Oral Interview Questions

LAST YEAR, IPMA-HR CONDUCTED A NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY and found that the majority of its customers were interested in oral interview questions for public safety positions. To address this need, we plan to create a bank of oral interview questions along with a scoring guide. IPMA-HR would like to invite your agency to be part of the question development process. Participating agencies will receive a discount off one order of IPMA-HR test products. Additionally, participating agencies that place an order for the interview questions will receive a free copy of the scoring guide. The guide will be based on research as well as real world examples of scoring criteria.

The discount received depends on the agency’s level of participation in the project. Participating agencies will receive a discount on their next test order upon receipt of their oral interview questions. Discounts are structured on a sliding scale. Agencies providing 1 to 25 questions will receive a $100 voucher; those with 26 to 50 questions will receive a $200 voucher; and those with 50 or more questions will receive a $300 voucher.

Participation would include:
- Providing oral interview questions for any or all public safety ranks that your agency used in the past to be included in the oral interview question bank.
- Providing examples of how your agency currently scores oral interview questions that could be incorporated into the guide for scoring oral interview questions.

If you are interested in participating in this project please send an email to JAS@ipma-hr.org with any questions you have and your contact information. The development team will then contact you with additional details.

New Billing Model

IPMA-HR’S ASSESSMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT WILL IMPLEMENT A NEW BILLING MODEL as of January, 1 2007. Starting on this date, IPMA-HR test customers will be invoiced 60 days after their tests have shipped. Any unused tests for which they are seeking credit must be returned by that date, i.e. if the tests ship April 1, then any unused booklets must be returned by June 1. The invoice for that test will then print on June 1, and will reflect all credits that have been applied. At this point, no additional credits will be provided.

As a result of the new billing model, the Assessment Services Department will discontinue six-month rental agreements. Those agencies who took advantage of the six-month rental agreement are welcome to order sufficient quantities to administer over that same period of time. However, credits will not be granted for tests returned more than 60 days from the shipment date.
Why do IPMA-HR promotional test reading lists contain a large amount of reading materials?

Typically, our reading lists contain approximately 5 to 6 books. Although IPMA-HR aims to minimize this number, decreasing the number of books would most likely impact the validity of the test. That is, it is difficult to find books that assess all of the KSAPs that the job analysis has shown to be crucial for success on the job. To some extent, the smaller the range of books, the less the test will be able to predict success on the job.

We are, however, cognizant of the fact that test books are expensive for candidates and are working to resolve this issue. For example, we are working with our publishers to create customized text books that only contain relevant excerpts from the books on our reading lists. More information on this issue will be available in the coming months.

What do I do if a candidate has special needs and requires my agency to make test accommodations?

Since IPMA-HR does not have standard procedures to which your agency must adhere, check out the ADA website at http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahtm1.htm. Federal and state laws require that the candidate show proof of disability (e.g., a doctor’s note stating the disability). If possible, you may want to consider testing this candidate separately from the other candidates so as to avoid disruption.

Since each testing situation is at least somewhat unique, specific accommodations usually vary by the situation. Currently, IPMA-HR is preparing a handout on testing accommodations. This handout will contain resource information, advice from our consultants and current customers, as well as real world examples regarding how to handle candidates with special needs. In the meantime, if you have questions on how to handle specific situations, please contact the Assessment Services Manager.

I have several candidates within my applicant pool whose first language is not English. Does IPMA-HR provide test translation services?

IPMA-HR’s Assessment Services Department does provide translation services for most test products. This service is available by special request only and is subject to the availability of translators and foreign language proof readers. In the past, IPMA-HR has only provided translation services if translation is required by law. If your agency would like to request a translated test, please understand that IPMA-HR cannot endorse your decision unless the translation is required by law. For this reason, you may want to consult with your agency’s legal department to discuss the necessity of creating a translated test. If you decide to special order a translated test, IPMA-HR will provide you with a cost estimate based on bids from at least three companies. If you have further questions, please contact the Assessment Services Manager.

Recently, I administered one of IPMA-HR’s entry-level tests. I have a candidate who is challenging its validity. I know IPMA-HR does not provide an item challenge service for its entry-level tests. What should I do?

Item challenges of our entry-level tests are extremely rare. However, if you find yourself in this situation, contact the Assessment Services Manager who will research and confirm the accuracy of the disputed question(s) and answer(s).

If the candidate pursues the complaint further, you may tell the candidate that all test questions are reviewed for accuracy and fairness by subject matter experts, that the test has been validated, and that it is supported by an extensive technical report. Please do not, however, show the candidate the technical report. Doing so would represent a violation of your STSA.

If the candidate is still not satisfied, the only way for the candidate to actually see the test would be for the candidate to successfully convince a judge that he/she has just cause for wanting to review the test. To date, no candidate has ever been successful. Please note that in cases of formal charges of discrimination by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Office of Revenue Sharing, the Department of Justice, etc., IPMA-HR tests and scoring keys may be released under a protective court order. IPMA-HR MUST be contacted prior to the release of these materials as required by our test security agreement.

Why does IPMA-HR now offer both Agency and Candidate Reading Lists?

