



SortMyCareer (SMC)

**AN INTEGRATED ON-LINE TEST PROVIDING CLEAR DIRECTION FOR
CAREER CHOICE, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK**

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SortMyCareer (SMC) Belief Statement:

A Unique On-line Resource for Career Planning

SortMyCareer (SMC) by Aptitude Institute is a new and uniquely effective on-line resource helping a broad range of individuals identify the career path and future education plan that will maximize their educational and vocational success. SMC accomplishes this by identifying their personal strengths coupled with aptitudes. Aptitudes are factors that can be measured; they predict performance in vocational or educational settings. They are based on one's natural ability to perform a particular type of task better than most other individuals. Aptitude testing has been researched and applied over 100 years. Just as psychometric testing identifies personality types, aptitude testing identifies natural abilities to perform certain job activities, such as an aptitude to solve three-dimensional problems faster than most people. There are no 'bad' aptitude profiles because different occupations require different combinations of talents. Understanding what you are capable of provides you with the first step in planning your future.

SMC delivers aptitude testing online in an affordable, scalable and accessible format. It incorporates the test taker's interests and preferences, and provides a list of specific job options. The report is also suitable for use at all levels of career planning and offers useful information for future employers. It provides useful insights into how an individual processes information and thinks. Test reports can be used by participants and the professionals guiding them, to match interests and strengths to successful vocational choices. Report information is unique to the person tested. SMC is a unique tool for managing human resources, staff development and other levels of program development. Organizations that use this resource have, with the cooperation of their employees, access to the data.

SortMyCareer On-line Assessment

The purpose of this document is to examine SortMyCareer (SMC) assessments and outcomes as they relate to the provision of clear direction for further education, training and work. It provides a background, brief history and review related to the need for aptitude assessment, assessment elements and their relation to identifying personal career objectives and long-term job placement. Document content will include discussion on SMC as:

- Background – unlocking potential
- A robust aptitude test developed by an internationally recognized test developer
- An on-line portal that is used to access the aptitude test
- A tailor made report that identifies career options that are the best fit for an individual
- A link for test users to O*NET the US Labor Department's benchmark online tool which provides comprehensive occupational information
- Summary: justification

Background

Unlocking Potential

Not everyone has the type of job they were born to do. We have, too often, heard relatives, neighbors, and colleagues lament their job choice based on need, convenience or intellect. The stories of doctors who cannot stand the sight of blood and teachers who do not like children fill popular media with an endless series of televised dramas portraying poor vocational matches leading to unhappy situations for everyone involved.

In an issue paper (Military Leadership Diversity Commission Issue Paper #10 January 2010) a federal military commission stated that "In the case of aptitude tests, extensive research shows that well-developed aptitude tests are valid predictors of future performance and are typically not found to be discriminatory according to testing standards and the law." Simply put, aptitude testing helps all users identify, analyse and synthesize the elements of their career potential. This can be accomplished by providing objective information through the SortMyCareer assessment outcomes and offering customised designs for aptitude-assessed career alternatives.

Given the value of aptitude assessment and at least 100 years of career suitability research, three factors have been identified that underpin modern aptitude testing:

1. There are a number of basic job talents, which can be measured independently of job experience. These are predictably in place at puberty and remain constant throughout a person's working life
2. Each career relies on some combination of aptitudes. Research has identified these aptitude patterns and which combinations fit specific careers
3. Individuals who pursue careers that match their strongest aptitudes report above average success. A majority of people who have used a comprehensive aptitude

testing program found their results “helpful,” or “very helpful.” (Betz and Borgen: 2009)

Given the research and personal experience, today's work environment with myriad job options requires an effective way of reducing the thousands of possible occupations to a short, workable list of high-quality choices. This is a goal of “SortMyCareer.”

