

Major IT Services Company Adopts Skills Measurement Best Practices to Ensure Successful Placements

For an IT services company, the ability to measure skills is crucial. But according to Mark Bouck of TEKsystems, online skills measurement is evolving into a “must-have” capability in a competitive marketplace.

Baltimore-based TEKsystems provides strategic staffing and infrastructure solutions relating to information technology and communications. As Vice President of Application Services at the company, Bouck has seen the character of the staffing marketplace change greatly over the past two years. “Budgets are tighter, of course,” says Bouck, “and we’re seeing clients rely more on vendor management systems. These VMS systems help companies send requests and requirements through a system to track contract employee engagements and performance. Companies are able to track both the speed and success of the engagement; therefore, the need to ensure quality placements is paramount.

“For the consultants (IT professionals) that we place, we’ve gone out of our way to differentiate ourselves based on quality,” he says. “These companies have the systems in place to track the performance of our consultants, and therefore they recognize a track record of success. Skills metrics provide a valuable tool for ensuring that we deliver the quality that we promise.”

Skills Measurement System Delivers Metrics for Prescreening and Validation

TEKsystems focuses on three prime areas of expertise in the services they provide. “We place professionals in communications, infrastructure, or applications,” Bouck explains. “My group is the applications group, and in many cases, the consultants we place must be proficient in multiple skills.”

“Of course, the market’s different now than it was a few years ago,” says Bouck. “Today, there are fewer jobs and more applicants, but that doesn’t make it easier to fill an opening. The client has every right to be more selective than ever. The candidate has to be qualified for every aspect of the job, not just a single skill.” For recruiters and salespeople in the field, the ability to screen and to place a candidate quickly is critical. A vital part of the TEKsystems recruiting and placement operations is a thorough screening process that includes credential reviews, interviews, and skills validation.

While many organizations rely on skills measurement as a pre-screening tool, Bouck says that, for his group, skills validation later in the recruiting process is just as important. “Our recruiters may test candidates in their skills as a screening method early in the cycle,” he says, “or they may administer assessments later to validate skills relating to particular job assignments. Either way, the result is an assessment that provides measurable evidence of the capabilities of our candidates. Skills data is useful for us, our consultants and our clients at any stage of the recruiting or engagement process.”

Flexible Technology Enables Customized Tests Covering Multiple Key Skills

The concept of using online skills metrics is nothing new in the staffing industry. “We’ve used online measurement tools to assess the skills of our consultants in the past,” says Bouck, “but we found that simply having a system in place won’t guarantee success. What we needed was something that would adapt easily to our needs, and change easily as those needs change.”

“Up until a year ago, we relied on a measurement system that worked well in some situations,”



he explains. "That system enabled us to select skills tests and deliver them on demand, but we needed a way to customize tests to meet different needs. But today, our clients are demanding that candidates have multiple skills. The flexible system we have in place now enables us to combine elements from different subjects into a single test. The result is a high level of validation across multiple skills that apply to any job, delivered with the speed of a single test."

Skills Metrics Play Growing Role in TEKsystems' Continued Industry Leadership

Rated number one in the industry by IT Services Business Report, TEKsystems can attribute much of its leadership role to the quality of the candidates it places. Best practices include an established process known in the company as the "successful placement process." This process takes on a complete lifecycle approach to the development of TEKsystems' consultants, from recruiting to placement, re-engagement, and career development.

"The value of a broad and flexible skills measurement system is that the metrics it provides can apply to any step in the process," says Bouck. "By adapting online skills measurement into our system, we are supporting our leadership in the industry by proving, to ourselves and to our clients, that our consultants have the qualifications to get the job done right."