

Welcome to the sixth issue of **Informed**, the newsletter from Informed Assessment.

Over the last few months we have continued to undertake an ever-widening range of services – this has included personal development planning for managers; career management support; and psychometric test validation in addition to our existing assessment and development activities.

In this edition of **Informed**, we describe a team profiling session on behalf of ASD Metal Services, the UK's largest independent multi-metal stockholding and distribution operation which in-

cluded a review of the team in question's creativity when problem-solving – a crucial but often overlooked competency. The range and number of clients drawing upon online assessment has been growing and in this issue we give some insights into the applications, benefits and pitfalls of this pioneering approach to assessment.

Punch Taverns asked us to review the selection processes for their call centre operation; this involved a "mini" validation of some sales and customer service psychometric tests and produced powerful results.

Thank you again for your con-

tinued custom and support of Informed Assessment. We hope you find this issue interesting and useful, and we look forward to working with you in the remainder of 2005 and beyond.

**Did you know.....**

A review of Informed Assessment's 2004-5 work showed that 97% of our financial turnover during that period was either repeat business from existing clients, or from new clients who then asked us to undertake further work. We are very proud of and grateful to all our clients for their willingness and appetite to "come back for more" – thank you!

## *Assessing a team's profile with an emphasis upon creativity*



ASD Metal Services is the UK's largest independent multi-metal stockholding and distribution operation, with over 100,000 tonnes of metals in stock at any one time.

The HR team of ASD was keen to explore how psychometric assessment could be used to help better understand themselves and each other, and to create a clearer sense of team identity. The team wished to have an action plan which would build upon the identified strengths of each individual. Pauline

Garnett, the Group HR Manager, said, *"we were also particularly interested in gauging our innovation and creativity, a quality of increasing importance as we respond to the varied challenges we face within ASD"*.

The process was facilitated by Informed Assessment over the course of a day. The event consisted of an introduction and overview to what makes an effective team, the administration and scoring of two psychometric assessments — a personality questionnaire and a test of occupational creativity— followed by individual and team reviews of the results.

Towards the end of the day the questionnaire outputs were used to derive Belbin team types to capture differ-

ing team styles and contributions in an accessible way.

The team was facilitated to review their relative strengths and areas for development, and an action plan was discussed and agreed to ensure that learning from the session was carried back to the "day jobs" and gave a practical framework to help improve team effectiveness.

Reflecting afterwards on the day, Pauline Garnett said, *"the session gave us practical and powerful insights in to our individual styles, our team strengths and areas for development. We also identified some realistic ways that we can collectively build on our different strengths"*.

## Product Spotlight

*In this continuation of our “Working Guide” articles, we take a closer look at online assessment, which has been growing in popularity. Recently we have coordinated online assessments all over the UK, as well as Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland, Miami and Guatemala.*

### Applications

A wide range of exercises is now available online – these include personality questionnaires such as the OPQ, 16PF5 and the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI); motivation questionnaires such as the MQ and MVPI; and ability tests pitched at the graduate and management critical reasoning level.

These are increasingly available in different languages - we have conducted online assessments in French and German and we responded recently to further requests for assessments in Chinese and Russian, both of which could be done online.

The range of our clients using online assessment has been growing too; examples of these include UK call centres, direct sales, banking and technology organisations and more recently the public sector.

### Benefits

**Speed** – online assessment offers a crucial advantage when the alternative is time consuming candidate travel to attend assessment events. When Informed Assessment recently set up a candidate in Singapore, the candidate completed the assessment and a tailored report

was prepared within 36 hours.

**Cost and time savings** – linked to the above point, administrator and assessor time can be saved.

**Candidate convenience** – candidates can select a venue, or complete at home. It is particularly attractive to certain candidate groups such as sought-after professionals with scarce time to travel.

**High-tech** – paper and pencil administration can be replaced by more up to date technology, and this can be used to reinforce the image of the organisation.

**Scoring** – from an assessor perspective, the automated scoring associated with online assessment eliminates human error (and time spent) scoring answer sheets.

