THE PREDICTIVE INDEX

EBOOK

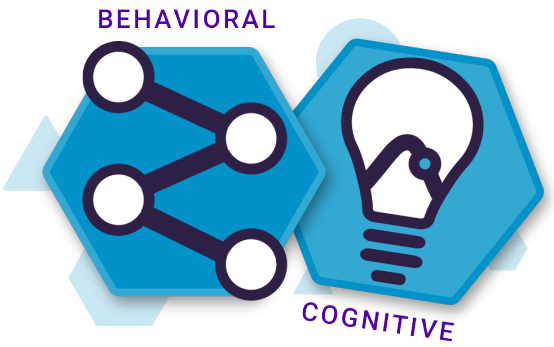
When to compromise on cognitive ability

(and other hiring best practices)

The future of hiring

People data is key to making great hires. In this day and age, it's not enough for hiring managers to ask for a resume and work history. If you want to make the best hire possible, you need to collect *all* kinds of objective data about your candidates.

The PI Behavioral Assessment™ and PI Cognitive Assessment™ allow you to collect two crucial forms of people data. The behavioral assessment measures a candidate's drives and needs within the workplace. Meanwhile, the cognitive assessment measures how quickly a candidate processes and adapts to new information.



However, with great data comes great responsibility. Consider the following scenario:

You have a candidate that strikes all the boxes. Behaviorally, they're a perfect fit. They share your organization's values. They even have a few skills or certifications over others applying for the same role.

But there's an elephant in the room. The candidate's cognitive score doesn't meet the threshold for your Job Target™. Do you reject the candidate, on principle? Or, do you compromise on cognitive—and risk hiring someone who can't keep up with their job?

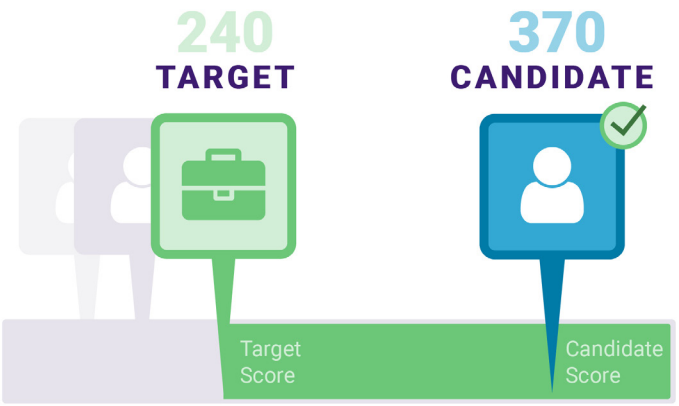
Read on for answers to these questions—as well as some other hiring best practices.

What is the PI Cognitive Assessment?

The PI Cognitive Assessment is a timed, 12-minute assessment designed to measure cognitive ability. The assessment consists of 50 multiple-choice questions across three categories—verbal, numerical, and abstract reasoning—and nine subcategories. The assessment is divided into 10 pages, each of which contains five questions.

Candidates are asked to answer as many questions correctly as possible within the allotted time. They may leave questions blank and move on to the following pages. Likewise, they may come back and revise any answers they've selected or left blank.

At the end of the allotted time, the candidate's results are converted into a score based on the total number of correct answers. This score is then scaled and presented to the hiring manager as a number between 100 and 450.



The PI Cognitive Assessment was carefully crafted to meet industry standards with regards to reliability, validity, and fairness. In short, that means the assessment:

1. Provides consistent results when taken multiple times.
2. Successfully measures what it's intended to measure (cognitive ability).
3. Measures members of the population the same way—and avoids potential bias.

How accurate is the cognitive assessment?

PI created the cognitive assessment in the first place because it's the No. 1 predictor of job performance. Other people data (e.g., behavioral drives, skills, education) are all important pieces of the puzzle. But if you were to rely on a single data point, the cognitive assessment would be the most compelling one.

Meta-analysis—a term used to describe overall trends as measured by numerous independent studies—supports this. Thousands of studies have been conducted in the past century on the validity of cognitive ability as a predictor of job performance. While there are bound to be conflicting reports among such a huge sample, the general takeaway is clear: **Cognitive ability is a critical factor to consider.**

Why cognitive results are useful

Given its accuracy compared to other predictors, it's easy to imagine why employers gravitate toward the PI Cognitive Assessment. But what about it *specifically* is so intriguing? Here are several reasons why cognitive ability is particularly useful:

It helps gauge fit.

Cognitive results are helpful for assessing fit for different jobs. Roles that involve more complex, unpredictable tasks (e.g., learning quickly, working independently, adapting to a rapidly-changing environment) typically require higher cognitive scores. By contrast, jobs that involve more simple, predictable interactions (e.g., performing routine tasks, working in a stable environment) generally require lower cognitive ability.

