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## Below the iceberg of employee testing

By: JAMES L. PLOTKIN - For the North County Times

What do an applicant and an iceberg have in common? Much more than you realize. Just as only 10 percent of the iceberg can be glimpsed from the surface, today's hiring processes do not reveal much of an applicant beyond the superficial. Some companies' hiring processes are similar to the "mirror test" ---- if you can fog a mirror, you're hired. In many instances, hiring managers are essentially flipping coins and trusting to chance that they identify the right person for the right job who matches their culture.

Although the traditional interview, reference check and resume are valuable processes, the growing field of employee assessments is proving to be a valuable source for more telling observations about prospective employees. Employee assessments measure a variety of types of data, including behaviors, cognitive abilities, skills, integrity, attitude and even more specific attributes. The "best" assessment is simply the one that is most appropriate for a particular situation.

What all assessments share are the critical ability to predict an applicant's future behavior, which will determine not only how he performs in his new duties, but also how successfully he adapts to the company's culture. Too often, a brief interview is expected to judge if an applicant will be compatible with the company. If dating had the same assumptions as hiring, the divorce rate would soar even higher. Most of us learn that love at first sight does not guarantee that you will make it past the third date.

Companies with the fewest employees often fall behind their larger competitors, who can better weather the blow of a poor choice. These smaller companies seem to think that only big companies use these tools, when in fact, they are the ones who will benefit the most.

Although the scientific methods utilized by assessments have proven to be largely accurate, it would be fallacious to put blind trust in them, just as it would be foolish to rely completely on any one way of viewing a person. There are no crystal balls, because humans are not robots and will never be entirely predictable.

A well-designed hiring process can go a long way toward peering below the iceberg, where a good employee who will stay may be just out of sight.

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