are added or removed. The governance also clearly states assessments help ensure the company hires and promotes people who fit the needs of the organization and should never be used as the sole method for decision-making.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is the great enabler. An effective and comprehensive approach must include a system that ensures assessments taken by people inside and outside the organization exist in a safe and secure environment.

Use of Assessment Technology System
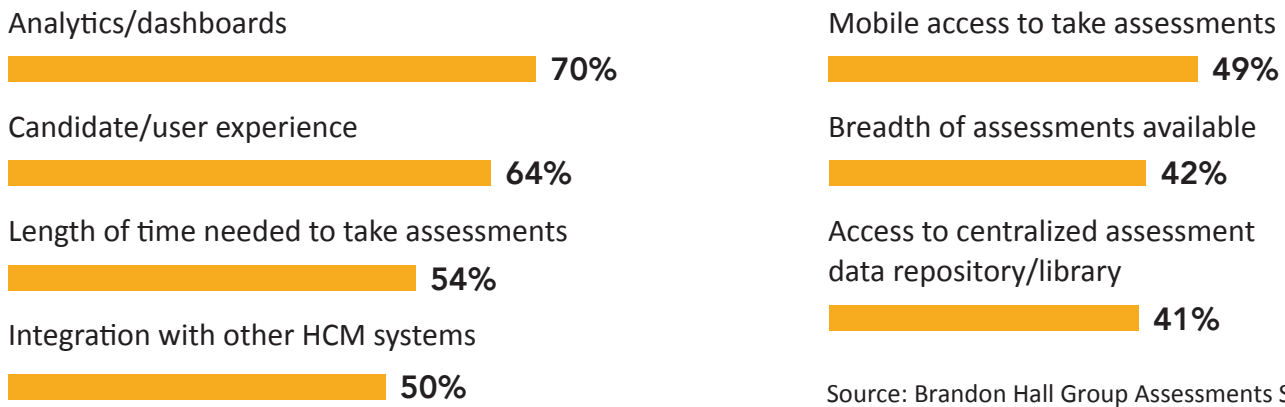
✓ **48%** Yes   ✗ **52%** No

Source: Brandon Hall Group Assessments Study

Security is important for any system, but especially with assessment systems. It is often overlooked. If you have people with bad motivations preparing the assessment, they can leak the content which, if used by people to cheat, invalidate the assessment. If you have bad actors with access to the databases, they can to change scores and harvest confidential data.

Organizations can be lulled into a false sense of security if breaches of your assessment system have not occurred recently or ever, but it takes one incident to wreak havoc on your program.

Features Rated Most Important When Selecting Assessment Technology

Analytics/dashboards
70%

Candidate/user experience
64%

Length of time needed to take assessments
54%

Integration with other HCM systems
50%

Mobile access to take assessments
49%

Breadth of assessments available
42%

Access to centralized assessment data repository/library
41%

Source: Brandon Hall Group Assessments Study

There are three types of security you should focus on:

Role-based security.

This permits an enterprise to manage the permissions of people involved in assessment programs and maintain the confidentialities required.

System and data security.

With the threat of data breaches at an all-time high, it is important that data is secure and also meets the multinational personal data security standards in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Assessment security.

Determine and mitigate risks for theft, identity fraud and cheating. To understand the type of security you need, you must understand the stakes of the assessment.

*It is **critical** that your system can reliably deliver an assessment to any device or browser an employee uses.*

Today's assessments are delivered to numerous types of devices and web browsers. Each has idiosyncrasies and anomalies which can affect the assessment experience. In addition, fluctuating Internet connectivity can also disrupt an assessment, so it is critical for the system to save results as a person progresses. Given that people already have test anxiety, these issues can distract participants from answering questions to the best of their abilities.

It is critical that your system can reliably deliver an assessment to any device or browser an employee uses. The system also must be designed to address the different types of accommodation required for employees with cognitive or physical disabilities.