SortMyCareer (SMC): A Robust Aptitude Test

Irvin Shambaugh, chief test developer, has a long and distinguished career in the field of aptitude testing. His experience and related history include:

- President, Chief Scientist and Senior Test Administrator for the Aptitude Inventory Measurement Service Based in Dallas, Texas 1976 – Present
- Chief Scientist for the Ball Foundation Grant for Industrial Testing 1974-76
- Research coordinator for Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation 1965-76

The initial goal of Aptitude Institute was to create an affordable aptitude test designed for anyone over the age of 16 to effectively and efficiently match their individual aptitudes and working style with specific job options. The effort resulted in SortMyCareer, a complete careers advice package comprising:

- A comprehensive aptitude test that looks at the person as a whole
- A specific tailored report with quantifiable, easily understood information as the basis for decision making
- Links from the SortMyCareer portal about careers, which will take test takers directly to useful relevant information about what jobs involve, pay scales and market demand for each job

SMC tests measure important predictors of career aptitude including:

- Working Personality (Generalist/Specialist)
- Working Style (Introvert/Extrovert)
- Abstract Ability/Structural Ability
- Convergent Thinking/Strategic Thinking
- Idea Fluency/Idea Fixation
- Visual Processing Speed

SMC also measures general vocabulary, interests, structural ability, convergent thinking, and strategic thinking. These comprehensive assessments of aptitude elements identify and affirm personal preferences integral to individual career growth and development.

SMC: An On-line Portal to Access the Aptitude Test

Characterized by its ease of use across a broad spectrum of individuals over the age of 16, SortMyCareer is deployed via an online portal to simplify test taking, results reporting,

and the provision of career advice. Test outcomes include relevant, specific job information with each person taking the test receiving a minimum of 10 individually matched careers worthy of consideration based on their test results.

It takes approximately 90 minutes to complete all ten SMC exercises and receive a list of occupations that match the results. This, however, is not the end of the career planning process. Once matched careers are identified, participants have a strong foundation to begin the career exploration process. They will have the information needed to take the next steps in gathering information regarding the various employment options. The complete process between identifying critical aptitude characteristics and deciding on a new career can take several months. Prepared with knowledge gained through the SMC testing process, participants will be able to strategically plan future careers and related life options.

The SMC Report: Aptitude Patterns and Career Options

The SMC report is a specific tailored summary of test outcomes consisting of quantifiable, understandable information as the basis for decision making. In developing individual reports, SMC provides comprehensive career information by linking directly to the United States Department of Labor's O*NET system. O*NET displays approximately 800 different aptitude patterns that can be matched to nearly 1000 occupations. These detailed career descriptions of the world of work are used by job seekers, workforce development human resource professionals, students and researchers.

SMC test developer, Irvin Shambaugh, has developed a simplified method for matching aptitudes and careers and incorporating them into the SortMyCareer assessment components. He found in his early research that 16 basic aptitude patterns accounted for most of the variation in the careers best suited to those taking the test. People with particular patterns found success within a group of occupations with similar characteristics. Once the basic pattern is determined for a client, it becomes a matter of making minor adjustments based on the person's remaining scores such as vocabulary and working speed to create a tailored list of careers (Shambugh: 1983).

Let's look at an example:

Janice has the aptitude pattern typical of persuasive people: Generalist Working Personality, Abstract Thinking, Idea Fluency, and average-to-strong in Strategic Thinking. As a group, people with this combination of traits are successful in fields that require an ability to communicate ideas to other people. Since Janice has an Extrovert Working Style, she should consider persuasive careers that offer daily opportunities to work directly with other people. Her average score in General Vocabulary is adequate for many persuasive fields, but she should consider improving in this area if she picks an option that places an emphasis on writing.

At this point, her recommendations would include both business careers, such as marketing and real estate, as well as non-business careers, such as fund-raising and counselling. Her results on the Interests exercise were much stronger for social service

careers than for business. This means her report would place careers such as elementary school teaching, counselling, and fund-raising as the strongest matches, but it would also mention some persuasive business careers because of the possibility that her interests might shift at some point.

