

Internet Benefits of Profiling

Profiling has traditionally been carried out face-to-face in a controlled environment under the watchful eye of an administrator. However, the Internet has proved to be a remarkably effective and efficient channel for profiling individuals, particularly using the PPA.

The PPA is not a timed test (in the way that TSTs are) nor is it a pass or fail test. These two factors mean that the environment in which the PPA is completed is not so crucial as it is with a normed test. However, the issue of "time" has been addressed by providing an opportunity for PPA administrators to check that the assessment has been completed within a reasonable time.

Using the Internet as a channel for delivery is NOT a huge challenge. The PPA is invariably used as just one part of a process such as an interview or appraisal i.e. it can be verified face-to-face. The PPA was never designed to replace an interview; it is a tool to discover as much information as possible and to understand the right questions to ask.

There are two main benefits to using the Internet to administer these assessments - location and access. As long as you have access to a web browser, the test can be administered from anywhere. The other major plus to this is that you do not need to have the Thomas software installed on your computer to administer it. This freedom of access is vital if you are a mobile executive. It is also crucial for companies with different sites across the country. The HR department could be in London with the staff they want to profile in Manchester. An online assessment means the HR department can administer the test remotely, saving time and expense in travel and/or communication costs.

Recent research suggests that in the USA last year over 80 per cent of all graduate recruitment was carried out online with graduate applications actually being processed online. It is clear from this that applicants are beginning to expect recruitment to take place over the Internet. An increasing proportion of the population today are accustomed to using a computer so it is a natural extension for them to use a computer when searching for a job. Companies are responding to this demand from their applicants by moving the recruitment process online. This includes applications as well as assessments.

Critics have suggested that the results derived from an online test will vary from those carried out in a controlled environment. However, all the evidence so far suggests that it makes little difference to the result whether the test is carried out on-screen or on paper.

The intuitive nature of the PPA means that it is well suited to being completed over the Internet. Candidates could be completing the assessment from home, dialing up and paying on a minute basis. The comparatively short time needed to complete a PPA minimizes their online time.

Not only does online testing appeal to companies for its ease of access and location, it also opens up the information derived from the assessments to more people within the company. If an administrator is testing via the desktop program then only the people with access to that desktop can have access to the assessment results. An assessment administered through a web browser means

Thomas International USA Inc.

Michigan
28175 Haggerty Road
Novi, Michigan 48377 USA
Tel: 1-888-597-6455 Fax: 248-994-8090

Florida
8201 Peters Road, Suite 1000
Plantation, Florida 33324 USA
Tel: 954-916-2757 Fax: 954-916-2758

Toll Free: 1-888-597-6455
Website: www.thomasus.com
Email: info@thomasus.com

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many more people can share the information. In effect it can become a central database. This does raise the challenge of data protection so the Thomas website provides a level of control over such access.

The Internet is being used by more and more people in their daily lives. Students are using it for research purposes. Lawyers search the Internet for precedents and the government in publicizing their white papers online before they are issued in paper form. Although generally underused as a tool for buying online, the Internet really comes into its own when delivering assessments such as the PPA. They are quick, easy to administer and readily verifiable. The physical product to be delivered is a printed report, perfectly designed for dispatch by the web. No warehousing, no picking, no packing, no postage.

By: Tony Kaye, Director, Thomas International

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Michigan

28175 Haggerty Road
Novi, Michigan 48377 USA
Tel: 1-888-597-6455 Fax: 248-994-8090

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Tel: 954-916-2757 Fax: 954-916-2758

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