

INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR INCREASED JOB PERFORMANCE PREDICTION

“While certain factors are easy to assess accurately, such as qualifications and sector experience, softer skills and other nuanced aspects of someone’s experience, personality and personal competencies can be better ascertained through a combination of competency-based interviews and behavioural assessments.” Says Jacob Rønne, Nigel Wright Group’s Nordic Client Manager.

A key project Jacob has been working on in 2019 is developing a bespoke assessment model that ensures Nigel Wright’s clients receive maximum value, accuracy and feedback from the competency-based approach.

The aim of a competency-based interview, says Jacob, is to gather as much evidence as possible about a candidate’s behavioural traits. Part of this is understanding someone’s personal preferences, habits and interests, as all these things provide strong indicators of different soft skills. These will not only determine whether someone will ‘fit’ into a culture but inform how you should work with a candidate to help them integrate into a team and organisation.

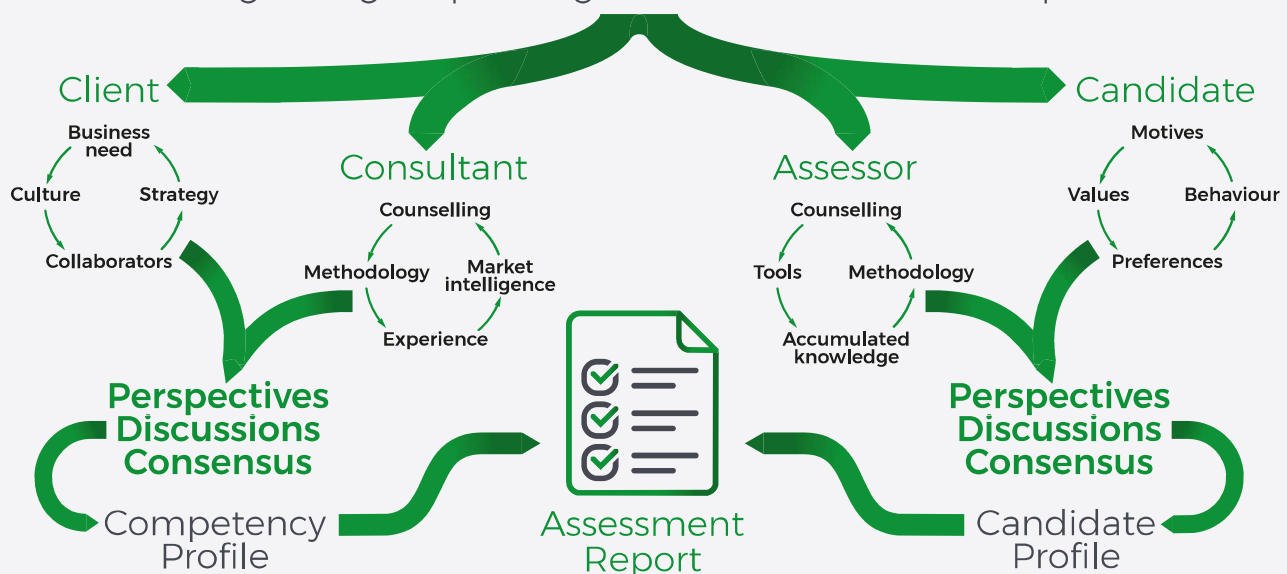
A recruiter’s role, whether they’re an internal HR specialist or external consultant, is to work closely with their client or hiring manager and advise which competencies to test.

They must also consider how best to do this throughout the recruitment process. Each company is different, though, says Jacob. Not only in the competencies they find attractive, but also in how they interpret what a certain behavioural competency is.

Competencies are tailored to fit the brief of the role and discipline, as well as a client’s culture and the team the ideal candidate will join. Each question is then intended to explore an individual’s effectiveness in these areas. Jacob explains how at Nigel Wright, much like at other recruitment firms, competency-based interviews form part of standard interview practice.

