

OPRA in the Media

Bosses have ways of making you talk: Sunday Star Times, Ruth Laugesen, 12-01-2003

Paul Englert, director of organisational psychology firm OPRA, says firms need to carefully research a job's requirements and the relevant personality attributes before administering a personality test. Unless they are able to show the personality traits are linked to the job performance, they are laying themselves open to potential court action. He says some employers and recruiters go overboard in reading test results. "People often start to feel they are psychologists and they're not. They start making incredible inferences from the tests," he says. The reliance some employers can place on the tests is particularly unwise given their track record. Academic studies of how closely personality tests measure actual traits show they account for only 9% of the variance in people's personality (sic. misquoted should have been 'job performance'). That means they give only 9% of the picture of what someone is like, while employers and recruiters typically read them as a complete snapshot. "That's leaving an unknown 91% of what's related to whether someone's going to perform on that job" says Englert. Surely a test that gives only 9% of the picture is close to useless? Englert says personality testing is only a top-up to other forms of assessment. Much more information will be gained if a personality test is combined with another type of psychometric test, called a cognitive test. Add to that the interview, CV and reference checks and you have a more complete picture.