You should expect these capabilities from your system to ensure trustworthy delivery of assessments:

- Employees expect the same type of user experience they get from consumer products. They must find the assessment easy — even enjoyable — to use. Questions must be clear and easy to navigate so participants don't get confused about how to answer. If

the user interface and experience isn't up to those standards, it hurts the credibility of the assessment and everything done to develop it.

- Blended delivery means you can create assessments once, then deliver them on a variety of platforms, such as mobile devices and workstations, and print them out. Delivering assessments on mobile devices helps you assess remote employees or employees "in the field." Delivering paper assessments and scanning the results accommodates employees without easy access to technology.

- The assessment system must accommodate participants with disabilities in compliance with Section 508 regulations and other accessibility regulations. Using systems that cannot make accommodations can expose your organization to EEOC complaints and lawsuits.

- Devices and network connections may fail, so it critical that every answer is recorded and saved at the server. SAYG capability guards against lost answers that can create stress and distrust in the system.

MEASUREMENT

It is impossible to understand the impact of your assessment program on hiring, developing and retaining employees without proper measurement. Most organizations struggle with this; on average, about 45% do not measure the effectiveness of pre-hire or post-hire assessments.

The absence of metrics can play into the hands of critics or who question their value. Executives of key stakeholders may limit or eliminate their use until a sufficient ROI can be documented.

Most Frequently Used Metrics to Measure Effectiveness of Pre-Hire Assessments

35%
Improved new-hire retention rate

35%
Improved quality of hire

21%
Improved time to proficiency

18%
Improved hiring manager satisfaction

17%
Increase in new-hire engagement

Source: Brandon Hall Group Assessments Study

The metrics for talent assessments are relatively straightforward, such as an improved retention rate for new hires, or improved time to proficiency. Improved quality of hire is a little more sophisticated, but can be handled by your data team or people in the organization

with data analytics knowledge. For post-hire assessments, strong metrics include reduction in employee turnover, increased employee engagement and improvement in performance goal attainment.

Assessment data can also lead to predictive and prescriptive analytics to help future hiring and development decisions. But you need data to develop the analytics, so a measurement strategy must be part of your overall assessment strategy.

The metrics you develop will also help determine whether to increase the scope of your assessment program, reduce it, adjust the types of assessments or even change providers.

Most Frequently Used Metrics to Measure Effectiveness of Pre-Hire Assessments

28%
Reduction in employee turnover

28%
Increase in employee engagement

27%
Organizational performance

20%
Goal attainment for employee performance

16%
Number of high-potential candidates identified

Source: Brandon Hall Group Assessments Study

The Assessment Lifecycle

We have divided assessment practices into four phases centered around critical business objectives, which we refer to as the "nucleus" of the framework. Here is a breakdown of each element of the framework.

OPTIMAL HIRING & EMPLOYEE MOBILITY

The Nucleus

Assessments provide additional perspectives on an individual's capabilities, personality and behavioral traits, interests, potential and other indicators to help organizations make better talent decisions. They can provide, in tandem with other data, rich insights into the types of candidates/employees who tend to be more successful at an organization. However, the key to assessments as a driver of high-quality hiring decisions is strategic and consistent use. We will discuss this as we explain the framework.

Phase 1: Alignment

The prerequisite for assessments as a business driver is to have everything associated with assessments in alignment. There must be an overall strategy for the use and governance of assessments, which must be aligned with the values and needs of key stakeholders across the enterprise. The data from assessments must then be consistently utilized across talent processes. There must be alignment on how insights from assessments will help to determine learning paths, career development and identifying high-potentials or selecting someone for a succession pool. This may involve strategies for each business unit or location, but there must be agreement and the strategy must be executed consistently.

PHASE 1: ALIGNMENT

- Build Strategy
- Gain Consensus
- Link to Talent Processes

1 Build a Strategy, Gain Consensus

The beauty of assessments is they are scientifically designed and rely on objective data to guide the talent selection and development processes. However, each organization must determine their scope of use according to their business strategy and values. Maybe you will only want to use assessments for certain roles, levels, processes or business units. Or you may want to start with a pilot program, assess the benefits and determine whether to expand.

