Just the ticket — new psychometric ticketing tools for stations and onboard teams

OPC Assessment shares news about new station and onboard staff ticketing psychometric tools and the robust manner in which they are developed to ensure they are fit for purpose

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OPC Assessment has a long history in developing psychometric tools for the rail industry with over 20 years of experience. They work hard to ensure that all new tools that are developed meet quality standards using psychometric principles. Psychometricians are evidence based. So, when they design a test, they ensure first that the test is reliable so that a candidate's test score is trustworthy and not fluke or random. Secondly, they work to ensure that the test is valid – i.e., it does its job. For example, does it predict a trainee's ability to pass ticket training or a candidate's future customer service performance; and finally, is it fair. Does it assess all candidates equally without bias or discrimination against one population or demographic group?

Rigorous test trialling to help deliver a quality test to the rail industry

There are specialists at OPC Assessment who develop psychometric tools, who are experienced at doing the job. To ensure the three principles of reliability, validity and fairness are met OPC psychologists will often develop at least three times the number of questions they eventually want to use. This is because some questions may fail and not assess the intended characteristic or ability, or they may be ambiguous for the candidates. All the test items are then trialled, usually by a large group of people, of around 100+ that the test is aimed at. OPC Assessment regularly works with its rail clients around the world to help find these trial groups.

The trial results on the questions are analysed very carefully by OPC Assessment psychometricians. Each individual question is looked at across all those who answered them to check they are working. The best questions are used to create the final test that is then normed. This involves a large group of individuals sitting the final test to create a comparison group – a 'norm group', against which to compare and contrast future applicants.

Extracting key job requirements to design the right assessment tool for the right job

If the new test they want to design and use is really to work then it needs to be fit for purpose. OPC Assessment psychologists spend time with organisations and job holders, observing and analysing the job tasks and activities in order to develop an in-depth job profile. From this they determine what Non-Technical Skills (NTS) and personal competencies are specifically required for the role. The psychologists can then either build a bespoke assessment tool to measure the required NTS or personal competency, or alternatively select an off-the-shelf assessment tool for a client from OPC Assessment's extensive range of rail related assessment tools.

Benchmarking the candidate to others: an informed assessment of a candidate's test performance

Because OPC Assessment tools are based on the robust analysis of a role, evidence of the efficacy of the tool and statistical research, then we can predict they are more likely to tell us how someone is likely to perform in the job, for example, working on a station or in a ticket office. As each candidate takes the test, they can be compared to the norm group. This comparison will help show if a candidate or existing employee is performing higher, lower or about the same as the norm group. The rail recruiter can then have confidence that the person they are selecting is more likely to perform to the required level and standard on the job according to the test assessment.

For some OPC Assessment tools, there are now norm groups consisting of thousands of rail candidates. Furthermore,

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the OPC has also worked closely with some rail organisations to create bespoke norm groups e.g. an entire group of train driver applicants or train dispatcher candidates for a particular train operator. These bespoke norms are used by the rail recruiter to provide a confident and robust benchmark against which any candidate wanting to join their organisation will be measured against.

Existing off-the-shelf assessment tools for onboard and station staff
Rail organisations have still needed to recruit staff during the pandemic and many have had to adapt their recruitment processes, utilising more online digital technology – to the benefit of both rail organisations and candidates.

OPC Assessment has an extensive range of onboard and station ticketing assessment tools available to help recruit train conductors, station ticket office staff and station customer service roles. For example, the Ticket Selling and Checking Test (TSCT) assesses the ability to sell tickets and check the validity of tickets.

It may also be necessary to assess applicants for station ticket office roles where numerical and verbal reasoning abilities are required. Here, the Core Skills Verbal Test (CoreV) and the Core Skills Numerical Test (CoreN) may also be useful tests in a talent acquisition process. In some on-station roles rail clients are looking for individuals who have exemplary customer service skills. The Customer Service Situations Test (CSS) is a situational judgement test that presents the candidate with a range of customer service problems

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and four potential solutions. They must order and prioritise the solutions according to their experience and personal judgement. This test is based on award-winning customer service managers' performance. So, any candidate's answers are assessed against the very best in customer service!

New online ticketing assessment tools launching from OPC Assessment
Ticketing regulations in the UK can be pretty complex depending on varying factors e.g. time of day, route, discounts, duration of validity etc. So, our ticket staff and onboard train personnel who sell tickets need to have the ability to hold and retain a lot of information, concentrate on the detail as well as check information quickly and accurately.

It is also important to consider the shift in the job function due to technological developments too. For station staff and conductors there is now less focus on working with money or counting up. Instead, the new key characteristics are about the ability to work with technology along with demonstrating the NTS of conscientiousness, checking and accuracy.

With these changes in mind and through listening to customer's requirements, OPC Assessment have been able to review their assessment portfolio and have recently developed and launched the following new online tests, suitable for onboard and station staff:
The Ticketing Machine Test (TMT) assesses an applicant's checking ability, to determine if the ticket information displayed on a ticket machine is correct vs. customer travel information provided. They must understand how the ticketing machine works, how the information is presented and check the information displayed; identifying how many errors, if any, are showing on the machine.

The Ticket Checking Test (TCT) is a new online test, specifically developed for use with station staff or conductor role recruitment. It is designed to assesses an applicant's ability to check the validity of different types of train tickets and determine if they are good for travel. This test requires concentration, attention to detail and accuracy skill against a set of fixed criteria.

As a result of the pandemic, some clients have approached OPC Assessment to design bespoke, online assessment tools because of the need to use more digital technology in their selection processes. The Station Staff Timetable Test (SSTT) is one such test, developed for a client needing a tool to help recruit for station roles. The SSTT assesses a candidate's analytical skills when working with timetable information. The applicant is provided with a section of a train timetable and they must use the information to answer customer queries – assessing their ability to read and interpret timetable data correctly.

Jo Lawrence, Business Development Manager and Director said: 'OPC Assessment has invested considerable time and expertise in designing new bespoke and off-the-shelf assessment tools for use by our clients. By having close relationships and regular conversations with clients, we are able to discern their future requirements and develop new tests accordingly.'

The Train Dispatch Multi-Tasking Test (TDMT) is a new online test that assesses a candidate's ability to multi-task and ensure trains depart safely. It measures a candidate's capability to concentrate on a dispatch sequence and to prioritise safety

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critical tasks above all else whilst also being required to multi-task where possible.

Jo Lawrence concluded by saying: 'The use of technology on the railway is advancing at pace. This includes how we maximise digital recruitment and psychological assessment. Our Aim at OPC Assessment is to assist our rail clients to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their recruitment processes, and also to improve the experience of applicants who want to join our rail industry. OPC Assessment has a suite of nearly 90+ assessment tools including ability tests, situational judgement tests and personality questionnaires. We are working at speed, to embrace the technological revolution too, by updating our testing platform which will be ready for release some time this year, and by updating our paper and pencil test materials to online versions.'

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