



simplifying human resources

Regardless of your public agency's size, type or geographical location, CODESP has the ideal web-based talent assessment tools to fit your needs. Improve candidate quality, hire more efficiently, cut costs, and boost employee performance.



November 2012

What's new at CODESP?

Articles

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Have you noticed the changes at CODESP? New logo, new services, new test materials, new interns, new customers! The CODESP website has a sharp new look since we redesigned our logo to better reflect the broadened range of agencies we serve and the services we provide. Got an important HR recruitment that you need expert help with? Ask us about our contracted recruitment services - and our satisfied customers! And did you know that just in the past quarter, CODESP has added nearly 400 new multiple choice test items? We have also edited many more existing. It's true. Look on page 5 for details.

What is a consortium? A consortium is a collective group, typically one made up of groups like public agencies and educational institutions, that band together to create support for a project. When members work together, a consortium can be an incredibly powerful tool that benefits all of the individual members. CODESP is a consortium of school and college districts which has been helping educational agencies for over 35 years. Other public agencies can become customers through our subscriber program.

Welcome, Special Districts! Special districts are units of local government established by the residents of an area to provide some service not provided by the county or city. Within California there are 58 counties, 468 cities, and over 3,400 special districts, exclusive of school districts. CODESP welcomes Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, Inland Empire Utilities Agency and Dublin-San Ramon Services District to CODESP!

Sample Performance Exercises

Some of the posted Sample Performance Exercises have new names and categories. For Microsoft Office programs, such as Word or Excel, check out the “Accounting-Purchasing-10 Key” and/or “Software-Office Programs” areas under “Test Materials” / “Performance Exercises” after log-in. We are currently adding new test materials in this area, **plus** new multiple choice test items for Office Software in the Item Bank. If you have a subject matter expert who would like to help test the performance exercises and multiple-choice items, please email us at tests@codesp.com.

Test Material Requests

We would like to share some information about the CODESP test material request system that will help us process your requests more effectively and efficiently.

The CATS Request Form is found in the left margin of the website after login. Please follow these steps when submitting the form:

- Submit the request *at least 10 working days* prior to when you need the materials.
- Before you submit the form, check that the name listed at the bottom is yours. Emails will be sent to the person listed here.
- Check your email box frequently, and respond to CODESP staff as soon as possible, as we may require additional information to complete the request.
- ALWAYS add a job description in the comments section. We NEED detailed information regarding the minimum requirements PRIOR to beginning the request process.
- Read the job description first to see if it is up-to-date. Add comments such as software program proficiency and version required, e.g. “Word 2010”.
- If new materials need to be developed, or existing items require editing, the 10 working days begin when we receive materials from your agency that will assist us in the process.
 - Materials required might include samples of typical documents produced; lists and information on equipment; or technical manuals/regulations, etc. used by incumbents. This will require contact with a SME so that they can provide information and feedback on the items.
- Test materials submitted from customers to be entered into the CATS system will be checked to determine if they are copyrighted. They will also need to be reformatted prior to entry into our system. We will not develop test questions for positions that require state certifications such as Physical or Occupational Therapist.
- Multiple-choice testing is not appropriate for all positions, nor to determine certain competencies, such as human relations. Many times an interview with situational questions or one that includes an exercise such as an in-basket exercise may be a better choice.
- Sample interviews, supplemental application forms, writing samples, in-baskets and performance tests are found under Test Materials on the website after log-in. Many are listed by generic job title, and are in Word (or Excel) format so that they can be edited. If you do not find what you need, submit a CATS Request Form, supply us with the same materials required for new or edited multiple-choice test questions, and allow 10 working days.

We hope to soon introduce our Module Catalog, which will allow customers during the request process to choose which groups of multiple choice test items they want delivered. 2011-2012 will be an exciting year for CODESP, and we look forward to providing your agency with services. For questions regarding your requests, email tests@codesp.com, or call 714-374-8644 during our office hours, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Interpreting CODESP Item Statistics

When you are looking at CODESP multiple choice test items for an exam, have you ever noticed a little bar graph next to the checkbox for the item on the Test Generator page?



This icon means that item statistics are available for this item. To see them, you click on the bar graph icon. The CATS Item History Report will open in a new tab or window. But what do these statistics mean?

Let's start out with our Disclaimer: For low numbers of candidates (typically under 30), the statistics will not be valid. Item analysis is influenced by many factors, and these should be carefully considered before making decisions regarding question use. More detailed item analysis interpretation information is provided under [Tutorials / Test Scoring and Item Analysis Services](#) and under [Links / Webinar Archives / Interpreting Your Test Results](#). Let's take a look.

The “**Total Number of Candidates**” shows how many times the item has been scored on any CODESP test. As the Disclaimer states, the larger this number is, the more accurate (and therefore useful) the other statistics are likely to be, but keep in mind that all of these statistics are affected by the actual qualifications of candidates admitted to the exams on which the items were used.

