BUSINESS NEWS LESSONS

How would you describe yourself ... honestly?

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1 Warmer

a. **Discuss these questions.**

> *Personality* is the part of a person that makes them behave in a particular way in social situations, for example, in a friendly or unfriendly way or in a confident or shy way. You use the word *character* when you are talking about whether someone is good or bad, or honest or dishonest

1. What different words can be used to describe people's personalities? Add to the words below:

agreeable

dominant

emotional

extroverted   honest   humble

introverted   intuitive

influential   open   steady

_____   _____   _____   _____   _____

2. Have you ever done a personality test? Can you remember what words were used to describe you?

3. Do you think these tests accurately describe an individual's personality?

4. Is it a good idea to ask someone to do a personality test before hiring them? Why (not)?

2 Key words

a. **Choose the correct word for each definition.**
    Check your answers and your understanding of how the words are used by using the same word to complete the example sentence immediately after each definition. You may have to change the form of the word.
    Then, read the complete article to see how each of the key words is used in context.

> | assessment | disclaimer | drive | embellish | empathetic | guarantee |
> | hard-wired | hypothetical | integrity | profiling | reveal | screening |

1. based on situations or events that seem possible rather than on actual ones

_____

Don't worry, this is just a _____ question. This hasn't really happened.

Intermediate

2. behaviour that is caused by your genes and the way that your brain is made, rather than learnt from experience _____

He is _____ for this kind of design work. He has been building models since he was just a kid.

3. make someone determined to do something _____

She has always been ambitious; I have always wondered what _____ her to work so hard.

4. the process of making a judgement or forming an opinion after considering something or someone carefully _____

Our human resources team include a lot of different evidence in their _____, not just the job interview.

5. a written statement in which a company or person says that they do not take responsibility for something bad _____

After someone got hurt using their product incorrectly, the company realised they had to issue a _____ somewhere on the packaging.

6. the process of collecting and examining information about someone or something to get an accurate idea of what they are like _____

Customer _____ can be a handy tool for marketing and understanding your existing customers.

7. a promise that something will happen _____

If you follow my advice, you should get on OK, but there's no _____.

8. the quality of always behaving according to the moral principles that you believe in so that people respect and trust you _____

He has always acted with _____, even in extremely difficult circumstances.

Intermediate

9. checks that an employer makes to be sure that someone they want to employ is suitable for a

    particular job _____

    Thank you for your interest in working with us. The _____ process usually

    takes two to three weeks.

10. make something more interesting by adding details, especially ones that are not entirely true

    _____

    Sarah's version of what happened is always more interesting because she always

    _____ the facts a little.

11. show something unknown or hidden _____

    The report _____ that almost 60% of staff felt that they did not enjoy a good

    work–life balance.

12. able to understand how someone feels because you can imagine what it is like to be them

    _____

    He is very _____, which is why he chose to become a psychologist.

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Psychological tests can help firms hire better – but accuracy is not guaranteed

EMPLOYERS ARE USING PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS TO RESOLVE DISPUTES AND DIVERSIFY THEIR WORKFORCE

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1 It was the closest I've come to seeing a therapist. After several hours of personality and aptitude tests for a hypothetical job at AlixPartners, it was time to talk to Jeremy Borys, a partner at the consultancy and an expert in organisational psychology. He wanted to discuss my "hard-wired personality structure".

2 For 40 years, Alix has been collecting data on the core psychological needs of potential recruits – from its receptionists to its chief executive. The company's findings show that by discovering what innately drives an individual, they can hire for the long term, weed out people who would not be a cultural fit and build teams that work more effectively.

3 Many creators of personality assessment tools issue disclaimers that they should not be used to predict job performance. Executive headhunters say people lie, responses can change depending on the day and practice tests mean you can beat the system. Alix believes its assessment is a game-changer for the firm – it uses results to resolve problems within teams and, like other companies, believes testing helps diversify its workforce as it is not recruiting from certain schools or people with specific degrees. But even so, the consultancy admits the tests alone are not enough to hire someone.

4 So why are they so prevalent?

5 "If you make a good hire, it is a powerful and advantageous thing to do," said James Reed, chair and chief executive of the recruitment company that carries the family name.

6 Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, an organisational psychologist and expert in personality profiling, said that while there was huge variability in the quality of tests, a small proportion of them were very accurate. "Well-designed tests predict performance," he stressed.

7 Only 10–15 per cent of companies on the Fortune 500, FTSE 100 and S&P 500 indices did not use some kind of pre-employment testing, according to Chamorro-Premuzic. Even though these corporations only tested a small percentage of their total workforce – perhaps at entry level or for an executive committee – companies from PepsiCo and Boeing to Shell, Maersk and Spotify all used them, he added.