By setting a Job Target with a cognitive score reflective of the position's demands, you provide a realistic benchmark for candidates. Using Match Score technology, the PI software distills an applicant's cognitive and behavioral results down to a simple score from one to 10. From there, you can sort by Match Score and identify potential candidates to interview.

It's relevant to most jobs.

Another strength of the cognitive assessment is its wide applicability. Not every job requirement necessitates a work sample test or previous experience. By contrast, the cognitive assessment is relevant to most jobs—regardless of industry or level. It may be *more important* for some jobs than others, but it's a nice tool to have nonetheless.

It's cost-effective.

The cognitive assessment is also cost-effective. Compared to the costs of facilitating work sample tests and structured interviews, the cognitive assessment is relatively inexpensive. What's more, it's easily accessible to all with a computer.

The dangers of relying solely on cognitive results

The cognitive assessment may be the No. 1 predictor of job performance, but it's only one piece of the people-data puzzle.

Here are a few reasons why you shouldn't rely solely on cognitive ability:

You shrink your talent pool.

Let's expand on the example from the beginning of this e-book. Say the position you're filling is an outbound sales role. The candidate you're considering meets nearly all of your needs. They're extremely charismatic and assertive enough to close deals. They share your company's vision and believe in your product/service. They have several years of experience working in an extremely similar role. And—cherry on top—they had strong answers to all of your interview questions and were polite to everyone in the office.

Sounds like an ideal candidate. Despite not meeting the cognitive requirements set in the Job Target, it's entirely possible this individual would thrive in the role—which is why it's critical not to treat cognitive ability as a pass/fail metric. Yes, there's a correlation between cognitive ability and job performance. But a high cognitive score doesn't guarantee strong performance—just as a low cognitive result doesn't ensure poor productivity.

By dismissing any and all applicants who fail to meet the expected cognitive score, you artificially shrink your talent pool—and eliminate candidates who could be valuable assets to your organization.

It's less important for more routine jobs.

The more complex the job, the better predictor of performance the cognitive assessment is. For simpler jobs—such as those that require very routine, repetitive actions—the tasks are so structured that there's very little room for deviation. In these cases, it's difficult for someone with a higher cognitive ability to be a "better" performer than an employee with a lower ability. The use of other data points—such as behavioral results or structured interviews—can provide essential color when determining who to hire.

You open yourself up to potential bias.

Another by-product of relying solely on cognitive results? You run the risk of adverse impact—discrimination against ethnicities, gender groups, and other protected classes as a result of a particular hiring process. In this case, selecting only candidates that meet a specific cognitive threshold may hinder certain minorities that, on average, score lower than other demographics.

The PI Cognitive Assessment has been specifically tested—and meets industry-standard guidelines—for fairness. That means the assessment has been designed to measure candidates identically, regardless of demographic. At the same time, it's still possible to misuse the test, as in the above case.

It's crucial that test administrators understand the risks of hiring solely based on cognitive ability. **Responsible usage is key.** When cognitive ability is just *one of many* data points you measure in your candidates, you significantly reduce the risk of adverse impact.

When should you compromise on cognitive results?

The answer to this question may surprise you: **always.**

If you're not always willing to compromise on a cognitive, then you're treating the result of the assessment as binary. You either succeed or you don't.

In an age where so much valuable data is available to us, it makes little sense to rely solely on one data point to inform a decision. **Knowledge is power; the more objective information you have, the better your hires will be.**

Some data points *will* be better predictors of performance than others. The cognitive assessment is proof of that. At times, these measures may even tell opposing stories (e.g., a high-cognitive individual who's a poor behavioral fit). That's why it's so essential to get a holistic view of the candidate—and make a decision based on all the available information.

Understanding the *whole* candidate

The PI software equips you with much of the people data you'll need. By setting a Job Target, you ensure all key stakeholders are aligned on the position's behavioral responsibilities and cognitive threshold. When sharing the PI Behavioral Assessment and PI Cognitive Assessment with candidates, you can decide how much weight is given to each—resulting in a Match Score that measures each candidate's overall job fit.

Even then, there's more work to be done. PI lets you generate interview guides based on the Job Target with questions designed to probe for behavioral strengths and weaknesses. Or, you can craft cultural interview questions to see if your candidates share the same values as those of your organization. You can even predict potential changes in team dynamics with the Team Work Styles™ tool.

As a hiring manager, you always have to be willing to compromise—not just on cognitive ability, but on any individual candidate shortcoming. In doing so, you open your organization up to a wider array of talent—and increase the odds of landing the perfect hire.

Hire holistically—and confidently.

Want to transform your hiring with PI?

REQUEST A DEMO

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