The statistic “**Response Frequencies (%): Cumulative**” for the Key shows the *number* of candidates who answered the item correctly. Most items should be answered correctly by 30% to 80% of the candidates. Items that virtually everyone gets right are not discriminating amongst candidates, and should possibly NOT be included on your exam. You should compare how the item performed on the other exams for which the item was scored to see if the titles are comparable to the job for which you're creating a test. For example, if a certain item performed well for clerical jobs, and that's what you are testing for, it's more likely to do well on your exam too.

“**Difficulty**” shows the *proportion* of candidates who answered the item correctly. Generally, items which are too easy or too difficult do not discriminate well among candidates. For a four-choice multiple-choice item, the ideal difficulty is around 0.62. Difficulty values below 0.20 indicate very difficult items which *may* not be suitable for your applicant pool. This stat can be affected when items are too difficult or too easy for the typical candidate pool for that position. Just as for **Response Frequencies**, it will be helpful to look at the job titles for which this item has already been scored. You may see that for a job similar to yours, the item in fact performed well.

“**Discrimination**” indicates how effectively an item *distinguishes* between the top and bottom performers on the exam. Good items generally have a discrimination index between 0.10 and 0.30, and above 0.30 is a very good discrimination index. However, this is not always a measure of the item quality. An item may have low discriminating power for a number of reasons. Extremely difficult or easy items will have low ability to discriminate, but such items might be needed to adequately sample the full range of KSAs required by the job. An item may also show low discrimination if the test measures many different content areas and cognitive skills. For example, if the majority of the test measures "knowledge of facts," then an item assessing the "ability to apply principles" may have a low correlation with total test scores, yet both types of items are needed to measure candidates' qualifications for the job.

“**Point Biserial**” shows the relationship between how well candidates did on the item and their total test score. It ranges from 0.0 to 1.0, and the higher the value, the better-discriminating the item. A high Point Biserial indicates that the candidates who had high test scores answered the item correctly, while candidates who had low test scores answered the item incorrectly. Items with a Point Biserial of 0.20 to 0.40 are generally performing well, and those with a Point Biserial of 0.19 or less are generally performing poorly on exams. The usual disclaimer about candidates' actual qualifications applies, of course.

Summary: Any item may have been too easy or too hard for a particular applicant pool, which will skew these statistics. Low numbers of candidates also reduce the predictive validity of the statistics. Look at the job titles on other exams to determine how similar they are to the job you are testing for. When reviewing the stats, keep these factors in mind. Item stat alone do not tell the whole story. Also, we ask that you do not score online “practice tests”. The scores will affect the statistics for the items. If you need to develop a practice test, contact us and we will provide you with items that will not affect our item bank statistics.

Correct Responses: GOOD items - not too easy, not too hard - are answered correctly by 30% to 80% of candidates.

Difficulty: GOOD items have a Difficulty index from about 0.20 to 0.62 (0.62 is ideal for a 4-choice item).

Discrimination: GOOD items generally have a Discrimination index between 0.10 and 0.30; above 0.30 is a VERY GOOD item.

Point Biserial: GOOD items have a Point Biserial from about 0.20 to 0.40.

If you ever have any questions or concerns about CODESP item statistics, contact us. More information can be found on our website under [Tutorials / Test Scoring and Item Analysis Services](#) and under [Links / Webinar Archives / Interpreting Your Test Results](#).

New Multiple Choice Items - LOTS of Them!

CODESP staff have been busy adding to our Item Banks, logging over 500 new multiple choice items over the past six months, nearly 400 in the last quarter alone! We're pleased to tell you about all of the new materials we have created, so here's a run-down of the highlights:

First, we are delighted to announce that our entry-level figures and items for Microsoft Office applications - Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, PowerPoint and Publisher - are now **complete** for the 2003, 2007 and 2010 versions of these programs. We've also added items on Excel functions and formulas (and have in the works Excel items especially for accounting tasks - coming soon!). Additional items will be posted soon!

Maintenance and Trades items include new HVAC and Sheet Metal Tools. In the Athletic bank, we have new figures on anatomy and on weights. For those assisting in K-12 classrooms, there are items on teaching reading, on the 6-dot Nemeth Code for Braille math and on theories of child development; and at the college level, new items on arts and crafts such as metal working, screen printing, sculpture and ceramics. And, for those who clean locker rooms and restrooms, we have up-to-date items on safety precautions to avoid blood borne pathogens.

New Reading Comprehension items cover topics from teen mothers, to assessing multicultural needs, to interpreting Union Policies, to school district fingerprinting procedures.

The Math item bank has been especially busy, with new items including quadratic equations and equations with multiple operations and items on calculating things as various as grade point averages, pottery glaze formulas, probabilities, and the molarity of chemical solutions (whew!). Next up will be new construction math questions.

For our new customers in Water Districts, we have added an entire new item bank just for items specific to their jobs, over 50 and counting!

This by no means exhausts the list of new multiple choice items that we have added to our item banks, and we hope you're as excited as we are about the growth of the resources we have to share with our customers. As always remember that the multiple choice format is not the assessment "answer" for all positions and for all competencies.