First, researchers will screen candidates, usually via telephone, to judge their suitability for a role and whether they’re ready to change jobs. This is an unstructured

Nigel Wright operating model assessment concept



conversation based around a few general questions which allow researchers to gain an overall impression of a candidate. Those deemed a 'good fit' are then invited for a competency-based interview with a consultant.

When it comes to competency-based interviews, Jacob says each consultant develops their own style over time which they use within the parameters of the competency-based interview. There are variations of questions too which probe things like leadership, driving change and transformation, managing conflict, people engagement and collaboration. Candidates must provide evidence-based answers that are considered against a pre-agreed set of criteria.

Some consultants prefer a very structured approach, while others will be flexible – having a list of key questions and mixing these with other discussion points related to the role and organisation. Candidates, however, are always convinced that they're giving you what you need, Jacob says. This is where technique becomes important, as consultants must probe the evidence provided so that answers are as thorough as possible to get a good insight into the candidate.

Following that interview, a select number of candidates are shortlisted and progressed to a client interview stage.

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Research indicates how structured competency interviews have the highest predictive ability for job performance and are the most effective way to determine whether a candidate is suitable for a role. Though, predictability of job success following a structured competency-based interview may still only be 13% accurate – around 10% higher than if an interview was informal and unstructured.

Like any skill, experience developed over several years of interviewing people using a competency-based approach will make you better at it, says Jacob. However, human factors such as a reliance on intuition, subjectivity, and unconscious bias will dilute the interview's effectiveness, despite how experienced the

consultant is or how rigorous the approach.

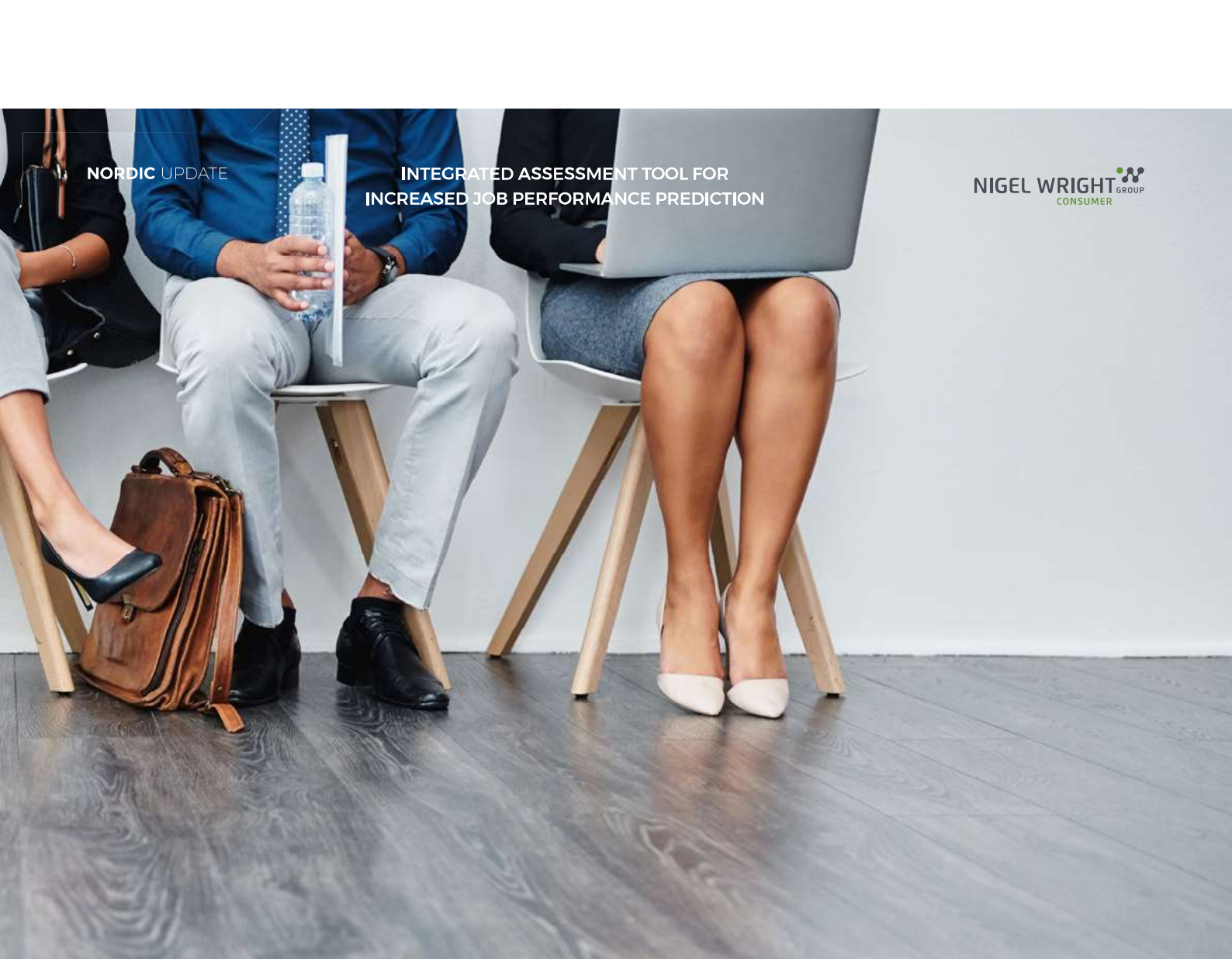
Jacob's assessment model aims to counteract these human influences by adding another layer to the interview process, offering even greater insight into a candidate's behaviours and soft skills.