The key is that all stakeholders are aligned on the scope and purpose of use and procedures are in place so whatever assessment program you implement is done consistently and strategically.

For example, you will want to determine when the assessments are given. For hiring, should they be performed once a candidate applies for a position? This means the assessment would be used as a screening tool to narrow the field based on results. Or do you want to use them only as an evaluation tool with a few finalists for the position? Or use different types of assessments at each milestone?

For development, should you assess employees when they begin a role or learning experience and again after a certain amount of development? Should competency or skills assessments be done annually or at another interval to collect data over time to determine readiness for promotion or another type of mobility?

Failure to have alignment can create complications and waste precious time and money. Strict and consistent rules, on the other hand, bring order and mitigate legal risks of hiring, particularly in highly regulated industries operating in different states. Here are examples of each situation:

CASE IN POINT

Consumer Home Products Company

A consumer home-products company, which requested anonymity to speak candidly, had to halt its companywide assessment program after one year because of competing ideas and values.

This is a decentralized organization where different divisions make their own talent decisions with a central talent function focusing on creating strategies and providing consulting services. The central talent function believed that assessments can be a powerful pre-hire tool to differentiate between senior-level candidates with

similar experiences and accomplishments.

Through a central RFP process, separate vendors were selected for a personality and a critical-thinking assessment. The goal was to leverage synergies and capitalize on the scale of the organization (25,000 employees and growing) to find the best assessment tools to serve the entire enterprise.

Unfortunately, when managers from the various divisions began using the tools in 2018, they found assessment results were

communicated in ways they struggled to understand and leverage. In 2019, after months of conflict, the corporate-wide approach to assessments was paused as the company searched for new providers. A decision was expected later in the year.

CASE IN POINT

Healthcare Provider

The healthcare provider mentioned earlier in the discussion of governance has strict protocols for assessments for practical and legal reasons. The company hires about 20,000 people a year, ranging from primary-care providers to registered nurses, facility administrators and vice presidents.

The selection philosophy for getting quality hires in each position is very simple on its face: "Can the candidate do the job?" But it's much more complicated because "can do" involves how employees communicate, how they work with colleagues, how they interact with customers and how they manage and adapt to change within the team. Motivation and personality come into play. This requires selection of an assessment or multiple assessments to gain insights into whether the candidate "can do" the full scope of each job.

The assessment focus the company selects is heavily dependent on job analysis. The assessment function, headed by a PhD in industrial-organizational psychology, interviews job incumbents and their managers to understand what the job entails; not just capabilities, but behaviors and motivations. That job analysis is shared with assessments providers so business needs can be met. The company has an intensive selection process for assessment providers and works closely with them to customize assessments, when necessary, to ensure the assessments meet their requirements.

The company also aligns its candidate interviewing strategy with the assessments. All hiring managers are given behavioral interviewing guides that include protocols and question suggestions for one-on-one interviews, panel interviews and other types of interview situations that may arise. The company plans to invest in interviewing technology so the guides are quickly and easily updated; they now are in PDF form on an intranet.

There are legal reasons for the disciplined assessment process, as well. The company hires for multiple positions in most states. If it hires primary care providers with a different process than in New York, for example, it creates legal risks.

Are these strategies and processes working? Turnover for most positions for which assessments are administered are significantly below industry averages in all states where the company has a presence.

2 | Link to Talent Processes

Assessments don't exist in a vacuum. Once you gather insights on candidates or employees, it is important to use them to create performance goals, individual development plans with specific learning opportunities linked to insights in the evaluation, have career conversations with employees about their career goals and create career development plans (which also should link to learning).

Here are examples of what this looks like:

CASE IN POINT

APTMetrics and Duke Energy

APTMetrics developed a customized, high-fidelity, technology-driven "day in the life" simulation as part of the comprehensive assessment experience for Duke Energy, a major energy company with close to 30,000 employees.

Participants were placed in a scenario that takes place five years in the future within a simulated, fictitious organization, Viceroy Energy — a holding company with operations covering 10 states. In the simulation, the participants take on the role of the CEO, accountable for the overall success and sustainability of the organization.

