

HIRE.DEVELOP.PERFORM.

SEPARATING MYTH FROM FACT

Hiring for Peak Performance and Customer Satisfaction

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Introduction

Contact center hiring is frequently plagued by myths and misinformation that can affect a company's talent strategy. What impacts do myths have on who you hire and how those people perform? Creating a research driven approach to hiring contact center employees can enable you to separate myth from fact.

Recently, FurstPerson participated in the 2011 Customer Contact West Executive MindXChange hosted by Frost & Sullivan in San Diego, CA. We led an interactive session, Separating Myth from Fact: Hiring for Peak Performance and Customer Satisfaction, which was a top rated session at the 2011 Customer Contact West event.

Based on FurstPerson research and the content discussed during this session, we wanted to present three common Myths versus Facts that relate to contact center hiring.

Myth or Fact:

1. Applicants generally think it takes them longer to complete pre-hire tests than it does
2. Shorter pre-hire testing time reduces the number of candidates who drop out of the process
3. Approximately 70% of call center attrition is voluntary

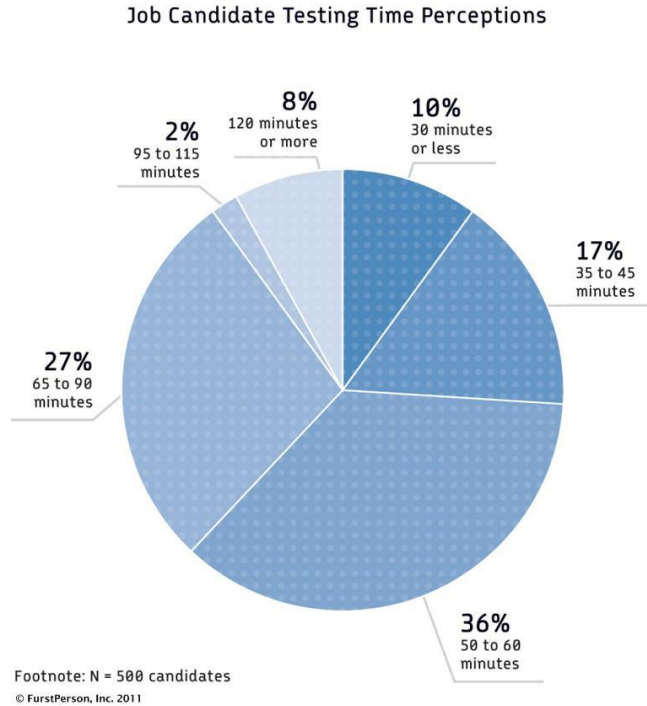
By reviewing these three topics, our goal is to view them using a data-driven, research based approach.

Myth or Fact? Applicants generally think it takes them longer to complete pre-hire tests than it does.

Answer: **Myth**

FurstPerson recently surveyed job candidates who had completed a three test battery of work-related assessments and simulations. The average testing time was 88 minutes. However, the candidates perceived that it took 67 minutes or 25% less time to complete this three test battery.

The chart below provides a summary of the survey data.



In addition, the survey asked candidates for suggestions to improve the tests. Only 6% suggested that reducing the testing process time would be an improvement.

In our experience, the use of job relevant, engaging pre-hire tools creates a more engaging candidate experience, which reduces the perception of how long it takes to complete pre-hire assessments. Even with a battery that takes almost 90 minutes to complete, 84% of candidates Agree or Strongly Agree that testing length is appropriate and acceptable (11% Neutral, 5% Disagree or Strongly Disagree).

There are certain types of assessments, called speeded tests, that aren't designed to be finished in the allotted time. With these types of assessments, applicants may feel short-changed because s/he wasn't able to finish the entire assessment. It is imperative that the business set the appropriate expectation for candidates as they begin the assessment process. Although pre-hire processes that are engaging are usually perceived to take less time than they actually do, a poorly designed process can be seen more negatively.

Myth or Fact? Shorter pre-hire testing time reduces the number of candidates who drop out of the process.

Answer: Myth

FurstPerson research shows that the factor in the candidate testing process which is most responsible for influencing dropout rate is not the length of the test, but the *location* of testing (in-office vs. off-site/at home). Testing on-site has a dropout rate of approximately 2-3% versus an off-site rate of 40-43%.

Looking at data, FurstPerson adjusted the test battery process from 75 minutes to 45 minutes for an organization with both an off-site and on-site option. Shortening the test battery time by 30 minutes had no effect on the dropout rate, either on-site or off-site.

Dropout rate may be higher off-site because:

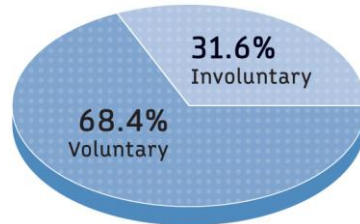
- Candidates are not motivated (i.e., just window shopping)
- Candidates are not ready (i.e., they click a web link without realizing they're being taken to a testing process)
- Candidates are not engaged (i.e., off-site process tends to be depersonalized)

In fact, some organizations have found that a longer assessment process helps weed out candidates who aren't motivated to work hard and go the extra mile.

If you are considering an off-site assessment process, what's critical is to find a way to connect with applicants – via personal connection – even if process is remote. Creating an emotional connection with the employer is the first step to building buy-in from candidates and potential employees.

Myth or Fact? Approximately 70% of call center attrition is voluntary.

Answer: **FACT**, but many people voluntarily term before they are fired because of attendance or similar issues



FurstPerson research shows that the primary reasons for voluntary attrition are personal reasons, job abandonment and resignation. Using the example of one organization:

- 29% of voluntary attrition was for personal reasons
- 17% was job abandonment
- 7% was resignation with discipline pending

Effective strategies for reducing attrition and improving agent attendance start with using pre-hire tools that identify the right candidates up front. It's important that these tools are validated against attrition and attendance data, not just performance.

In this real-life example using Biodata (measures work habits) and personality (measures work attitudes for job fit) pre-hire tests, the outcomes are dramatic when comparing high vs. low scorers:

Outcome	Biodata Test	Personality
Attrition	62% lower	38% lower
Attendance	30% higher	22% higher

Other effective strategies for combating voluntary attrition are:

- Implementing payback policies for unused time off
- Set expectations for the job and manage to them
- Spend time with people who are performing well and let non-performers come to you
- Create a culture of accountability and professionalism

There are also a number of steps that companies can take to avoid holding on to long-term employees who perform below threshold for too long (also called the “dark side” of retention). Avoid keeping “high likeability floaters”, people who are well liked and kept around despite their poor performance. Also, exit employees who are not succeeding despite regular coaching, frequent feedback and performance reviews documenting poor performance. It’s important for managers to support the decision to let these people go, and it’s just as important that performance issues are well-documented, so that this action does not come as a shock to the employee.

About FurstPerson

FurstPerson, based in Chicago, has been helping organizations solve hiring problems through a consultative, technology enabled approach since 1997. FurstPerson focuses on customer contact organizations that hire for contact center jobs, retail jobs, field service jobs, and other customer facing jobs. Our solutions help organizations discover the issues, solve the issues, and advance the solution forward. You can learn more at furstperson.com or call us at 888-626-3412.