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# WHITEPAPER

## Searching for the Silver Bullet: Can One Test Alone Improve Quality of Hire?

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Work sample assessments, like simulation assessments, have proven that they predict performance more effectively than any other type of assessment.

## Introduction

Most contact center leaders agree that turnover is a consistent problem within their industry. Research from FurstPerson's 2009 Contact Center Recruiting and Compensation Survey showed that turnover alone costs organizations \$4,284 per term on average. Factoring in the opportunity cost of poor performance accelerates this cost by a factor of five to ten times depending on your industry and call type.

Organizations with experience utilizing employee selection systems would agree that the use of pre-hire assessments supported by empirical based research, job analysis, and validation analysis can help improve the quality of hire of new employees evaluated by these assessments. Recent research reports discussing contact center attrition have focused on utilizing one assessment – a personality inventory – to combat attrition. Is using one assessment, the so called silver bullet, the best way to improve quality of hire?

## Personality Testing, the Big Five, and Applicant Screening

The Big Five is a well established model of personality profiling that has been shown to predict turnover in contact centers. However, it's not enough to have just the right personality profile. Applicants must also have the right skills and abilities to perform well. That's why best practices in applicant screening suggest an approach that includes skills or work ability assessment via simulations, motivational and personality-job fit (work attitudes) assessments, and work habits fit via bio-data assessments.



FurstPerson's 4-Quadrant model (see chart to the left) reflects a culmination of our experience and research and highlights the multi-dimensional nature of employee performance within contact centers.

Bio-data tests have proven to be an invaluable tool when predicting an applicant's likelihood to leave a company.

According to the 4-Quadrant model, an employee's on-the-job success is a function of:

- what an individual *can* do, which includes
  - work habits (e.g., dependability, detail orientation, organizational skills),
  - cognitive capabilities (e.g., critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving)
  - interpersonal characteristics (e.g., sociability, interpersonal sensitivity, empathy)
- what an individual *will* do, which depends on his or her work-related attitudes, interests, and motivations.

There is no “magic” test that can measure all four quadrants simultaneously. Best practice organizations often use several assessments to ensure that the applicant possesses the requisite level of competence in each quadrant. Leveraging the 4-Quadrant model as a framework, we can see that certain types of assessments provide a more accurate evaluation of certain types of competencies.



Research clearly supports the value of a multi-tiered approach over personality assessment in isolation. In fact, work sample assessments, like simulation assessments, have proven that they predict performance more effectively than any other type of assessment.

You can take the assessment process one step further by adding in a work habits assessment. These types of assessments have consistently proven themselves to provide the best predictions of attrition/retention, even better than personality factors. The reason why is that work habits assessments (more commonly referred to as biodata assessments) gather data from the applicant’s past to help predict what s/he will do in the future – i.e., past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. By asking a variety of questions about a person’s previous work habits and tendencies, a bio-data test has proven to be an invaluable tool when predicting an applicant’s likelihood to leave a company.

Excellent contact center performance depends on possessing competence in each of the four domains. A combination of a work abilities or skills test (simulation), work attitudes assessment (personality test), and work habits assessment (bio-data test) can provide a best practice approach that delivers unparalleled value. **Thus, this model provides a map of what to measure, and provides added support for the “whole-person approach” to pre-hire assessment.**

## Conclusion and Applicant Screening Philosophy

While the Big-Five based personality assessments do play an important role in developing the story about how a job candidate may potentially perform in your contact center role, it is critical to understand that personality-job fit is only part of the attrition problem – it is not the sole solution. A job candidate with the right personality will fail if s/he doesn't have the right skill set. Moreover, a candidate who has great skills and the wrong personality profile is also likely to fail. The key to success is to use a multi-faceted solution that addresses both skills and personality-job fit.

Recently published research is correct in calling for the need for assessments to be specific to the contact center industry. Strong empirical research should guide all employee selection tool development, and employee selection tools should provide useful value to organizations that use them correctly.

The problem is that these articles do not address the inextricable links between job performance and attrition (Quality of Hire). It's easy to think that the biggest problem affecting contact centers is attrition if you have never worked in one before. Anyone who has staffed call centers understands that hiring people who will perform their job well can be just as important as hiring people who will remain with the company. In fact, companies who focus solely on hiring for retention end up dealing with a problem that we call the *dark-side of retention*, which occurs when the production floor is full of marginal players who won't leave. Although the recruiting organization might be happy because they have filled the seats, the executive team will be concerned because the attrition problem has now shifted to unhappy customers. Selecting contact center representatives who will remain on the job and perform well requires an assessment solution that pinpoints all of the key issues, not just personality-job fit.

## About FurstPerson

### What we do:

- Develop and operate web-based pre-hire, employee selection assessments that help contact centre organisations hire and develop the right employees.

### Our experience:

- Thirteen years of research and implementation experience working with all major call types including customer care, sales, collections, win back, and technical support.
- Implemented our solutions in over 250 labor markets in the United States, Canada, UK, the Philippines, and Latin America.
- Significant industry experience in telecommunications, insurance, outsourcing, financial services, retail, travel, and business services industries.
- Home agent hiring since 2002.
- Average client is a multi-site, multi-call type organization with complex hiring workflow models and job profiles.
- Developed award-winning assessments featuring interactive simulations.

### Differentiators:

- Predictive assessments with demonstrated bottom line results ranging from:
  - Improved new hire performance (up to 40%)
  - Reduced turnover (up to 70%)
  - ROI – \$1 invested yields \$10 to \$20 in return
  - Lower recruiting expense
- Hiring solutions based on empirical research supported by ongoing job and validation analysis.
- Customized solutions leveraging our extensive contact centre hiring expertise and industry leading assessment solutions.

To learn more about FurstPerson, please visit our website at [www.furstperson.com](http://www.furstperson.com) or email us at [info@furstperson.com](mailto:info@furstperson.com) or call us at 888-626-3412.