The results of the simulation program were integrated with results from personality, motivational and behavioral-based assessments. This information provided specific feedback regarding the participants' strengths and key opportunities for improvement relative to the desired core competencies and the organization's strategy. In addition, the results illuminated targeted developmental priorities and aggregated insights into effectively investing in the development of critical employees.

CASE IN POINT

Alba's Skills Matrix and Training Program

alba
Aluminium
for the world

Aluminum Bahrain, known as Alba, is a global aluminum smelter with 2,700 employees. It needed to stop competitors from poaching its best talent and develop leaders from the local workforce rather than relying on expatriates.

Its previous programs were flawed: non-managerial employees were only promoted when a vacancy arose, even if they had higher skills. Also, managers were paid for years of service, rather than technical know-how.

Two new programs, "Skills Matrix" and "Training Development Program," solved this problem. The Skills Matrix Assessment and training scheme streamlines the succession plan for non-managerial roles. It involved preparing an approved matrix of knowledge and skills for every non-supervisory job across the organization. This job profiling ensures multi-skilling at every level so that management in each department can rotate jobs and reassign employees to meet ever-evolving requirements — giving Alba a competitive edge.

Phase 2: Transparency

1 Educate Stakeholders

PHASE 2: TRANSPARENCY

- Educate
- Market
- Report

Our research found organizations that value assessments and use them strategically with full buy-in across the enterprise got there by ensuring key stakeholders were fully informed about assessments.

Assessments attempt to predict the level of future performance. They are most predictive when a candidate performs tasks required for a job. The next most predictive are cognitive with aptitude tests that are aligned with job requirements. In all their uses, assessment are significantly better predictors than resumes and interviews.

However, everyone has an opinion about talent assessments, often forged by prior experiences with assessments. Educating stakeholders is not a one-off event but a continuous campaign of education, communication, updated research, use cases and facilitated discussion.

Communication technology can be leveraged so ongoing information/education campaigns are scheduled for different stakeholder groups, from recruiters to hiring managers, to managers, senior leaders and executives — whoever is involved in conducting or analyzing assessments or asked to use them as part of making talent decisions.

2 | Market to External Candidates and Employees

Just as students get nervous before a big test, talent assessments can make job candidates and employees nervous. It's human nature to feel anxious when you think you are being judged.

Anyone who takes assessments should understand their purpose and how they will be used. Some companies interviewed in our research dropped assessments or restricted their use because of past objections and the belief that using assessments would reduce the pool of high-quality candidates and affect engagement of current employees seeking new opportunities within the organization.

Those companies also did not proactively communicate their assessment policies to candidates and employees.

Companies with a communication or marketing plan around assessments said they did not believe assessments created any barriers. In fact, many said top candidates and high-potential employees embraced the assessments because they believed they were objective tools of evaluation that would improve — not reduce — their chances for selection or advancement.

Of course, the potential exists for an unsuccessful candidate to blame the assessment, so having a well-constructed report provided to all candidates, whether successful or not, is a useful marketing tool to retain goodwill by providing useful feedback. You don't want to "poison the well" and lose a customer or potentially great candidate who would be appropriate for another role in the future just because there isn't a current fit.

Ensure Assessment Reports are User-Friendly | 3

Most assessments, especially vendor-generated ones, are developed by experts with advanced degrees in organizational psychology or a related specialty. The reports generated from the assessments often read like they are written for academics. A common complaint heard in our research interviews was that assessment reports are difficult for hiring managers to understand, read and explain to candidates/employees.

Whether you work with internally produced assessments or third-party products, make sure output reports are reader-friendly. The content of these reports can have a significant impact on someone's future. The person analyzing the report must explain hiring or promotion decisions and also use the report to generate development plans. These reports must be clear and unambiguous to the people reading, analyzing and applying them.