### Downsides

**Candidate identity** – a chief concern is not knowing for sure that the person at the other end of the wire is the actual candidate, or if the candidate undertaking the tests is doing so with the support of a friend! Various options to counter this include asking the candidate to sit a similar exercise at the next face-to-face opportunity in the assessment process, use of webcams etc.

**Candidate “buy in”** – a further concern is that candidates are more likely to distort an image of their personality through an online questionnaire because of its remote, more detached nature.

**Loss of “assessor control”** – the assessor loses control both of the assessment “environment” within which the candidate sits the online assessment, and is at the mercy of when (and if) the candidate chooses to undertake the assessment.

**Technology challenges** – early experiences did highlight certain technology problems involving over-enthusiastic spam filters blocking out crucial access emails and configuration settings on individuals’ PCs taking unkindly to the online assessment servers and emails. This appears to be less of an issue as the volume of online assessment has increased.

### Effective Strategies

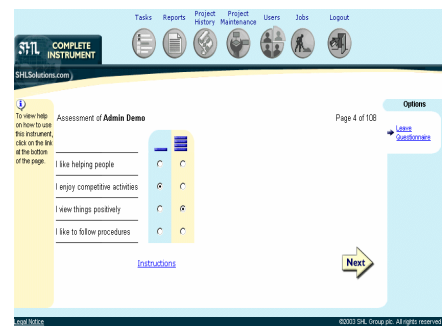
Give thought to the choice and format of the online questionnaire – some are harder to distort by candidates.

Arrange for candidates to complete the exercises in a semi-controlled environment, such as company offices based nearer to the candidate or 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites such as the facilities of recruitment consultants etc.

Professional candidate briefing and clear communications is probably even more important in an online assessment context, with a contact point given for technical support should problems be encountered.

### Final thoughts

Clearly online assessment has its challenges alongside many benefits. In our view, for more senior assessments, an online approach despite its pitfalls can still add value and will always be more revealing than no assessment at all. Online assessment, as with other options, works best when integrated with other exercises to create a fuller picture of an individual.



# Online assessment in action in the NHS

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Greater Manchester Collaborative Procurement Hub (“GM CPH”) is one of three such organisations of its kind in the UK, taking procurement out of hospitals into a strategic sourcing organisation. Informed Assessment was recommended to GM CPH to help with the assessment of a new key appointment of Director of Supply Chain.

For the GM CPH, time constraints were tight, and the short-listed candidates were living across the UK.

In addition, a further candidate was still living and working abroad. As a result Informed Assessment recommended online assessment which would allow all candidates to complete the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) at a time and venue to suit them.

Tailored reports were prepared for the GM CPH by Informed Assessment in time for the panel interviews to tight deadlines. Informed Assessment attended these interviews,

presenting feedback on each candidate prior to their interview and presentation, allowing panel members to focus specific questions on the key strengths and areas of concern highlighted in the reports.

Peter Akid, the Chief Executive of the GM CPH, commented, *“the online assessment process provided valuable insights on the candidates attending our panel interview in a logistically friendly manner and met our timescales”*.

## Designing and piloting a new call centre recruitment process

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Punch Taverns, the UK’s second largest pub company, is committed to the excellence of its Telecentre operation - a crucial, high-profile call centre environment which provides the first point of sales and service contact for its growing base of retailers. Informed Assessment was asked to review the Telecentre’s current recruitment processes and to make recommendations for improvements.

The first step was to undertake a thorough job analysis. This included fact finding sessions with a range of current incumbents, line managers, senior managers and trainers to identify the skills and qualities required to perform effectively in two distinct sales and service roles.

Following these sessions, role profiles were created and approved, and key competencies in each of the two roles were highlighted.

A complete recruitment process was designed to capture information on the most important competencies

earlier in the new selection process. It utilised those more time-consuming and costly exercises later in the process where they worked best – to provide more in-depth assessment on those candidates which the business felt were more likely to have the qualities needed for effective performance.

A mix of off-the-shelf psychometric and tailored assessment exercises designed by Informed Assessment was used. Candidates would progress through a sequence of exercises — CV screen, telephone interview, psychometric ability tests, competency interview, psychometric personality questionnaire, keyboard exercise and a role-play exercise, provided they met key criteria at particular stages.

