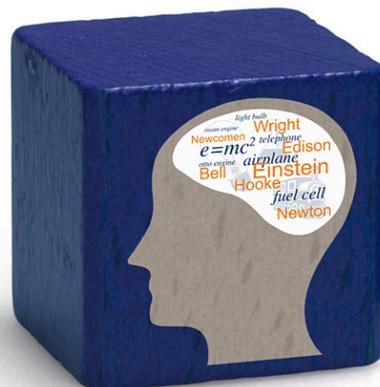




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## How to get the right job

*If you are looking seriously, you must do more than look serious,  
says Mark Lassleben.*



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If you haven't been to a job interview recently, you may still think it's about creating the right impression, dressing for success, a firm handshake and direct eye contact. These things are of course important, but the superficial impression you create will not get you very far in today's job market.

Human resource departments now use the latest behavioural science measurement techniques to match vacant positions with individuals from large pools of applicants. To get the job, you have to fit what they want, like a key in a lock.

Today's employers know what they are looking for. They've asked themselves: what skills will an individual need to succeed in this specific position? Some employers will look beyond the specific position they're hiring for to ask: what skills will an individual need to succeed in this organisation? They've also developed new ways to more accurately answer these important questions. They're using a new 'measurement power' to sort applicants ever more accurately into 'good matches', who should be offered job opportunities, and 'poor matches', who should not.

Job seekers should take some comfort from the fact that a rigorous selection process will actually be 'fairer'. It also increases the likelihood that if they are selected for a position, they'll be a 'good fit' and they'll have the skills needed to be successful in the role.

## So how can you ensure that a rigorous selection process works for you, not against you?

### **Research, research, research**

Develop a clear behavioural understanding of what skills and abilities you'll need to do the specific job well. Gone are broad generalisations about having 'winning attitudes' or the 'willingness to grow with the business'. Employers now ask: can this person double the sales volume in our western region? Or how quickly can they have a client relationship management system up and running in the European division? You have to want the position and convince the recruiter that you are the right person for the job. Research will help you achieve this. Find out about the major tasks involved in the role, your goals and accountability in the job and how your performance will be evaluated. Talk to the person you will report to, and in the best case, one or two of the people who will be reporting to you. See the environment where you will work. Talk to customers about their view of the business.

### **Collect evidence to prove you can do the job**

When you've identified your potential employer and your preferred position, collect and organise evidence from your work and general life experience that shows in a convincing manner that you can and will do these things. For each skill or activity you have identified as being centrally important to the job, you need two good examples of how you have done something similar in the past. Applicants who have just entered the job market need not panic. The skill sets required in most jobs are often reflected in other aspects of life. You may never have had a management position that involved constructing employee work schedules. But that time your father was out of town on business and your mother ended up in the hospital provides a great opportunity to describe how you got your younger siblings fed and to school on time and made sure household tasks were assigned effectively. Think creatively and show you know the limits of your competencies and what you will need to do to expand those limits. This increases your credibility and helps the recruiter see that you 'fit' the position.

## Anticipate and prepare for online assessments

Tests can sometimes be intimidating. You should anticipate two different kinds of tests and questionnaires, each with different objectives and requiring a different approach. No matter what you are being asked to do online, follow the instructions precisely. This may seem pretty obvious. But you need to understand that many online applications and evaluations are not even processed because applicants do not follow instructions correctly.

### The most common tests you'll face are:

- **An ability test:** Employers will use verbal and numerical reasoning tests to assess your abilities. Be sure to take these tests when you are 'at your best'. Don't take them if you are tired, hungry, impatient, distracted, discouraged or worried. Ensure you're free from distraction and have scratch paper, a calculator and other necessary materials at hand. These tests are often administered under strict time limits, so develop a strategy, and give yourself every opportunity to show what you can do – and turn off your mobile phone!
- **Personality profiles, motivational profiles, or preference surveys:** Employers use these tests to assess likely behaviour patterns and preferences. There are no right or wrong answers, but they help the interviewer see how well your temperament fits with the job. The best approach is often to go with your first reaction to the question. Being 'too careful' or playing it 'too safe' will often result in your profile being indistinct, which will be of no help in moving you along to the next step in the selection process.

When you're taking assessments, give them your best effort but, remember, if you fall by the wayside after an initial online screening, it was probably not the right position for you.

Perhaps your biggest risk is the recruiter who is not up-to-speed on the latest assessment and selection techniques. If you are getting questions in the interview about what kind of animal you would like to be, perhaps it is time to gently steer the conversation towards what competencies are central to the position you are interviewing for, and how you have demonstrated these in the past. Good luck.

### About the author Dr. Mark Lassleben

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*cut-e* is a world leader in the design and implementation of innovative online tests and questionnaires for recruitment, selection and development. *cut-e* helps companies identify people with the right capabilities and cultural fit to deliver optimal business results. *cut-e* carries out over 7 million assessments per year in over 70 countries and 40 languages.