This example demonstrates how the strategy is not to compare every person with every possible career, but rather to find the narrow range of careers that fit the basic pattern. Once this is accomplished, the results are further modified based on other traits measured. Finally, these results are separated into options that match the person's stated career interests and those that do not. Another important point to note is that SortMyCareer does not dictate a career solution for the client. Once the career suggestions have been presented in the report and read and understood by the test taker, the responsibility for completing the process of choosing a career lies entirely with the test taker.

Summary: Justification

By using aptitude testing, for a modest cost, and with a few hours of effort, most people can gain an accurate appraisal of their innate career talents. If people are willing to investigate the resulting educational and career suggestions, they can reach an informed career decision that improves their chances for lasting success and satisfaction. For businesses, aptitude testing reduces the cost of recruitment and retention while delivering improved results. It also helps employers address skill shortages which can hold back their business even at times of high unemployment. For social agencies, testing provides a means of helping people break out of the cycle of unemployment to live satisfying lives and play a meaningful role in society.

For governments and industries targeting productivity and economic gains, aptitude testing can ensure that prospective employees select careers where they can be successful and make the greatest contribution. For high risk populations that traditionally have poor success rates at securing and retaining jobs such as school dropouts, mental health clients, and individuals discharged from correctional facilities, SMC confirms strengths and interests. The test can also enhance self-esteem and aptitude-based job success.

The ability to match an employee's strongest talents to the requirements of particular occupations, analogous to putting a square peg in a square hole, benefits the individual, the employer and society. SMC has the potential to make these benefits more widely available than ever before. It can also help create businesses staffed by people utilizing their strongest aptitudes, education based on those strengths, and contributing in a mutually supportive work environment.

References:*

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Requirements and the Demographic Profile of the Eligible Population: The Use of Standardized Aptitude Tests in Determining Eligibility, (2010). Military Leadership Diversity Commission. Arlington, Virginia, p. 1.

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*Research Resources used in constructing SortMyCareer may be found on the Aptitude Institute website.

Testimonials:*

College administrator:

During 2010 Julene McCorkindale offered staff and senior students from John McGlashan College the opportunity to undertake aptitude testing on behalf of the Aptitude Institute. As a result, the college intends to embark on further testing in 2011 to include all Year 11 students and link it with a curriculum unit on life skills, transition and careers.

Throughout the testing process John McGlashan College has found Julene to be highly professional and responsive. The quality of the product she offers is continually reviewed and adapted based on feedback from the consumer. Julene has an outstanding ability to interpret the data and link it with life opportunities, future study and career planning in common sense manner.

In completing the testing, many of our students gained a much broader and more comprehensive view of their own talents, strengths and aptitudes along with their weaknesses and identification of areas requiring further work. John McGlashan College plans to continue to utilise Aptitude Testing as part of a broader programme in course planning, goal setting and career planning.

I fully endorse the work of the Aptitude Institute and the personal passion and innovation for Julene McCorkindale to craft a very useful tool that will serve to assist our young people to find their place as happy and productive members of New Zealand society.

**Neil Garry, Deputy Principal
John McGlashan College, Dunedin**



Student:

Josie, 18 years, Dunedin

I found the aptitude test and summary very helpful, especially as it explores several aspects of a career, as in reality jobs are more complex than one would expect. To really be able to prosper and be passionate in your line of work you really do need to have the right attributes for the job. At this age, fresh out of high school it is intimidating to say the least, entering the real world and deciding what on earth to do. And even more frightening is the prospect of missing out on other potential opportunities once you've made a decision. The aptitude test was great as it gave suggestions as to what line of work to aim for which match my skills, and more importantly the careers to avoid (as let's face it, it's much easier to cross off options than commit yourself to one). It seemed very accurate, everything in the report I identified with. It was definitely a good push in the right direction, inspiring me to strive for a career which is creative and offers variety. I think it's perfect for anyone who is stuck in a rut as to where to go next, or even just to discover whether your attributes really match the career you're set on.

*Additional Testimonials are available on the Aptitude Institute website.



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