

# Boost the quality of your hires with English proficiency testing

How testing English skills builds a strong and thriving workforce.

# Hire quality is top of the agenda for recruiters and talent acquisition leaders. Discover the impact of English skill testing on hiring fit-for-role employees.

The results are in... thousands of recruiting professionals and top talent acquisition leaders say that sourcing high-quality candidates is their number one objective in 2024 and beyond.

# 54%

of recruiters are now prioritizing quality of hire above all else,

according to LinkedIn's Talent Solutions report [The Future of Recruiting 2024](#). The report also highlights that **73% are using a skills-based approach** to find top-quality hires, faster, with skills that fit the business both now and in future.

Getting recruitment right can drastically impact productivity. In the UK alone, [effective recruitment boosts productivity by £7.7bn each year](#), according to the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC). Conversely, the direct and indirect costs of mistake hires are a constant concern to organizations, not just in the UK but around the world. According to a survey of 400 hiring decision-makers by [CareerBuilder](#), 75% have hired the wrong person, and say that one bad hire costs them nearly \$17,000 on average. It's no surprise then that skills-based quality hiring is such a top priority for recruiters.

It's harder than it might seem to systematically increase the quality of your hires, especially when you're recruiting at scale. But the rewards are high when you get it right, and a skills-first approach increases your chances of success – particularly when you focus on core skills like English proficiency that underpin communication. As an added bonus, skills-based testing can speed up the recruitment process significantly.





## Why are great communication skills so intrinsically linked to high-quality hires?

The ability to communicate well and integrate into the company culture is a core workplace skill that's easy to assess with the right tools. Effective communication is essential for successful business operations. It's the fundamental skill across all roles and departments that not only underpins a full suite of soft business power skills such as building customer relations, negotiation, delivering presentations and problem-solving, but also hard skills including IT literacy, data analysis and reporting.

## Why testing English skills should be central to the hiring process

Proficient English language skills power confident business communication. It's long been acknowledged that English is the [global language of business](#), with one in four of the global population speaking it to at least a useful level. English is also **the language of technology**. Since the globalization of the internet – and more recently the widespread adoption of generative AI – English has established itself as the global language of digital technology and innovation. To remain competitive, forward-thinking international businesses know that they must prioritize English proficiency.

Many skilled professionals around the world are proficient in English, so by testing proficiency levels, organizations can access **a larger pool of candidates** from diverse backgrounds and locations, bringing fresh ideas and perspectives.



This is particularly true when it comes to recruiting candidates who speak English as a second or additional language. It's also an important consideration when hiring for remote or hybrid positions (according to [Global LinkedIn Data](#), there was a 146% increase in remote job applications last year alone). A team that's strong in English also means good communication with clients, suppliers and colleagues, wherever in the world they are based.

Testing English skill levels at an early stage of the recruitment process can be efficiently carried out at scale to increase the chances of quality hires. Regardless of sector, role, level or department, screening out candidates who don't meet the minimum requirements for English fluency will save all parties time, giving you a shortcut to the very best candidates for the role.

## A skills-based hiring approach fast-tracks finding the best talent

This approach has been proven to open up access to a much wider range of talent, with LinkedIn reporting that **talent pools expand on average by nearly 10x with a skills-first approach**. It's a trend that's set to stay, not least because Gen Z will soon make up more than a quarter of the workforce, and they're **34% more likely** to prioritize skill development opportunities.

When building teams, recruiters are under increasing, and often conflicting, pressures – not just to fulfill short-term need, but also to factor in longer-term strategic workforce planning priorities. An emphasis on using skills to increase quality of hire helps build experienced, skilled and stronger teams for the long term (and reducing attrition rates due to higher employee satisfaction, too).

English language assessment gives individuals a starting point from which to improve their communication skills, competencies, and capabilities, subsequently boosting their confidence and personal growth. This will open doors to better career opportunities.

While testing is invaluable, organizations should emphasize the importance of effective communication, continual exposure to the language, consistent practice, and continuous learning to realize long-term business benefits.



**Judy Whisenhunt**  
APAC CEO,  
TDS Global Solutions

## Why robust data is key to supporting skills-based hiring

**Data-driven talent strategies** are now commonplace, and skills assessments which speed up the decision-making process using reliable data are a key part of that. By using AI-based English language assessment tools such as **Versant by Pearson**, recruiters can be confident that results are not only accurate but also unbiased, ensuring a consistent recruiting experience for all candidates and supporting wider DE&I initiatives.