The standardised procedure involves candidates undertaking an additional "highly structured" behavioural assessment conducted by Nigel Wright. At the briefing stage, consultants determine what key behaviours and soft skills are required by the client, says Jacob. These are then communicated to trained assessors within Nigel Wright's teams. Following the interview, assessors – qualified to use a variety of tools

including SHL, HOGAN, Predictive Index, DISC, and CUT-E – write-up a base-line report.

All reports have a standard format, but only include an analysis of the competencies important to the client. Each competency is summarised and rated according to the specific definition set in the client briefing. Critically, before sending the report to clients, consultants and assessors discuss the findings and moderate any previous analysis based on the results. Language is also tailored to the client. Clarity is important here, and any technical terminology is avoided.

Incorporating a scientific and numeric methodology, undertaken by highly trained assessors as well as making judgements based on several data



points rather than relying on intuition and gut-feel, helps consolidate and verify the findings from other methods. The solution, Jacob explains is independent of psychometric testing. It can easily incorporate any client-specific preferences too – either from the range of tools offered by Nigel Wright or those available through internal and external providers. In Jacob's words:

“While offering a robust data-driven analysis to uncover predictive evidence of how potential candidates will perform, our assessment tool provides clients with the accumulated knowledge of behavioural traits collected from several years of best practice in the assessment field. By adding this service, clients are assured of a complete and accurate

360-degree overview of candidates.”

The assessment tool is compulsory for all executive-level assignments and available as an additional service for mid-management and specialist roles. At the executive level, the tool is implemented before shortlisting stage, while for mid-management and specialist roles, clients can purchase the assessment to reinforce or challenge judgements, while highlighting useful areas to probe further during a final interview stage.

While several suppliers of behavioural assessment tools exist, Jacob anticipates a high demand for Nigel Wright's solution, given the challenges and costs associated with integrating 'third party' assessments into the recruitment process. Furthermore,

as few Nordic businesses have the capacity to conduct behavioural testing themselves, he says it makes sense for companies to work with a chosen talent partner that can deliver a truly end-to-end search, selection and assessment process.

He added: “Competency-based interviews should never be used in isolation. Rather, they represent a component of the application process, which must include behavioural assessments proven to work better at determining personality than human intuition. Several people – researchers, consultants and clients – should also be involved to ensure a diluting of individual biases.”