Phase 3: Deployment

• Screen
• Differentiate
• Anticipate

PHASE 3: DEPLOYMENT
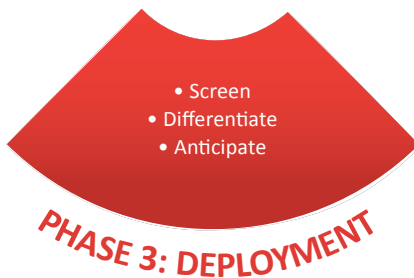
As discussed earlier, assessments can be extraordinarily helpful tools. They provide an additional, science-based perspective on the skills, capabilities, personalities and behaviors of talent. Whether you use assessments to screen internal or external candidates for a position, gain insights that uncover differentiators for final candidates or to understand development needs to help candidates or employees reach their potential, assessments provide critical information to shape tough talent decisions.

Along with having a strategy and consistent approach to leverage assessments, consistency of execution is critical for fair and reliable assessments. The key to consistency is well-documented processes to develop, deliver and analyze assessments.

The processes you develop will help you:

✓ Define the purpose of each assessment.

✓ Analyze the tasks to be performed on the job and their importance (job task analysis).

✓ Outline the topics covered in assessments.

✓ Engage subject matter experts who will help determine the content of assessments.

✓ Develop the test questions and structure of the assessment.

✓ Review or pilot the assessment to ensure validity and resolve ambiguous items or other issues that could adversely impact the reliability of the test.

✓ Deliver the assessment.

✓ Analyze the results so that you can make high-quality decisions.

Here is an easy-to-use model for following an effective process for assessment development:

| ASSESSMENT PLANNING | AUTHORING ITEMS | ASSEMBLING ASSESSMENT | PILOT AND REVIEW | DELIVER | ANALYZE RESULTS |

SECURITY

Phase 4: Discovery

PHASE 4: DISCOVERY

- Capabilities
- Personalities/ Behaviors
- Potential

Once assessments are reliably deployed within a secure system, analysis and reporting of results will ensure the data and insights are accurate and valid.

Assessments shed light on capabilities, personalities and behavior traits, and potential that will help organizations make hiring, development, career and succession decisions.

Beyond the results themselves, there is huge potential in correlating assessments with other business data to help make decisions. For assessments to be part of your "big data" analysis, your system must provide a secure, standards-based API to access raw assessment results data. Many business intelligence applications are now available. For example, Microsoft Power BI, SAP Business Objects and Tableau can access data via OData-base APIs to provide analytics and data visualization that help organizations analyze assessment results alongside data from other enterprise systems such as an HRIS, ERP, CRM and others.

Critical Success Levers

A framework is important in driving business initiatives such as assessment practices. But there are several prerequisites, which we call success levers, that must be in place for the framework to be successful.

Success levers include:

External Influencers

These may be shareholders, board members, regulatory agencies — even your competitors. All can have significant impact on your organizational success. Leveraging them or mitigating their impact is essential for your assessment strategy and processes to succeed.

Executive Leadership

A major culture and business initiative such as assessments requires buy-in from top leaders. If assessments have not been a focus or there is skepticism among stakeholders based on past experiences in other organizations, the words and actions of executive leaders set the tone for the organization. A champion for assessments at the executive level is important.

External Influencers	Executive Leadership	Strategic Alignment	Global Agile Scalable	Valid & Reliable	Inclusive

SUCCESS LEVERS

Strategic Alignment

Our research makes it clear that success hinges on the proper alignment between the assessment strategy, key stakeholders — including those taking the assessments — and the talent processes assessments can impact most notably learning, career development and succession planning and management.

Global, Agile, Scalable

Even small organizations can operate globally. Leveraging assessments in different regions and business units presents challenges. Business needs and priorities change. When they do, you must review your assessments strategies and processes to ensure they keep up with the business needs.

Valid and Reliable

To evaluate assessment results, sufficient data must be captured and analyzed to confirm that items and the test are valid and reliable.

An assessment is reliable if it measures the same thing consistently and can be reproduced time after time. If you deliver a highly reliable assessment to the same participant on two occasions, you would likely reach the same conclusions about the participant's knowledge or skills.

A valid assessment measures what it is designed to measure. A test can be reliable, but not measure what it is meant to measure. For example, you could have a reliable assessment that tested for word-processing skills, but this would not be valid if used to test machine operators because writing is not a central task.

