

**Competencies: potential****RECRUITERS TO FOCUS ON POTENTIAL**

BY CARLY CHYNOWETH

"TELL me about a time you..." This, the competency-based interviewer's refrain, is familiar to most candidates today, but there is every chance that job-hunters of the future may face quite different recruitment processes. There is anecdotal evidence of the odd wacky approach - people getting hired based on whether the boss's dog likes them, say - but Peter Sloan, a consultant at Kaisen ([www.kaisen.co.uk](http://www.kaisen.co.uk)), argues that most employers will push for increasingly detailed testing.

Partly this is because of weaknesses in the competency system, which relies on candidates to provide evidence of their workplace abilities and characteristics but does not lend itself to assessing potential, Sloan says. "All you can do [as an employer] is look at how good the candidate is now at a specific job," he says. "I think the first thing to think about is what employers are looking for. Increasingly that is whether they can fast-track candidates, and what potential they have."

He believes that the next move will be towards employers attempting to look at the psychological traits that underpin competencies, with the aim of discovering people who are capable of developing particular competencies even if they do not display them at the time. "There will be a greater reliance on sophisticated psychology - [identifying] key personality traits that will make a difference now and in the future." Employers will also pay more attention to motivation, "not just the surface, but what drives you, what releases your energy". Ability without motivation is virtually meaningless, so organisations will want to know how to switch their staff on.

This means that candidates can expect more psychometric testing, more hours spent in assessment centres, and more sophisticated interviewing techniques. "Do as much preparation as you can about understanding the business you are going for a job in but expect that you can't swot up for psychological assessment," Sloan advises.

Graeme Yell, a director at Hay Group ([www.haygroup.co.uk](http://www.haygroup.co.uk)), thinks that changes are more likely to involve recruiters building on the competency framework rather than scrapping it. "I don't think that competencies will become obsolete," he says. "They are growing in importance rather than anything else." He believes that past success is a good indicator that someone will be successful in the future, and that a competency-based approach is an effective way of drawing this out.

"I don't think that intelligence testing will become any more useful because it is not good at predicting job performance." However, other types of psychological testing that require candidates to respond to hypothetical situations are more likely to have a role - particularly when coupled with technology that reduces the subjective aspects of the process. Using computers to complete and mark tests helps to increase the objectivity of the results; having multiple human interviewers or assessors would also help this.

But whatever shape the future takes, Yell's core advice for those who want to get ahead remains the same. "Continue to put yourself forward to do new things in different situations. That's how you become a more rounded and experienced person, and ultimately that's what employers are looking for."