

Handwriting Analysis: The Pen is Mightier than the Sword!

Handwriting analysis (also known as Graphology) has become a highly popular pre-employment testing tool in recent years. Handwriting analysis has shown to be a reliable measure of both work behaviors and personality traits and is an effective method of determining candidate fit with both job responsibilities and company culture.

Specific factors that handwriting analysis can uncover include motivation, strengths and weaknesses, creative thinking, preferred work style (independent or team player) communication skills, dishonesty, tendency toward violence, emotional stability, and leadership style.

As with fingerprints, handwriting is unique to each individual. Handwriting analysis depends on the complex interplay between the motor cortex of brain and hand movements. Graphology is based on approximately 300 distinct features of a person's handwriting. However, no single handwriting feature can provide definitive results; all one handwriting feature can do is identify a *proclivity* toward a certain behavior. It is the *blending* of several features that analysts use in reaching valid conclusions regarding an applicant's personality.

A few traits that handwriting analysis evaluates include:

Slant. A slant to the right signifies ambiguity and the writer may be trying to communicate a range of emotions such as sociability, affection, support, kindness, or control. A slant that is upright indicates a person who has an independent nature, while a slant to the left indicates someone who is self-centered and resentful of others who ask things of them.

Size. Handwriting that is large in size indicates a person who is outgoing, expansive willing to help others, and self-confident. Smaller-size handwriting tends to indicate the opposite: that the person is shy and socially withdrawn, with minimal social skills. It can also mean that the person tends to be an analytical thinker with an academic orientation.

Other areas that are analyzed include pressure, sentence angle, adherence to margins, height of letters, and line spacing. Analysis of every area will reveal over 40 specific personality traits that can result in the creation of a thorough personality profile.

Several factors render handwriting analysis unique as a pre-employment assessment:

- The applicant can write in any language since it is the way in which characters and sentences are formed that are the determining factors. However, handwriting analysis cannot identify a candidate's age, race, religion, or gender, and is not influenced by the candidate's attempt to portray a positive personality. This makes handwriting analysis an objective measurement tool, thereby increasing its reliability and validity.
- It is difficult to forge handwriting over an extended period since the candidate will be unable to control the brain impulse that is transferred to the hand movement. Any attempt to change the style of writing will be quickly picked up by an experienced graphologist.
- Most companies who use handwriting analysis ask candidates to compose an essay. In this way, candidates are unaware of what is being tested so cannot consciously or subconsciously try to alter the results. This can be a benefit to job seekers since they tend not to experience the same degree of nervousness when preparing an essay as when they are sitting in front of interviewers. The result is that the handwriting sample is usually natural and a genuine reflection of the candidate's personality.
- Professional graphologists abide by a strict code of ethics so that their written reports are objective and based on their analysis of the handwriting sample. A professional graphologist will only perform the analysis after the consent of the writer has been provided.

The use of handwriting analysis in conjunction with other pre-employment assessments can assist in-house recruiters and hiring managers to identify the most suitable candidates for job openings, thereby saving the company significant costs in terms of recruitment, on boarding, and training. Another consideration is the opportunity cost to a company that results from lost production due to job vacancies.

Handwriting analysis is exceedingly popular throughout Europe, but especially in France where it is used by over 90% of recruiters to screen candidates. Handwriting Analysis is now being implemented by several of the largest firms in the United States, a trend that is expected to continue in light of the continuing expansion of candidate pools in every sector.

The use of handwriting analysis has expanded beyond pre-employment testing as it has been found to be a useful tool in a variety of situations, such as training, career coaching, leadership development, and team building. Handwriting analysis is also usual as a post-employment assessment to identify current employees for promotional opportunities.