Good analysis and reporting of assessment results are only useful if the assessment is valid and reliable. If your company designs its own assessments, it is important that someone who is trained and knowledgeable oversees the operation. If you use a vendor, you must them for data showing their assessments are valid and reliable. (Don't worry; they are asked that all the time.)

Validity and reliability are often brought up by stakeholders who had bad experiences with assessments and are trying to put up roadblocks to their use. Everyone on your assessments team must understand these concepts and be able to explain your process for ensuring validity and reliability.

Inclusive

However you choose to use assessments, it is imperative that they be conducted inclusively. You must make sure to include everyone within the cohort you assess. People should not be left out. You do not want to leave yourself open to bias or subjectivity in how you conduct assessments. Sometimes there are problems in getting people to take assessments due to travel, or geography, or work shifts or other factors. But make reasonable accommodations to ensure assessments are inclusive.

Conclusion

Assessments can have a significant positive impact on talent decisions. But ad-hoc usage, devoid of strategy and governance, is the most common approach. It doesn't work.

Assessments are driven by science and must be managed and deployed with consistency and precision to be valid and reliable, and to gain the confidence of stakeholders. This includes leaders who analyze and make decisions based on them and the candidates and employees who take them.

In our interviews with more than 10 organizations for this research, those that struggled with assessments did not have a cohesive strategy and governance. They did not get buy-in from top leaders and stakeholders across the enterprise. The companies that succeeded had a qualified

owner of the assessments process who coordinated provider selection, led development of governance and managed marketing the assessments to candidates and employees.

There are many qualified assessment providers and the best route to a strong assessments program is to work with one or more — depending on the type needed — to ensure assessments meet all business needs.

Like all other talent processes, the key to success is strategy and planning. This framework outlines the steps required to make assessments work. It is worth the investment in time and money to manage assessments the right way. Done well, they are an incredibly valuable tool for making talent decisions. Done poorly, you are likely to get flawed data that is not adopted across the business.

Demographics — Assessment

329 **valid responses**

Responses are from more than 32 industries. Top 5 industries represented:

Technology/software • Healthcare • Banking/Finance/Insurance • Education • Consulting

13% **Small Organization** (100-499 employees)

37% **Mid-Size Organization** (500-4,999 employees)

50% **Large Organization** (5,000+ employees)

Headquarters of Respondents' Employer

79% US/Canada

13% EMEA

4% APAC
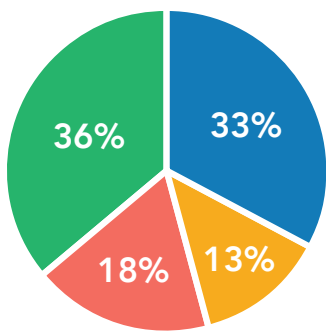
4% South and Central America, Caribbean

Disbursement of Employees in Respondents' Companies

- Employees dispersed globally
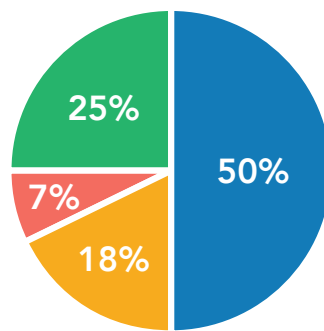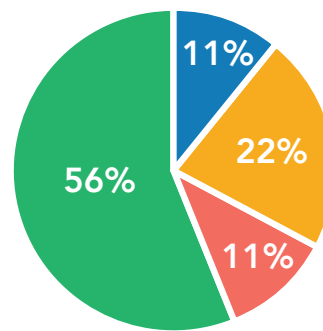- Some international locations
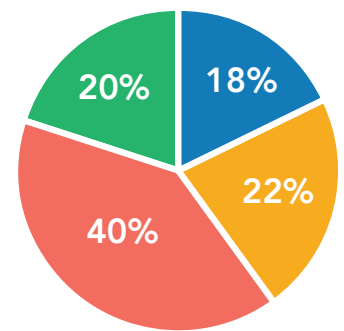- One location in one country
- Multiple locations in one country

US/Canada
33% — 13% — 18% — 36%

EMEA
50% — 18% — 7% — 25%

APAC
11% — 22% — 11% — 56%

South and Central America, Caribbean
18% — 22% — 40% — 20%

Research Methodology

PHASE 01

Evaluation of Business and Talent Landscape
We study current trends to hypothesize about how they might influence future events and what effect those events is likely to have on your business. We then prepare a project outline and circulate to executives and practitioners in the particular field for feedback and insights before our research survey is developed.

