

Why I don't use personality tests

Many companies use personality tests not only in recruitment, but also in personnel development. Career coaches do the same in personal and professional assessments. Does it make sense to entrust people's self-knowledge to a test? In recent years, I have noticed that my clients have become increasingly sceptical about personality tests - a positive development, especially as artificial intelligence is likely to give the testing industry a new boost.

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Personality tests achieve good validity in studies and seem to make quite reliable statements about a person's personality. However, what always scares me is how incorrectly they are interpreted. Even as a headhunter, I often heard statements such as: «The candidate is a typical blue one». I find such stereotyping absolutely inadmissible.

Long live the individual

The tests are more difficult to evaluate than the playful, full-colour presentation and the catchily described character types would suggest. A weekend seminar on certification is unlikely to be sufficient for a credible interpretation.

The tests categorise test subjects into a manageable number of types, which do not do justice to the individuality of people and their ability to develop. Unfortunately, the different types are often also assigned to certain professional fields in the manner of: «Red - and only red - belongs in management».

I experienced the pitfalls of external evalua

tions for a career assessment myself when I was young. My career had reached a dead end, and I didn't know what to do next. For my professional reorientation, I had a graphological report drawn up on my inclinations and talents. This was a common tool at the time, before it was replaced by personality tests.

Self-knowledge cannot be delegated

The results of the assessment surprised me, and I could only recognise myself to a limited extent. I was aware of some of the characterisation and therefore did not gain any insight. However, many of the statements were new and I couldn't reconcile them with myself. So, what now? It was out of the question for me to steer my professional development in a direction that was recommended to me by a third-party personality analysis.

So, I checked the statements in discussions with family and friends. It wasn't their feedback that convinced me - after all, these were again external images - but the concrete examples they gave me to illustrate this. In the end, I was able to recognise my inclinations and talents in these personal experiences.

Why take an expensive personality test if I must validate the results through my own observation and reflection anyway? I therefore skip the tests and go straight to self-observation, because self-knowledge cannot be delegated anyway.

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