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A Winning Staff Part 1: Employee Screening

Take your hiring process to the next level with evaluations that help you find great employees.

Psychological Evaluations, in particular, are becoming an increasingly common part of hiring practices – 29% of companies administer these kinds of assessments to their employees, according to the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

Peggy Mitchusson, owner of The Face and The Body Spa in St. Louis, www.faceandbodyspa.com, is a big proponent of employee screening. For the past seven years, Mitchusson has given psychological evaluations to prospective employees to test their integrity and determine how well they would suit her company culture. "Without hesitation, I'd recommend using these tests," she says.

The decision to add this extra step to her hiring process was fueled by a succession of experiences with employees who failed to disclose vital information. "We interviewed them and checked their references, but there would end up being something they hadn't told us that would've influenced our hiring decision," she says. For example, she brought on an employee who was planning to leave town a few months later and another who didn't have means of transportation. "We'd hire people who didn't show up for work or were arrested on their way—all kinds of crazy stuff you can't account for," Mitchusson says. With the help of employee screening, applicants in these situations no longer make it through The Face and The Body's hiring process.

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When hiring therapists, Mitchusson uses a test called the Insure Survey from Hiring Solutions. It consists of 141 multiple-choice questions to be completed in an allotted time. Mitchusson submits the answers to the Hiring Solutions website; (Cost \$15 – \$21 depending on volume) and then receives a report back that grades the applicant in the following areas: integrity, attitudes about substance abuse, reliability, and work ethic. A distortion score, which considers how candid and frank the test taker was, is also given. Distortion scores range from 9 to one.

"We won't hire anyone with a score of less than six," Mitchusson says. "We tested it ourselves and found that all our best staff, from service providers to general managers, scored above six." With six as her benchmark, she concentrates on traits that are most important to her and is a bit more relaxed about others. "I look for high ratings in reliability and integrity, but I'm willing to overlook a slightly lower score on attitudes toward drug use," Mitchusson says. "I recently

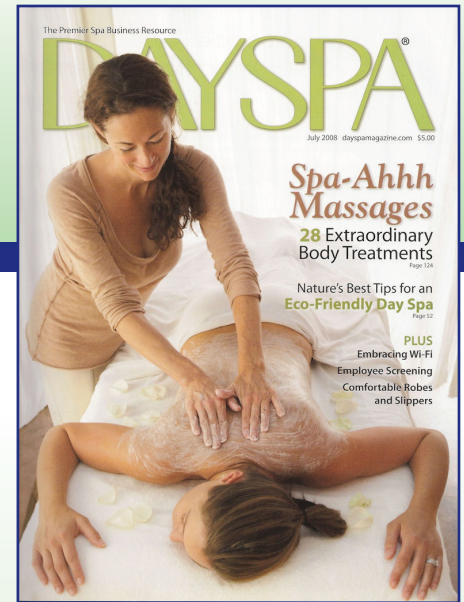
tested someone who had a reliability of seven and integrity of eight, but a drug use attitude of five.

I still hired her because it's the generation in which she's been raised that's shaped her attitudes. It doesn't necessarily mean that she'll be a drug user."

.....Most people are surprised by the accuracy of the tests, "At first they doubt the results when they find a candidate they really like. But when they hire against the test, they often realize it was correct." Mitchusson has experienced this firsthand. "Every time we've gone against the test, the employee hasn't worked out," she says. "When we trusted it, I'd say about 90% of those applicants worked out."

....In addition to the Insure Survey, The Face and The Body's Mitchusson use tests that measure practical skills essential for positions in her spa. These include Personality Plus for potential general managers and the Sales Plus and Johnston Index for front desk staff. The Johnston Index assesses candidates' abilities in Problem Solving, Mathematics, Vocabulary, and Spelling (with a perfect score being 12.) "I couldn't employ someone with a score of less than four in vocabulary, as this indicates they can only speak affectively with peers and wouldn't be a good match for the front desk," she says.

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Management Workshop • by Lola Augustine Brown • www.lolaaugustine.com*



The logo for Hiring Solutions features a stylized, abstract shape composed of a blue and green wavy line with a series of small blue dots trailing off to the right. The text 'Hiring Solutions' is written in a large, blue, serif font to the right of the logo.

Hiring Solutions

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