The personality questionnaire was piloted using online administration on a range of current incumbents and the tests were also given to the same sample.

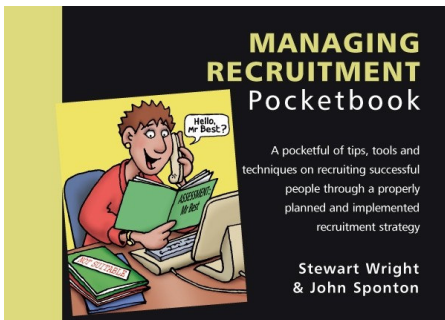
This piloting process highlighted the significant value that could be achieved by using ability tests early in the selection process giving the potential to eliminate those individuals likely to be less effective in the role. In addition, a clear picture

emerged of the personality characteristics which could differentiate effective from less effective performers. The other exercises were also reviewed to check the value they were adding to the selection process.

The final stage was to design and run training courses covering the structure of the new recruitment process; the administration and scoring of the exercises; and an appreciation of the information coming from the tests and the questionnaire, including how to integrate the ratings derived from the expert report outputs with the other exercises.

The training was highly participative and also involved managers in completing selected exercises and placed an emphasis upon ensuring as consistent an approach as possible to their scoring.

Ann Rennie, Head of Telecentre Operations for Punch Taverns, commented, *“feedback from the managers on the process itself and associated training has been particularly positive; early indications as to the effectiveness of our new selection procedures and the exercises themselves are very encouraging”*.



Stewart and John's new book, *Managing Recruitment Pocketbook* (ISBN ref 1 903776 34 1), is due to be published by Management Pocketbooks Ltd in October. This handy-sized book is aimed at line managers, HR professionals and recruiters who wish to work their way through the maze of activities and the legal framework associated with fair and effective recruitment and selection.

## Assessment and Development Product Supplier News

Following the path of Peter Saville (the 'S' in SHL), his co-founder Roger Holdsworth (the 'H' in SHL) has also set up a new psychometric test publisher. Roger's new company, a joint venture with Capital Consulting, is a web-based psychometric assessment company called Talent Q.

### Did you know that - ?

According to *People Management* (11/8/05), 81% of the 73 FTSE organisations surveyed said they currently use some form of psychometric testing to recruit and develop employees, and 22% said their use of psychometrics had increased substantially compared to 5 years ago?

## The Lighter Side of Assessment and Development

### A good recruitment process can be a steal.....

*The Times* (19/4/05) reported that transport officials had not ruled out offering a job to a teenager aged 15 who stole a Melbourne tram. He drove so well around the city, switching tracks manually and picking up passengers in his 27-tonne

train over a 40 minute period, that the Yarra Trams Service said, "anybody who passes the mustard for our recruiting policy, we'd be glad to offer a job to – provided he's old enough to hold a driver's licence".

### What's in a name.....

*Personnel Today* (5/7/05) reported that Barclays, having surveyed 60,000 of its Premier Banking customers, had identified that the top earning men's and women's names were David and Susan. The next most affluent men's names were John, Michael, Peter, Paul, Andrew, Richard, Robert, Mark and Stephen, and, on the women's side, Elizabeth, Sarah, Jane, Helen, Patricia, Jacqueline, Alison, Anne and Nicola.

### Development area: Try to pay more attention to detail.....

*The Metro* (29/6/05) reported the unfortunate typing mistake caused by a Taiwan-based dealer working for Fubon Securities. Instead of ordering shares worth £1.4 million, the trader ordered £140 million, resulting in a paper loss of £7 million. An executive for the company said, in arguably a slight understatement, "something like this is difficult to explain to superiors".

Please submit any Lighter Side of Assessment gems to us for future inclusion in **Informed**.



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**Supporting Selection and  
Development**

*At Informed Assessment, we are committed to delivering work to a high standard. We work ethically and professionally with clients, candidates, participants and suppliers. We work in partnership with our clients and focus on providing practical solutions to their needs. In achieving our goals, it is important to us that all parties are treated with respect and have a positive experience of the process.*

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