

Australian Case Study Selecting for Safety in the Mining Industry

Safety Selection - Locher Human Resources Case Study

Locher Human Resources have designed and delivered a number of assessment processes to assist organisations in gathering objective information about their candidates' abilities and behaviours in accordance to the competencies of the role. The Psychological Services team at Locher apply their empirical knowledge to assist managers and recruiters from a number of industries to identify suitable candidates for job fit. In recent years, Locher has become more involved with the recruitment and development processes in the mining industry where safety is a big prerogative. The success rate of their safety selection process has been significant in reducing incident rates and increasing manager satisfaction with employees. Over the years, they have increased their presence at various mine sites nationally and are also aiming to extend their services internationally.

The Safety Imperative in the Mining Industry

The critical competencies required for a role and the organisation's core values drive the choice and design of the assessment batteries used in a recruitment process. In the mining industry safety behaviours and attitudes are of paramount concern to reduce the number of critical incidents and safety breaches in the workplace. For these clients, selecting safe personnel is a risk management process that can save time, money and other resources such as training needs.

The Selecting for Safety Process

In order to gather robust information about the safety behaviour and attitudes of candidates, Locher have utilised a comprehensive assessment approach which provides insight into a person's capability and suitability to the applied role.

This includes:

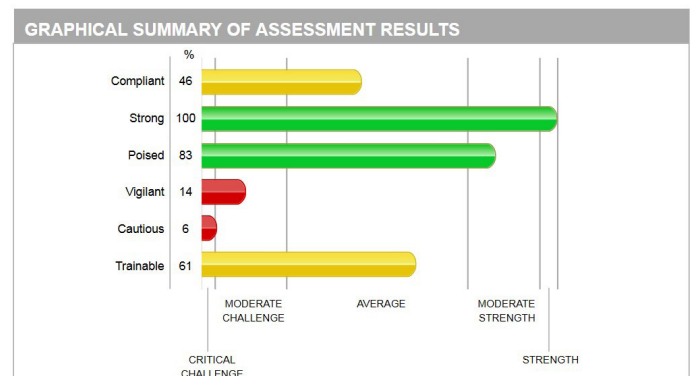
- **Safety assessment tools** like the Hogan Safety Report, which provide insight into the candidate's preferred behavioural style and safety orientation,
- **Ability tests** like the SHL ability assessments
- **Experiential group activities** which determine a candidate's potential performance when placed into a comparable high risk working environment
- **Traditional methods of recruitment** including interviews and reference checks

Information gathered from this process provides recruitment panels with accurate and objective information about safety behaviours which could not be obtained from a stand-alone interview process. Clients in the mining industry have found this combination of assessments to be invaluable in profiling a candidate's capacity to learn and apply new information and skills to successfully perform in the designated role.

Finding the Ideal Candidate Profile Using Safety Profiles Using the Hogan Safety Report, Locher identifies candidates who are best suited for roles in a high risk environment like the mining industry. Some of the key characteristics which are relevant for safety assessments are:

- **Individual traits. Being vigilant, conscientious, cautious and compliant** are highly desirable in a safety assessment. These personal traits are especially attractive to mining sites, as they narrow down the applicant pool by identifying those who are more likely to maintain safety standards.
- **Capacity to remain calm under pressure.** This is another key focal point. Candidates who are more likely to maintain composure when placed under high pressure situations are less likely to make mistakes.
- **Trainability.** This is measured by the tool and has been especially important throughout the psychometric assessment process as it provides an insight into a candidate's attitude and discipline towards developing new skills through mentoring and training programs. We found that this trait is increasingly valued for the high risk roles. Among candidates with years of industry experience, trainability along with ability assessment results has significantly screened out candidates who are less likely to adjust well to new values and processes.

Safety is a difficult concept to measure without objective tools. The thorough assessment process offered to clients provide them with an objective, evidence based decision making framework to select candidates ideal for a high risk environment.



A Sample Graph from the Hogan Safety Report

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Using Experiential Activities in Safety Assessments

To measure behavioural traits, experiential activities are designed for candidates to participate in during the Assessment Centres. These activities provide us with insights into how the candidate is likely to react and interact with others when placed into high pressure and high stress situations. Activities are designed in collaboration with work site personnel to ensure the exercises simulate the environment and provide opportunities for these critical behaviours to be observed. These activities also provide insights into team interactions, problem solving skills and demonstrated safety behaviour. Evidence obtained from the experiential activities enable an objective assessment of each candidate by the panellists involved in the Assessment Centre. By collating the information gathered throughout the day, an objective selection of candidates could be made by the organisation to determine who would proceed to the next stage of the recruitment process. Additionally, data also allows assessors to develop further questions for reference checking, particularly if concerns were highlighted at the final meeting.

Accuracy and Reliability of the Safety Selection Process

Clients are often surprised with the reliability and accuracy of the results obtained through the assessment processes. It enables the panel to identify candidates with potential who, while having achieved the predetermined benchmark, may have been overlooked had the assessment process not been in place. The assessment process also helps uncover underlying attitudes and behaviours experienced personnel may have regarding the requisite competencies and values

of the organisation. In many situations, candidates who looked suitable on paper and at interview did not profile or demonstrate the required safety attitudes and behaviours the organisation sought. Furthermore, as human judgment comes with high risks of error caused by biases and stereotypes, the process for these clients has also increased their awareness that a variety of screening activities are necessary to identify ideal candidates. The success rates of the psychometric assessment processes that were utilised have been extremely positive. For one large mining organisation, all of the candidates who were selected through the assessment centre passed the probationary periods with no concerns. Additionally, one hundred percent of the selected candidates chose to continue employment with the organisation. The process was also cost effective for the organisation as no resignations or dismissals occurred in the probationary period. All of the evidence gathered throughout the process ensured that safety was objectively assessed while also providing them with multiple benefits such as saving the organisation costs, materials and human resources.

Reference – The Australian Psychological Society, Illuminations - Special Edition – Safety in Organisations – Nov 2010