Recently, IPMA-HR created two different types of reading lists: one for use by the agency and one for use by candidates. In the past, we only distributed reading lists that were intended for use by the agency. As such, we included certain information on the reading lists to which candidates should NOT be privy, including our contact information. Some agencies distributed these lists to their candidates and, in turn, the candidates contacted us with both general inquiries about their upcoming test administrations and with requests for out-of-print texts. Please note that test administrators are responsible for contacting us with candidate questions as well as responsible for obtaining out-of-print readings, which we provide free-of-charge. The test administrator may then disseminate this information to candidates directly. Per the Terms and Conditions stated in our STSA form, we only provide test-related information to STSA signers. To resolve this issue and to facilitate our customers’ test administration processes, we have created two different types of reading lists. The Agency Reading List is for review purposes by authorized personnel only, while the Candidate Reading List may be disseminated directly to candidates. At no time, should candidates be encouraged to contact IPMA-HR directly.
TESTING in the News  
BY TINA CHIAPPETTA

Rank Order Based on Cognitive Test Violates Title VII

THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT for the District of Massachusetts ruled on August 8, 2006 that the Human Resources Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (HRD) and the City of Lynn’s, use of a cognitive test to rank order applicants for the position of firefighter has a disparate and adverse impact on black and Hispanic candidates. Jacob Bradley, Noah Bradley, Keith Ridley and Jared Thomas v. City of Lynn, et al., Civil Action No. 05-10213-PBS.

Plaintiffs are a class of black and Hispanic firefighters who took the civil service examination for the position of firefighter in 2002 and 2004. They allege that the tests have an adverse impact on their employment opportunities, that the selection process is not job related and consistent with business necessity, and finally that there are alternative selection procedures with less discriminatory effect that would serve the employer’s interest.

The HRD develops and administers the examinations for entry-level firefighters in Massachusetts. A jurisdiction that wants to hire a firefighter submits a request to the HRD which then certifies from the eligible list sufficient people for consideration. At issue here is the use of a cognitive abilities examination that was developed by Landy, Jacobs and Associates, Inc. and validated in 1992.

The results of that test are used to rank order candidates by test score. Despite a “passing” score set arbitrarily at 70, in fact, candidates must score in 90’s to be considered for hire. Although with a cut-off score of 70 there is no adverse impact, at the 90s level, there is a statistically significant impact.

The court found that the use of the cognitive ability test was never properly validated for its current use. First, Landy-Jacobs never validated the cognitive abilities test as a stand-alone test for the rank ordering of candidates. Instead the report validated rank-ordering of candidates only when used in conjunction with a physical abilities test. In that case, the cognitive abilities test would be weighted 40% and the physical abilities test 60%. The court also noted that the validation was done in 1992 and relied upon a 1986 study done in Columbus, Ohio, nearly two decades before the tests at issue here. And, according to industry standards was out of date.

Moreover, the HRD used the 1992 test to develop the 2002 and 2004 tests. The HRD did not employ any industrial psychologists at the time nor did they hire outside consultants. While the 2002/2004 tests are similar to the 1992 one, the HRD did not do analysis to determine, for instance, if the reading level of the new examinations exceeded the reading level of the job. Nor did they determine if the new questions they created were located in the constructs intended to be tested.

The court found that the plaintiffs demonstrated through statistical evidence that the examination had a disparate impact on the scores of minority candidates and that this leads to a disparate impact on the hiring of minorities. For instance Jacob Bradley, a named plaintiff scored a 94 on the test but three white candidates scored 95 and all three were hired.

The court also found that the HRD’s procedure was not job related and consistent with business necessity. The court said that although cognitive tests in part predict performance on the job, they do not predict how fast a firefighter can climb stairs with equipment or raise a ladder. “Teamwork and physical prowess are even more highly correlated with job performance,” said the court.

Even if the test were properly validated as the sole basis for rank ordering, the HRD would still lose because plaintiffs have offered evidence of alternative selection devices with less discriminatory effect. For instance, the HRD could go back to using a combination written/physical test to rank candidates. Alternatively, the HRD could have banded the scores of the written test, reducing the disparate impact of the tests.

The quarterly report of IPMA-HR’s Assessment Services Department
About IPMA-HR

SINCE 1953, IPMA-HR HAS BEEN PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY, RELIABLE TEST PRODUCTS AND SERVICES to the public sector. IPMA-HR provides more than 200,000 tests annually to public jurisdictions including the United States, Canada and the European Union. Developed by experienced psychometricians, IPMA-HR tests have been validated and are backed by more than 50 years of experience. Let us assist you as you make the difficult hiring and promotional decisions specific to your field. Our customers agree that we always provide excellent customer service, from the ordering process until long after test administration. IPMA-HR is your trusted source for test products and services.

Visit us online at testing.ipma-hr.org

- Police Service Tests
- Fire Service Tests
- Corrections Tests
- Public Safety Telecommunicator Tests
- Administrative Tests
  - Individual and Combined Customer Service Modules
  - Job Content Matching Tool
- Web-based Customer Service Test

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