Still in development is the CODESP Module Catalog, which will group items into modules that you will be able to request when you ask us for test materials. This Catalog will make it easier for you to let us know exactly what you need in your test materials packet. For example, for your HVAC Mechanic, you will be able to specify "HVAC Tools Figure" and "Shop Math-HVAC."

New development means lots of Subject Matter Expert activity, too. As a consortium we need your feedback and assistance, please let us know if your SMEs can review these new items. Email us at tests@codesp.com or call us at 714-374-8644. We are looking forward to working with you!

CODESP Webinar Training

Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement: Keys to a Culture of Excellence

November 17, 2011 | 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM PDT

Currently, you have three types of employees in your organization. They are the Engaged (100% committed to the role), the Disengaged (doing just enough to get by), and the Actively Disengaged (who seek to destroy what's working) - often referred to in organizations as High-Middle-Low performers. This webinar is designed to make you think about your employees' current level of engagement and inspire them to maximize their potential impact on the lives of people they serve.

Presented by Michael Daggs of



"Tutt and Daggs convey their message with a massive amount of passion and enthusiasm that exceeds all expectations. Their program is both entertaining and educational."

www.tuttdaggs.com

Free for Members / Subscribers of CODESP

Register at www.codesp.com

CSPCA Conference

January 26 - 29, 2012

"Fresh Face of Merit"

The 2011 CSPCA annual conference provides an opportunity to learn about current HR issues and to network with your merit system colleagues.

Location: The Hilton Hotel on Harbor Island in San Diego

Keynote Speaker: Garrison Wynn

Conference Includes: Staff development day, Commission and Director workshop options, and vendor area.

www.meritsystem.org



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**International Personnel
Assessment Council
Annual Conference**
July 22 - 25, 2012

Keynote speakers:

- David Campbell
- Wayne Cascio
- Scott Highhouse
- Kevin Murphy
- Rob Ployhart

The conference will open on Sunday, July 22nd with a variety of half-day and full-day workshops. The program offerings will feature separate session tracks on Monday through Wednesday designed to meet the needs of each conference attendee. Join us as we take Vegas by storm.....again!

The call for session proposals and online registration will be announced soon!



Cut-Back Management

Every public manager faces the challenge of cutback management. Real resources are declining (though demand for public service is not). Cutbacks are a reality. Consequently, public managers have the responsibility to make their agencies smaller while, simultaneously, fulfilling their organizations' missions.

Edwin C. Thomas, Jon B. Pierce, and William E. Tomes

Beyond simply looking at the budget, these decisions should be guided by the organization's strategic plan and informed by performance measurement data. In deciding what to cut, managers of each department must consider such key strategic questions as:

What business are we in (mission, purpose and mandates)?

What is our vision for the future (what are we striving to become as an organization; what outcomes are we seeking for our stakeholders)?

What are our guiding principles or values?

Who are our stakeholders?

What do they expect from us?

How well are we performing?

What would happen if the department did not exist, or did not provide a particular service?

What opportunities do we have to cut expenditures?

What are the threats we must avoid if we are to succeed in reaching goals?

BEST PRACTICES IN CUTBACK MANAGEMENT

Below are some examples of useful guidelines and advice for managers about approaches, strategies, and attitudes that may minimize the negative consequences of downsizing.

Although downsizing is a very difficult process that can be emotionally draining, it can provide an opportunity for innovation and improvement. For departments to survive tasks may need to be eliminated, modified or reassigned to increase efficiency. When employees experience changes in their job duties, managers need to remain positive rather than negative and defensive.

View the organization's human resources as an asset rather than a budget line item that must be reduced when faced with tight budgets.

Use downsizing as an opportunity for employee cross-training to enhance their chances of growth and development in the future.

Over-communicate. Ensure that there are frequent and honest communications to all employees about every aspect of downsizing.

Be compassionate and understanding. Provide support for those who stay with the organization. Counseling, training and support must be available for the "survivors" to help them adapt to the downsizing.

Organizational improvement or deterioration in the aftermath of downsizing is clearly dependent on much more than simply what or how much is cut from the budget. Approaches to decision-making and management are also critical determinants of success.

CODESP products and services can increase HR Department efficiency.



Solutions

Regardless of your district's size, type or geographical location, CODESP has the ideal web-based talent assessment tools to fit your needs. Improve candidate quality, hire more efficiently, cut costs, and boost employee performance.

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Our Products

- Multiple Choice Test Item Bank
- Interview Bank
- Supplemental Applications
- Performance Examinations
- Writing Exercises
- Job Analysis Questionnaires
- Job Description Builder

Our Services

- Online Employment Testing
(Instant Scoring & Item Analysis)
- Web-based Custom Test Generation
- On-Site & Webinar HR Training

Our Fees - \$1,850/year

Services such as re-classification, job analysis and HR recruitment are available by contract.



No Per Candidate Fees



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