8 Yet there is no guarantee such hiring tools work. "That's why we're still here," Reed said. "The most important thing for hirers is integrity. Is this individual honest and trustworthy? And none of these products will do that." Reed does a lot of screening work for clients – from evaluating CVs to credit and criminal checks and getting references. "Around 40 per cent of them have an error, shall we say," he said, alluding to the fact that people embellished their work histories and qualifications.

9 As a truthful test-taker, the Alix assessments revealed some traits I knew I had – I am task-orientated, value-driven and work best when I have clear, well-defined objectives, and take on work with meaning. At the same time I can take on too much, struggle to delegate, become overinvested in achieving goals, and can be stubborn and overly critical. My husband would likely agree.

10 My results showed that even as my critical-thinking skills were superior, my ability to process masses of data quickly could have been better. I couldn't help but think that had my toddler not woken up repeatedly the prior night my performance might have been stronger. Had I trawled the internet for practice tests, I could have improved my scores.

Intermediate

11 Chamorro-Premuzic said doing practice tests didn't necessarily mean you were gaming the system. You are showing yourself in the best light. He said prospective employees cheated less than people thought, for fear of being caught. And even if some did lie, what's the problem? "If you can tell employers what they want to hear…is that wrong? Sounds unethical, but this is the real world. You might actually be good at your job even if you lie your entire life."

12 Putting cynical thoughts aside, testing provides an extra level of assurance at a time when hiring badly is costly – in terms of time and money – amid a shortage of skilled workers.

13 It helps companies assess an individual's skills and potential for growth, as well as how well they would respond in a particular scenario. Self-reported personality quizzes aim to identify specific traits, such as how reliable or ambitious you are. Psychological tests try to measure emotional intelligence, such as how empathetic and self-aware you might be.

14 When individuals feel fulfilled psychologically, they are more productive in the workplace as well as healthier and happier. If testing technology improves and more accuracy could be guaranteed, the information it provided would be invaluable for all team leaders — they would be able to manage people better, individuals would be assigned work that was more suited to them, groups could function better and conflict could be dissipated swiftly.

15 Until that happens, companies might be wise to take note of those disclaimers.

Intermediate

3 **Understanding the article**

a. **Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Fix any that are false.**

1. AlixPartners, a consultancy, has been researching what potential recruits need psychologically.

2. Many personality test developers say these tests can all be used to predict job performance.

3. Personality test results can change a lot from one day to the next.

4. You cannot practise for a personality test.

5. A small percentage of Fortune 500 companies use testing when hiring.

6. Around four out of ten people embellish their CVs.

7. The author thought that her results could have been more accurate.

4 **Business language – collocations**

a. **Match the verbs and nouns below to form collocations from the article.**

> assess   assign   collect   embellish   issue   measure   process   resolve

1. _____ disputes/problems

2. _____ / _____ data

3. _____ a disclaimer

4. _____ your qualifications

5. _____ / _____ an individual's skills and potential for growth/emotional intelligence

6. _____ work

b. **Complete the sentences with collocations from task A.**

1. He (exaggerated) _____ his _____ and description of his previous work experience.

2. A _____ was (released) _____ to say that the company did not support the opinions posted on the CEO's social media.

3. It is not easy to (evaluate) _____ emotional intelligence since people do not always do what they say they would in an imaginary situation.

Intermediate

4. After doing very well on her first project, she was _____ more _____.

5. We try to work together with the human resources team to _____ any serious staff _____.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Did anything in the article surprise you? Why?

2. When should a company use a personality assessment tool?

3. How should they decide which personality assessment tool to use?

4. Would you prepare for a test if you had to take one? How?

6 Wider business theme – personality assessments and applying for a job

a. Imagine you are applying for your dream job. You have attended a successful interview. Now, you have been asked to take a personality assessment.

b. You are going to prepare for the test.

1. First, choose one of the tests described on the next page.

2. Make a list of the personality characteristics that you think they are looking for. Use the terms used in the test that you chose.

3. Then, go online and look at the test questions. Try to answer the test to give you the characteristics you defined in b.

4. Analyse your results. How could you get closer to B?

Extension

Based on your experience, write a short 'how to' piece about preparing for a personality assessment.

Intermediate

Choose i, ii, OR iii.

i. HEXACO personality inventory	ii. DISC	iii. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
Measures six major personality dimensions, namely: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience	Measures four major dimensions: dominance, influence, conscientiousness, steadiness	Measures: extroversion-introversion, sensing preference-intuitive preference for processing information, decision-making by thinking or feeling, judging-perceiving way of doing things
Results shown on scale	Description of your natural and adapted style	Identify your personality type (there are 16 4-letter MBTI types) and verification by expert
Free online test available in 60-item and 100-item version	Free 12-question test-question test (10 min)	Free for basic results
Desired results:	Desired results:	Desired results:
Actual results:	Actual results:	Actual results:

Intermediate