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Mobile assessment: Put your candidates in control

Candidate expectations are driving mobile assessment and pre-application testing, says David Barrett.

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Mobile assessment:
To recruit the best, companies need a mobile hiring strategy.

Today's talented candidates are increasingly using their mobile devices not only to search for jobs online but also to submit applications. It's no secret that if you want to recruit the best people, you need a mobile hiring strategy.

It's not just because nearly everyone has a smartphone or a tablet. Glassdoor claims that 44% of job seekers are now likely to apply for jobs via their mobile device. There are three main reasons for this:

- **Convenience:** Increasingly, we all reach for our mobile devices when we want to go online (and looking for a new job is no exception).

- **Speed:** According to Glassdoor, 59% of job seekers think they stand a better chance of being considered for a role if they apply as soon as it's posted. In other words, if you don't accept applications via mobile devices, you could lose good candidates to competitors who do.

- **Privacy:** Many candidates simply prefer to use their phone or tablet than their company desktop or laptop to search and apply for another job.

Of course, there's more to a mobile hiring strategy than simply receiving applications. Smartphones and tablets have created a new opportunity for recruiters to engage and communicate with candidates. Realistic job previews and psychometric assessments - which have long been used by employers to give potential applicants a taste of the role and the organisation, and to sift out unsuitable candidates - can now be offered on mobile devices. This not only speeds up the selection process, it puts the candidate in control of when and where they participate. In other words, they can interact with you at a time and place that suits them.

Testing via different devices
Technological developments have underpinned mobile assessment. For example, high quality smartphones and tablets now operate on Wi-Fi or 4G connections. Also, HTML5 (the web-page language standard) has replaced Adobe Flash, which was incompatible with Apple iPods and iPhones. This makes it easier for test providers to create mobile assessments that will work well on different devices.

But do the tests themselves need to change? At *cut-e*, we've found that realistic job previews, situational judgement questionnaires, personality questionnaires and values questionnaires can all be optimised for mobile environments. The layout and format of these tests means that they will resize appropriately, in portrait or landscape mode, so you can ensure that any text, image or video elements will display perfectly on mobile devices.

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One area where caution should be applied is timed aptitude testing. Logical and numerical reasoning tests can easily be designed for mobile devices but information-heavy tests, such as complex verbal reasoning may be unsuitable for smartphones because there may be too much detail to display. These tests could, however, be delivered on tablets. Tablets are still portable but, with a bigger screen, they offer a user experience that's similar to a desktop.

Some test providers are now developing sophisticated assessments which can 'sense' the screen size of the device being used. If the device is unsuitable, the tests can display a warning message saying 'your screen size is not optimal, we recommend you complete this assessment on a larger screen'.

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Specifying which devices candidates can use for each test is important because the assessment experience has to be fair for everyone, regardless of whether they're using an old iPhone or the latest android. The goal with testing is always to gain accurate predictive analytics on a candidate's behaviour or cognitive ability so you can match them to a job objectively. In 90% of applications, mobile assessments will work equally well on smartphones and tablets but you have to be aware of any potential adverse impact. Recruiters (and test providers) have a duty of care to ensure that a candidate's chances of progressing through the selection process are not hampered because they took a test on the wrong device.

If you plan to use timed aptitude tests or timed simulations via mobile devices, ask your test provider: is the layout of the test configured to work properly on any device? And will the test warn candidates if their screen size is inappropriate? A good provider should be able to reassure you that their tests are optimised for all uses - and that the quality or responsiveness of the device used by the candidate will have no bearing on their final test result.

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Another factor to consider in mobile assessment is the duration of the test. Put simply, people don't like completing long tasks on a phone or tablet. Mobile assessments therefore tend to be shorter, to allow candidates to undertake the process quickly. It can be a challenge for test providers to design a quick, aesthetic and engaging user experience for a mobile device, that doesn't compromise basic testing principles. Shorter tests have the advantage of 'reduced drop-out' - candidates are more likely to complete them - but the test still has to be psychometrically valid. Also, the content has to feel relevant and appropriate to the user. Test providers call this 'face validity', which simply means that the test should 'look like' it measures what it's supposed to measure.