Large-scale intakes can be incredibly difficult and time-consuming to manage. Using innovative AI-led technology can reduce the time to hire. With tools that reduce the number of manual touchpoints needed, you can streamline the process and deliver insightful recruitment metrics that can be used to inform and speed up future hiring decisions.

It's not only recruiters who benefit from a more efficient hiring process with in-built skill testing. Candidates also value a speedy and streamlined process, as it increases their chances of finding the right role more quickly. AI-based skills testing can free-up recruiters to focus on a more thorough human assessment of candidates to find the best fit for the role (and candidates still value human interaction in the recruitment process, according to **PWC's The Future of Recruiting**).

## Quality hiring means widening your talent pool

To attract the best of the best, particularly when hiring at speed and scale, you need to be sure that your talent pool is as wide and diverse as possible. From a well-written job advert and person specification, right through to screening and language testing, the interview stage and beyond, demonstrating to candidates that you value communication skills will make your organization attractive to a far greater number of candidates. English language testing at scale can open the door to candidates all over the world, without risking the quality of business outcomes dropping due to employees' English skill levels not being appropriate for the role.

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Employers tell us that language proficiency is critical to the retention and success of new hires, but language skills are difficult to assess without support.

Subjective judgments based on communication in interviews can give a misleading picture and often lead to qualified candidates being filtered out of a recruitment process or unqualified ones being advanced. Using a tool like **Versant by Pearson**, talent acquisition professionals can efficiently maximize the pool of qualified candidates and recruit based on the skills and experience most relevant to the role, safe in the knowledge that language won't be a barrier to success.



**Nick Laul**  
VP Product Management  
(Corporate),  
Pearson Languages

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# The long-term benefits of skills-based hiring cannot be overstated

Putting English language testing at the center of a skills-first recruitment strategy can bolster your hiring practices and increase top-quality, long-term hires.

**A skills-first approach to quality hiring delivers a wealth of longer-term business advantages including:**

## 1 Cost savings

Raising quality of hires by testing skills like English proficiency means fewer costly mistake hires.

## 2 Retention

Putting the right people in the right roles reduces employee churn (a growing concern, particularly in the wake of the Great Resignation). Confident communicators find it easier to integrate into teams and feel a sense of belonging.

## 3 Productivity

A confident and skilled workforce positions your organization to operate and expand into an international marketplace.

## 4 Employee satisfaction

Hiring with a focus on communication skills leads to a happier, more confident and collaborative workforce.

## 5 Happy customers

Recruiting well means giving your customers the very best service, and by testing English proficiency at hiring stage you can be sure that standards won't be compromised.

## 6 Better workforce planning

It's far easier to make strategic, long-term plans and identify skills gaps with a skills-based approach.

## 7 A great culture

Putting communication at the top of your hiring agenda means a happier and healthier culture and team dynamics.





The quality of your hires is directly linked to the amount of time and resource you put into testing core communication skills like English language proficiency. This is set to shape the hiring strategies of the future as talent acquisition leaders work to get the most out of every hire.

Communication has always been, and will always be, an enduring workplace skill that underpins a wealth of other skills.

Testing English skills early in the recruitment process ensures you attract top-tier candidates and hire effective communicators. It can accelerate your hiring process, enhance team performance, and help you retain the best talent.

**Prioritizing English language skills supports a high-quality recruitment strategy, cultivating a competent and adept workforce that ultimately improves business outcomes.**



## About Pearson

At Pearson, the world's leading learning company, we empower individuals and organizations through transformative learning experiences. With a global presence in over 70 countries, we offer a wide range of products and services to institutions, corporations, governments and learners worldwide.

**Pearson Language Solutions for Work** includes our language assessment tool – **Versant by Pearson**, which helps you hire with confidence.

The AI-based test reduces bias and enables global organizations and businesses to assess candidates' English proficiency quickly, accurately and at scale. Up to 3 million tests are completed each year across 100 countries. Then, using **Mondly by Pearson** – our suite of language learning solutions – employers can support employees to develop their language skills and unlock international business growth.