

Assessment – Driving the Diversity Agenda



Rab MacIver
Research and
Development Director



Saville Assessment
WillisTowersWatson | I I I I I

For further information visit
www.savilleassessment.com

Thinking Beyond Attraction

As a result of intelligent marketing and attraction campaigns, most organisations are happy with the diversity split of their initial applicant pool. However, they are less happy if they see the level of diversity erode as candidates move through the pipeline and the various stages of assessment.

Is there more we could do to maintain the applicant mix that we are seeing at application through to offer whilst still ensuring the result is recruiting colleagues who possess superior workplace performance and potential?

Maintaining Diversity – A Question of Balance

General research literature shows consistent, if generally small, differences between men and women at the group level on certain workplace abilities and behavioural measures of personality and strengths. Small differences between groups of men and women, but differences nonetheless.

So how do we make an informed choice about which assessments to use and how to use them to ensure the result is a diverse workforce?

The scientific evidence is compelling. Well-designed aptitude tests are the single best predictor of performance at work. So, to make a good start, we can focus on what we can do to make aptitude testing fairer.

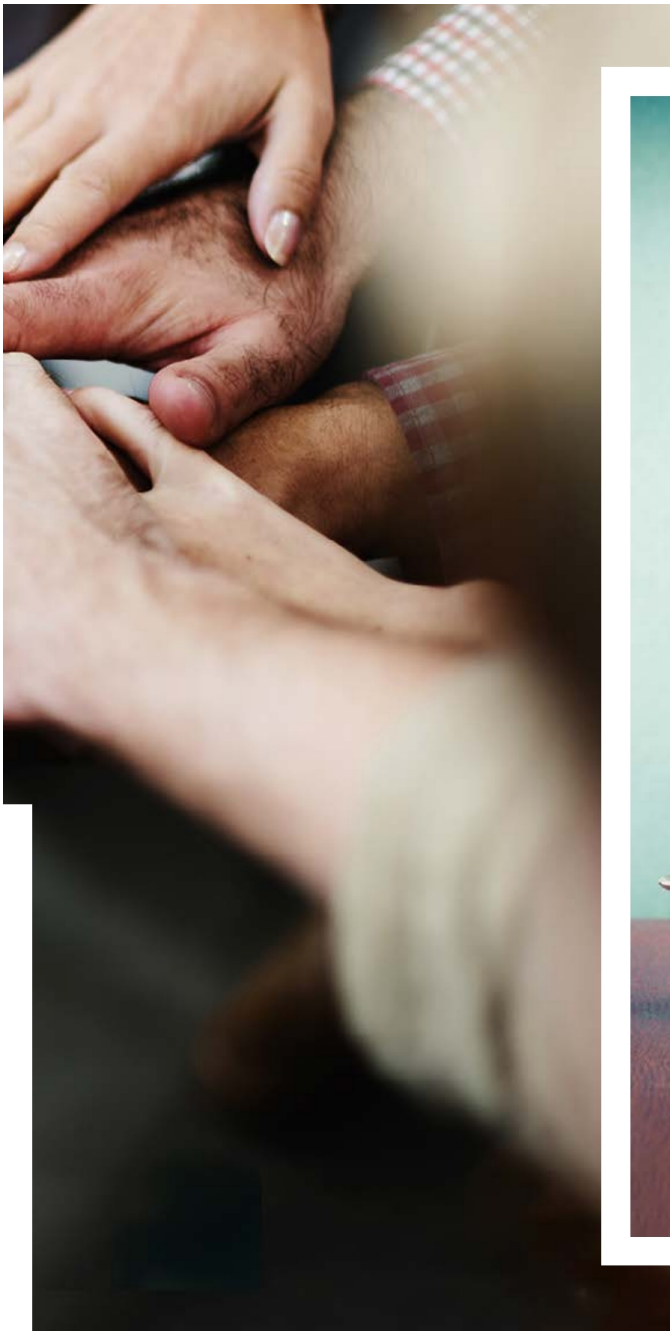
Aptitude - A Perfect Gender Balance?

Whilst the principles being discussed in this article apply to all group differences, we can bring this discussion to life by focussing on gender. Combining different measures of ability into one overall measure can reduce the risk of showing performance differences between men and women at the group level. Whilst our tests looking at one specific area of aptitude (e.g. verbal reasoning) have been designed to minimise group differences, our Swift series of online aptitude assessments pioneer the balance approach and further enhance our work performance.

Swift Executive Aptitude combines three aptitude areas (verbal, numerical, and abstract reasoning) in one online test. The first obvious advantage of this is that it makes for a short, varied assessment which gives an overall read on a candidate's ability in just 18 minutes. So far so good. But what becomes more interesting is when you look at gender differences for the three areas measured in the test on a sample of males (N=6,023) and females (N=3,630).

The verbal sub-test shows no difference between genders but numerical shows a slight advantage towards men. However, this is balanced by the abstract test which gives a slight advantage to women. This means that the total score on Swift Executive Aptitude gives no meaningful gender difference at all.

It is this total score which is used for decision making. This total score is a highly valid predictor of workplace performance and gives greater validity than looking at the individual sub-tests alone. In Swift Executive Aptitude, we have created a varied (and valid) aptitude assessment which balances scores to increase gender equality in assessment.



Better Diversity Through Balanced Behavioural Assessment

As with aptitude testing, there are group level differences in personality and on certain behavioural strengths scales. Gender differences can be reduced if we select varied items which show opposing patterns of gender differences.

Whilst highly repetitive personality scales, which effectively measure a single concept repeatedly, don't have the luxury of selecting varied items, the Saville Wave facet approach allows a more forensic analysis of differences between men and women. This approach means gender differences are reduced as the areas where the small differences which exist are balanced through the assessment. As ever, it is important that this balancing maintains or increases the predictive power of the assessment.

Combining Behaviour and Ability for Fairness

In conclusion, we'd argue that innovations in valid online assessments can ensure you keep your diverse candidate pool beyond initial attraction whilst maintaining or improving the calibre of successful candidates.

At Saville Assessment, we draw on our existing banks of big data to create optimal combinations of behavioural and aptitude assessment measures. We create weighted algorithms which are designed to best predict performance, while also balancing fairness of the assessment process. We model cut-off scores and actively monitor potential adverse impact to ensure similar proportions of candidates are chosen in terms of ethnicity, gender and age.

Our focus on continually monitoring group differences leads to the creation of assessments which effectively balance psychometric rigour (e.g. reliability, validity) with the management of diversity.