

Handwriting Analysis!



Sheila Lowe

How would you like to know – before you hire a new staff member – that an applicant is a dependable team player, willing to take direction, well-organized and a self-starter? Or, that

one who looks like the perfect employee is actually lazy, aggressive, quick-tempered, a flight risk, resistant to training or a troublemaker?

With the upsurge of violence in the workplace, the increasing difficulty of finding qualified workers in a tight labor market and a growing “play ethic” replacing the old-fashioned work ethic, employers are seeking new ways to protect themselves from security risks and expensive hiring blunders that result in a high rate of turnover. Of the profusion of psychological assessment methods flooding the market, one of the fastest growing and least expensive is handwriting analysis. Many staffing services are currently using this powerful, reliable tool to help them identify potential problem employees during the application process.

Consider this example: XYZ Staffing is seeking a receptionist-interviewer. The successful candidate will have a neat appearance, an exceptionally pleasant manner and a good telephone voice. He or she needs to be flexible and deal with many different types of people. Reliability, self-control, stress tolerance, good judgment, stamina and attention to detail are essential qualities for this position.

Jane Johnson, XYZ’s owner, spots a particularly appealing applicant, Louise Brown, who makes a great impression during the interview. Louise has an excellent résumé, her references pass muster and Jane believes her attractive appearance

will enhance the front office. When she sails through XYZ’s screening and application process with flying colors, Louise is hired on the spot.

For the first few months everything goes smoothly. Louise arrives early and stays late. The applicant flow is well balanced and both applicants and clients like her manner. Then, one day, in response to the pressure of rapidly growing hours, Jane creates a new position, office manager and hires an industry pro who immediately makes sweeping changes to existing policies and procedures. Suddenly, Louise starts showing up late for work, snapping at clients and co-workers and is generally moody and uncooperative. When Jane calls Louise into her office and asks

what’s wrong, she denies any problem. The situation deteriorates and after several counseling sessions, Louise is finally terminated for a

poor attitude and bad work habits. She files for unemployment benefits, claiming harassment and XYZ loses additional time and money when required to appear at a hearing.

Unfortunately, the XYZ story is all too common. But what happened? Could Louise’s attitude change have been avoided? What if Jane Johnson had known in advance how Louise might react to sudden

changes in her working environment? And what if she had known that her new office manager would implement major changes that upset the staff?

By **Sheila Lowe**

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Which one of these writers is a successful salesperson and which one is a serial killer? Handwriting gives the clues.

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Many business owners and managers have discovered the hard way that the good impression an applicant makes in the interview may not hold up under on-the-job stress. Behavioral changes may be subtle, bubbling under the surface for weeks or months, then explode abruptly, shocking everyone into awareness, perhaps creating a disastrous and expensive situation.

A pre-employment analysis of her handwriting could have revealed that Louise Brown, who had **good job skills**, was a traditionalist with a rigid personality, was incapable of handling sudden changes and could become volatile under pressure. Or, an analysis of the office manager might have pointed out that while she was good at solving complex problems involving data and organizing the office, she wasn't a people-person and might make changes without considering the effect on the staff.

Can handwriting really do all that?

In a word, yes. Like body language, tone of voice and facial expression, handwriting is an expressive gesture that reveals who the person is in the moment of writing. It also reveals past behavior – an indicator of future attitudes and behavior. Even if the writer alters his body language to make a better impression, the handwriting reveals what is really going on inside. Certainly, it doesn't tell **everything** – personality is just too complex for that – but handwriting furnishes fundamental information about the writer's potentials and strengths, as well as areas that need improvement.

Handwriting professionals usually offer analyses of various types, depending on the client's needs. For instance, some clients prefer a short narrative along with charts and graphs, while others want a more comprehensive report. The average cost for a personality profile is from \$125 to \$150, whereas most of the more effective psychological tests cost from \$250 - \$500.

Taking a handwriting sample is easy. Along with the application form, most employers ask the candidate to provide written answers to such questions as, why do you want to work for this company? What do you feel a manager owes her people? Or, what are your greatest accomplishments? The best sample

is at least one page in length, but a paragraph or two will do in a pinch. It should be written on unlined 8 1/2 x 11 paper and signed. No personal information is needed, but it is important for the analyst to have a comprehensive job description and some information about the working environment – who the employee will report to or who will report to them, etc.

Non-discriminatory methods of screening are vital to the staffing industry as a whole, so how does handwriting analysis stack up in that regard? Since the analyst rarely meets the person whose handwriting is being analyzed, and no protected information is required for the analysis, the resulting report is unbiased and objective. Handwriting does not conclusively reveal the writer's age, gender, sexual ori-

entation, race, nationality or religion.

The analysis should be thought of as one more piece of the puzzle, used in conjunction with whatever other assessment methods are available, including background checks, skill evaluation, education and interview. No professional handwriting analyst expects or wants their client to rely solely on the analysis to decide whether to hire someone or not.

In the twenty-first century, handwriting analysis has become a respected method of aiding employers to build cooperative teams and improve their work environment. All around the world, thousands of businesses are finding it a valuable tool to help them successfully place people in jobs that are right for them. ■

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