PHASE 02

Quantitative Surveys and Qualitative Interviews
To test our hypothesis, we gather empirical insights through formal and informal surveys. To check assumptions generated from surveys and to add context to the empirical survey data, we talk to Executives, Chief Human Resources Officers, VPs of Talent and other business leaders as well as HR, Learning and Talent Leaders and employees.

PHASE 03

Scholarly Reviews and Expert Resident Knowledge
We study and analyze renowned academic research comparing and contrasting their findings to our own and again engage in rapid debate to ensure our findings and analysis stand the tests of business usability. New perspectives are shaped and added as appropriate. Our quantitative and qualitative findings are also shared within our internal research community and rapidly debated in peer review sessions to test validity and practicality.

PHASE 04

Market Testing and Emergent Trends
We fortify and validate our initial findings, leading practices and high impact processes within the analyst environment, our own Advisory Board and select other clients and prospects that offer fair assessment of the practicality and usability of our findings, practices, and processes. After studying and analyzing all collected data, we see and document patterns emerging within high-performing companies.

PHASE 05

Analytics-Based Reports and Tools Publication
After verifying our position internally, in alignment with scholarly research, and the market and completing rigorous peer reviews, our findings, leading practices and high-impact processes are documented and published, made available to our members, in the form of reports, tools and online searchable databases.

Client-Centered Business Goals

| Employer Brand	Business Performance	Client Loyalty	Market Leadership

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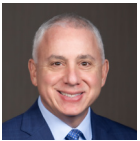
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About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is an HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management.

With more than 10,000 clients globally more than 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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Our Services

GET HELP TO DRIVE RESULTS FOR YOUR TALENT

In today's volatile and global business climate, managing talent for high-performance plays an increasingly crucial role in an organization's growth and future success. Effective talent management is a top priority in organizations everywhere because, while organizations recognize the need to obtain and retain people with the very best skills, they continue to struggle to implement effective strategies to do so. HR and Learning professionals need to be able to successfully define organizational talents needs and skills, identify talent strengths and career goals, and align organizational needs to individual needs. Rethink your strategy, validate your assumptions, transform your business, and optimize your time with the use of reliable data, tools, and guidance.

| PLAN | ATTRACT | DEVELOP | PERFORM | RETAIN | OPTIMIZE |

Our Services (Continued)

GET HELP WITH YOUR HR SERVICES MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY

As described in the employee lifecycle, processes are linked to employee transactional processes (e.g., compensation, benefits, compliance, contingent workforce management, etc.) via workforce planning and analytics.

- Policies/Process/Procedure
- Payroll
- Expense Management
- Benefits & Compensation

- Contingent Workforce Management
- Compliance
- Time & Labor Management

GET CONSULTING HELP WITH...

- Strategy and Planning
- Governance & Business Alignment
- Executive Management
- Team Development
- Measurement & Analytics
- Program Design & Deployment

- Technology Selection, Management & Integration
- Organizational Structure
- Measurement & Analytics
- Change Management
- Budgeting & Forecasting

Membership Offers Tailored Support

At the core of our offerings is a Membership Program that combines research, benchmarking and unlimited access to data and analysts. The Membership Program offers insights and best practices to enable executives and practitioners to make the right decisions about people, processes, and systems, coalesced with analyst advisory services which aim to put the research into action in a way that is practical and efficient. Membership also provides you direct access to our seasoned team of thought leaders dedicated to your success, backed by a rich member community, and proactive support from our client services team.

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