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### **Psychometrics picking up steam among firms Some use the tests to ensure candidates fit their corporate culture**

By OH BOON PING

FEW local organisations now use psychometric tests to recruit staff - but that could change.

'I believe it will slowly pick up among smaller firms,' says GMP Group chief executive Annie Yap. 'Plus, firms are trying to cut down on the number of wrong hires, which can be quite costly. A psychometric test can help reduce that.'

Similarly, Alex Lee, general manager of SHL Group, which administers psychometric tests, says Singapore companies that have expanded overseas have grown more aware of psychometric techniques.

The tests are said to measure a candidate's suitability for a job by assessing their personality traits and other qualities. Some companies use the tests to ensure candidates fit their corporate culture and have the aptitude to succeed.

According to both consultants, the tests are generally used by bigger companies like multinationals, which adopt a scientific approach to recruitment.

'These big corporations often look for certain personality traits and emotional quotient, besides educational qualifications and experience,' says Ms Yap.

GMP says the tests can pick up traits such as leadership qualities, which are crucial for strategic roles. The company has been using psychometrics tests for the past decade and found them a useful supplement to interviews and other screening. Other organisations known to have used psychometrics for recruitment include the civil service and big names like DHL International.

But the tests have not taken off with smaller companies because the hiring process is 'often more intuitive', Ms Yap says.

Some of these firms do not have formally trained human resource managers familiar with the tests, while others are sceptical. Still, the number pool of local users is growing slowly but surely. GMP Group has seen a rise of about 20 per cent in the use of psychometric tests by SME clients over the past three years. And local clients account for more than 20 per cent of SHL's total customer base.

Local companies that BT spoke to agreed on the usefulness of psychometric tests but expressed reservations about relying on them solely.

Kingsmen Creative managing director Benedict Soh said: 'It is useful for top management to understand the make-up of each person's in-built characteristics. We intend to use it for staff recruitment.'

Likewise, Alson Teo, chief executive of Stamfles Food Management, reckons psychometric tests are 'useful to assess a candidate's personality, especially when the job requires a particular personality type to perform well'.

But Mr Teo is quick to point out that there are qualities a psychometric test may not capture. For example, 'a few years ago, we included the test for hiring a few key executives. The results were excellent, but none of them stayed with us for more than a year. There was even one general manager who found it 'degrading' to wear a company T-shirt. Needless to say, he was not able to connect with the support staff'.

HG Metal chief executive Wee Piew prefers face-to face interviews because they provide interaction with job candidates.

'This allows for immediate assessment and 'feel' of how the candidate responds and reacts to questions,' he says.