Consistency
Every employer needs to ensure that every candidate has an equal likelihood of success, regardless of whether they take an assessment on a phone, tablet, desktop or laptop. There has to be a level playing field. That way, your candidates are in control of the process and they can take your assessments whichever way they prefer.

Test providers are striving to deliver this capability. This not only involves redesigning existing tests for a mobile environment and developing entirely new assessments specifically for mobile devices, it also means trialling tests across many different devices to check candidate performance and completion times. So even though a test may display slightly differently on a mobile device, than it does on a desktop or laptop, the outcome for the candidate will be exactly the same. The objective is to ensure that the results are entirely equitable, no matter how the candidate took the test.

If your selection process already includes online assessments, which candidates complete via desktops and laptops, then it won't be a major leap to introduce mobile assessment too. It just requires some groundwork and intelligent thinking around how to optimise the testing experience for a mobile environment.

Remember, mobile devices can also speed up the process of video interviewing. As a result, recruiters can now start to incorporate assessments and video interviews much earlier in the selection process. Minimal effort is required from the candidate and you'll gain a rich source of data, which you can use to make a quick and informed decision about whether or not to progress that person through the application process. And, at the same time, your candidates will receive a more engaging user experience.

Self assessment

As mentioned earlier, the other key aspect of your hiring strategy that can benefit from a mobile application is allowing prospective applicants to assess themselves before they apply, so they can match their own skills and abilities to your available roles.

Realistic job previews, situational judgement and gamification tools enable potential applicants to self-assess their suitability for a job. These tools also allow you to showcase your employer brand and the culture and values of the business. If the individual feels unsuited to the role or your organisation, they won't apply. That saves them - and you - time and effort. The great advantage of this is that it optimises the quality of the candidates who do apply. They make a conscious choice to proceed with their application, because they think they are well-matched to your requirements and your culture. As a result, your applicant pool is more likely to be populated with better-suited candidates.

Again, the benefits of offering self-assessment tools on mobile devices are that candidates can complete them quicker and at their own convenience.

Global impact

Mobile assessment is a global phenomenon but, interestingly, the West is not necessarily leading the way. In Asia/Pacific, access to the Internet is predominantly achieved through mobile devices. Desktops are only available for those in white-collar business roles. Companies in Asia/Pacific are therefore embracing the possibilities of mobile assessment faster than those in Europe or North America. For example, we're working in Australasia with Sunglass Hut, part of Luxottica Group, the world's largest eyewear company, and in the Middle East with airline Fly Dubai and du, the

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Dubai-based telecoms service provider. These businesses have incorporated mobile assessment as an integral part of their hiring strategy. European firms are also seeing the benefits. For example, we've been working with Siemens in Germany and McDonalds in Scandinavia on innovative mobile assessment projects that are helping these companies not only to recruit the right candidates but also to match those people to the right roles.

The ubiquity of smartphones and tablets presents a new opportunity to reach and assess your candidates. But, ultimately, the expectations of job seekers will drive mobile assessment. Simply put, your candidates will expect you to provide it. Mobile assessment and pre-application testing will then become a necessity for every employer that wants to recruit top talent.

About the author David Barrett

David Barrett is *cut-e* group Chief Operating Officer and has founded the North American, UK & Ireland, MENA, ASEAN and Australian *cut-e* organisations. He is a business focused occupational psychologist and leading speaker in all areas of online assessment, recruitment, talent and human resources technology. Through his work with *cut-e* David has advised some of the world's most respected companies, such as Dell, MasterCard, Etihad, flydubai, Telefonica, easyJet, Dubai Duty Free, PwC, Mubadala, JnJ, Rolls Royce and many others on how they attract, assess, hire and develop top talent at all organisational levels. David regularly presents at some of the world's largest talent and human resources conferences and is on the board of a number of organisations in the talent area.

cut-e is world leader in the design and implementation of innovative online tests and questionnaires for recruitment, selection and development. *cut-e* helps companies identify people with the right capabilities and cultural fit to deliver optimal business results. *cut-e* carries out over 4 million assessments per year in over 70 countries and 40 languages.