

Skills assessment

Avoiding a bad hire – the case for pre-hire skills assessment

While most law firms fully recognise the need for implementing a more rigorous, measurable Microsoft Word skills assessment programme for its existing and prospective employees, few find the time and focus to actually implement one.

With training budgets being squeezed and Microsoft Word's expanding feature set, a law firm must protect against making a hiring decision based solely on a candidate's resume and representation of advanced Microsoft Word skills. By implementing a pre-hire testing/skills assessment process that is easy to administer and consistently graded, a hiring decision can be made that is based on a candidate's actual Word proficiency and ability to follow firm-best practices for document production. This is especially important given the fact that, in order to increase profitability, law firms are asking secretaries to support more lawyers.

To address these issues, as well as to improve employee retention, law firms are increasingly planning, creating and implementing skills assessment programmes for pre-hires and existing staff alike. Focusing on pre-hire skills assessment, specifically, how can a firm reliably determine whether a prospective new hire really possesses the advanced Word skills and competencies that they profess to have or that the firm requires?

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Why assess prospective new hires?

Human resources and administrative leadership at law firms is driving the implementation of pre-hire skills assessment programmes for document-centric positions – secretaries, word processors, help desk analysts, trainers – because of several strategic initiatives:

- Improving Hiring Decisions – According to statistics provided to Microsystems by its customers, the cost of a bad hire can easily reach £100,000.
- Reducing Training Time and Expense – Targeting a new hire's initial training programming to meet the specific needs where document production skills are lacking.

What to assess?

Skills assessment programmes are focused on the advanced Microsoft Word skills that are a fundamental part of document production within law firms. These skills include: cleaning up

Word documents (tables, cross referencing, footnotes); working with fields (e.g., hyperlinks; page numbering); applying outline numbering; formatting documents; and styling documents.

Why can assessment be challenging?

The reasons are many:

- The programme is a time burden to administer – human resources professionals or office administrators can provide the assessment, but typically lack the “Word expert” skills in order to grade the output. This increases the time and manpower required to accurately assess a prospective new hire.
- Grading the assessment is done manually – the output of an assessment typically requires manual grading, which is both time consuming and subjective.
- The programme is not relevant to an end user's day-to-day responsibilities – the assessment does not reflect a typical document with which the user works.
- The programme does not reflect the firm's unique Word desktop – the assessment typically is done within a generic Word desktop, not one that reflects the firm's unique desktop.

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Why is the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module different?

The Module provides automated advanced Word skills assessment test for a firm's pre-hires, as well as its current employees. The Module is specifically designed to measure the advanced Word skills needed to be efficient and productive in legal document production. It evaluates the document clean-up and formatting skills required by a firm's document production process. The Module can be configured to assess a firm's unique document production environment and best practices – such as guidelines for styles and numbering. The Module is simple to implement and administer, and automates the time-consuming grading process of the exercise document, allowing the test to be easily administered and graded within the human resources department. No other software or component is required.

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Customer case study


- **Situation:** A law firm with more than 1,500 users wanted to accurately measure the Word skills of prospective new secretaries in order to execute targeted new hire training.
- **Challenge:** Limited training time for secretarial, word processing and help desk new hires.
- **Objective:** Execute targeted new hire training, with focus on measuring advanced Word skills.
- **Solution:** Implement a new hire assessment programme whilst customizing it for the firm's document best practices and styles.
- **Benefits realised:** Increased training return on investment; decreased turnover, as likelihood of a "bad hire" is minimised; greater initial productivity from new hires; and quick adoption and consistent usage by human resources and training.

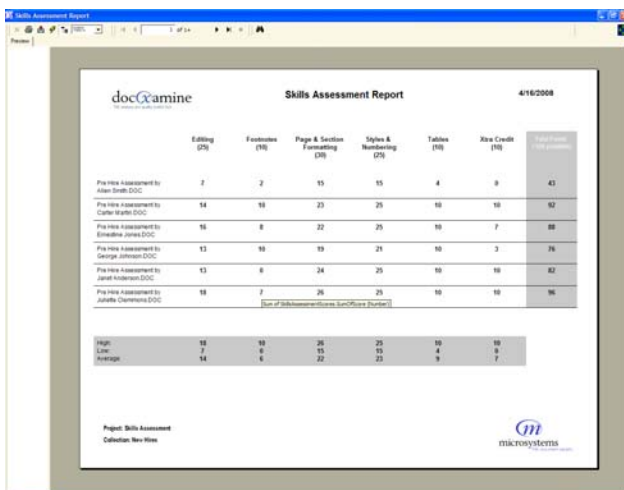
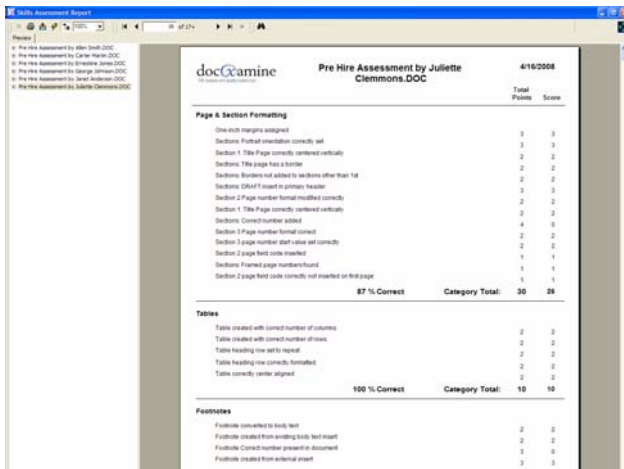
Conclusion

A pre-hire Word skills assessment programme provides a solid "first step" towards building a firm-wide initiative for evaluation and ongoing training of the document production skills required in the legal

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environment. New hires will enter a firm with a core set of skills and a road map for further development, jump starting their ability

to best serve clients and fee-earners alike. A firm can further its training initiatives by expanding the skills assessment programme to provide all document production specialists with targeted, meaningful and measurable training programmes around document production. 



Microsystems Skills Assessment

Not only is Microsystems' Skills Assessment Module ready out-of-the-box to test pre-hires, it can also be customised to assess the firm's unique document production environment, such as the guidelines for styles and numbering. The module is simple to implement and administer, and automates the time-consuming grading process of the exercise document, allowing the assessment to be easily administered and graded.

Find out more about Microsystems' Skills Assessment Module at: <http://www.microsystems.com/skills/index.php>

