



# Your brain predicts your chances for a job

An ethical hacker tries to find the weak spots in the security system of companies. Your 'brain profile' turns out to be a good predictor of the fit between you and a demanding job.

## Two groups

There are roughly two types of cyber security specialists. One likes to attack and will search for weak spots in the security system. This group of specialists is called 'ethical hackers'. On behalf of a company or institution, they try to break into the company's computer system. The other type is more defensive. They don't necessarily want to find holes but want to create ways for companies or institutions to protect themselves against digital intruders. A good cybersecurity team consists of a mix of both of these types.

## It is not smart to only assess IQ

'Traditionally, we let our potential cyber security specialists perform an IQ test, among other things' tells Heleen Huart, HR-professional at Deloitte. 'But intelligence is not always a good predictor of whether someone will fit into our team or not. For instance, sometimes we get cyber security specialists who have worked in the public sector. They have high scores in IQ- and behavioural tests, but still might have a hard time at Deloitte. Whether someone is a good fit for us, depends on other things as well. For example, whether you keep a cool head during stressful situations, and if you dare to quickly make decisions on the basis of new information. We work with an open-plan office, resulting in constant background noise. Some people get too distracted by this. So, intelligence is important, just like a nice CV and personality as well. We were looking for a test method that could be a better predictor of whether a candidate fits into our cyber security team.'

## The BrainsFirst games

Deloitte got into contact with BrainsFirst. This company develops computer games from which someone's brain profile can be created. A brain profile shows the characteristics of someone's brain, the strong and the weak points. Applicants play the BrainsFirst games and without them noticing, dozens of brain aspects are being measured. For example, the influence that stress has on you, how big your working memory is and how you deal with setbacks. But also if you work in a structured way or think of solutions ad hoc, and if you are easily distracted. Applicants perform shooting games, though there are also games that look more like the traditional game of Memory. The fun thing is, losing does not exist. For example, if you keep missing in the shooting game, it may indicate that you are more thoughtful. In some jobs, that is a big asset.

## Big differences

Tom Schuurmans is manager of the Deloitte cyber security team. He tells us that a large number of their employees have played the BrainsFirst games. This led to an important discovery. Tom: 'The ethical hackers in our team turned out to have a different brain profile than the people who work on the more defensive side. The hackers performed better on skills like concentration, control and anticipation. This resulted in an above average stress resistance, faster and better control, and more concentration without losing speed. 'Defenders' were better in switching their attention and had a better working memory.' The tests made a deep impression on the team. Nobody expected the differences to be so big. The test had immediate effects. Tom: 'A couple of staff members changed positions. For example, there was an ethical hacker who, according to his brain profile, was more like the defensive type. And the funny thing was: this person had been feeling out of place for a while. Now that he has switched, he performs much better.'

## Test managers as well?

What can the cyber security team of Deloitte do with this knowledge? Heleen Huart: 'All companies searching for talented employees are testing them in about the same way and using similar tests. BrainsFirst offers something completely different. We think that brain profiles are a good addition to the existing assessments. They help us to estimate more accurately if an applicant fits into our organisation.' Tom adds: 'I think we can apply the tests to other functions. I played the games of BrainsFirst myself. My brain profile differed from both security specialist groups. That makes sense, because I have been working as a manager for years. Apparently managers have their own brain profile. In time, we can use the test to predict whether someone is a born leader, an excellent hacker or should best be retrained to become an accountant.'

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