

Situational Judgment Tests

Part 1 – What they look like



AbilitUs

Content

The objectives of the document are to explain in detail the Situational Judgment Tests in order to have a full understanding and be prepared correctly before taking them in a recruitment procedure.

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“Through our books and articles, we will share what we know and what we learn about aptitude tests and define the actions that can ensure your success!”

« Situational Judgment Tests. Part 1 – What they look like » by ABILITUS

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Description of Situational Judgment Tests

What are Situational Judgment Tests?

Situational Judgment Tests (also abbreviated SJT or SJTs) are a type of aptitude/psychometric test that measures behaviors and attitude of a person in work-related situations. This type of test presents candidates challenging situations that they might experience in the job for which they are applying, to measure decision-making skills. For each situation, several possible actions are presented and candidates have to identify the most and the least effective answers to solve the problem described.

Example of a question from a Situational Judgment Test.

QUESTION :

You are working on a file with a colleague, who is currently on sick leave. The file is for another Unit. You learn that the sick leave of your colleague is extended by four more weeks. The treatment of the file is blocked. How do you react?

	Most Effective	Least Effective
Inform your Team Leader of the progress made on the file and the reasons for blocking.		
Inform your Team Leader of the file progress, and ask for someone else to work with you on the file.		
Wait the return of your colleague. Your part of the work is anyway done.		
Extend your working hours during one week to finalize the file and sent it.		

For recruiters, Situations Judgment Tests (SJTs) are useful for assessing soft-skills, non-academic behaviors and practical intelligence to select the right candidate for a job.

These tests are used by recruiters from private and public organizations in the recruitment procedure. Many organizations from various sectors are using them: banking, consultancy, audit, energy, FMCG, media or public institutions as the European Commission (through the European Personal Selection Office called EPSO).

History behind Situational Judgment Tests

Situational Judgment Tests are not a new type of test. They have been used since the 1950s. At the beginning, SJTs were used for military purposes during the World War II. Quickly, recruiters have been using them as they are presenting many benefits.

In the 1990s, the popularity of SJTs have been growing a lot among recruiters, as they are considered as efficient tools for recruiters to assess candidates' competencies and skills. Other aptitude tests are able to measure correctly soft skills, but are more focused on hard skills (numerical, verbal or abstract reasoning).

The development of SJTs is correlated to the evolution and trends in the Human Resources Management. Over the last 15 years, the role and important of Human Resources has significantly increased. It has to be managed in an efficient way to mobilize the people (employees, agent...), in order to get the best performance. Since the 1990s, the HR management is based on skills-based approach, rather than knowledge-based or experience-based approaches.

As part of HR management, the recruitment procedures have evolved with the HR management, in order to support this skills-based management. Recruiters have an important task to recruit candidates (job seekers) with the right competencies for their business. They need to identify the strong performers, sometimes among a large number of candidates applying for jobs. Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs) are considered as one of the best tools to achieve this task during the recruitment procedure, as they can predict correctly the future performance of a candidate.

Till 10 years ago, SJTs were mainly used in the United States. But now this test type is spreading around the world the popularity continues to increase. More and more organizations in Europe are using them. They are not only used by multinationals, but also by small/medium companies.

Why do recruiters use Situational Judgment Tests?

Why recruiters are using SJTs?

For the recruitment procedure, recruiters need strong tools in order to identify potential strong performers having the right competencies/skills among all the candidates. Aptitude/psychometric tests are offering benefits to reach this target:

- Cost effective – In most case, SJT will be done computer-based and are standardize.
- Powerful tests – Validity of this type of test has been demonstrated through many researches. They can predict the future performance of candidates
- Convenient – Easy to use with quick results to get candidates' profiles, and identify the strengths/weaknesses

Recruiters are using SJTs in complementary with other aptitude tests: verbal reasoning, numerical reason, abstract reasoning or personality test. Each aptitude test is measure a specific dimension. The use of several tests is providing a full profile of a candidate on various dimensions.

Another reason why recruiters are using SJT is the number of candidates applying for the job. If the number of candidates is large, recruiters have even more interests to use aptitude tests and SJTs to have a fast procedure.

- Private sector : audit/consulting companies are using many aptitude tests to recruit graduates for junior profiles
- Public sector: EPSO is using aptitude tests and SJTs during the first phase of the recruitment procedure (computer based test).

What do Situational Judgment Tests measure?

As mentioned above, Situational Judgment Tests measures behaviors of a person in work-related situations, to assess soft-skills, non-academic behaviors and practical intelligence.

SJTs are based on model in order to assess key skills/competencies. These skills are considered as essential. An employee should possess them to be successful in the job role. The competencies are defined not only for the recruitment procedure, but in the entire competency-based management system of the organization.

With SJTs, recruiters can measure the following dimensions:

1. **Decision making:** in all jobs, employees are forced to take decisions. Sometimes, it can be difficult decisions, often under time pressure and/or stress. Employers need to know that the people they hire are competent enough to take good decisions in all situations.
2. **Problem solving:** ability to accurately assess a problem and effectively arrive to an excellent solution: solve problems, find solutions or identify creative ideas. Employers are looking for analytical skills, critical thinking.
3. **Interpersonal skills:** ability to get on with other people and work with them efficiently is considered as a key competency. Most jobs require employees to work in a team and/or have interactions with other peoples (client, colleague, directors,...).
4. **Organization skills:** ability to organize the work depending constraints (time, results, objectives, money, resources).

How do SJTs measure these dimensions? For each question of a situational judgment test, the candidate will have to apply a reasoning to understand the situation, to evaluate the relevance of the possible answers and to

identify the correct answers (most/least effective). The candidate will make a judgment based on: information coming from the questions, competencies linked to the job and behavior of the candidate.

What is the validity of Situational Judgment Tests?

Like all other aptitude and psychometric tests, several studies have demonstrated the validity and benefits of SJTs in a recruitment procedure.

- SJTs have a predictive validity: ability to predict the future performance and productivity of candidates for a job.
- Use with other aptitude tests, cognitive tests (intelligence tests) and personality tests, SJTs increase the validity of a recruitment procedure. It will reinforce the view on candidates' profile by offering a view on the competencies/skills dimension.
- Candidates perceived SJTs as a robust assessment type and equitable. Candidates also perceived a higher complexity level compared to other aptitude tests as they are not directly linked to hard skills (knowledge), but soft skills and behaviors.
- Capacity to test a large number of candidates in an efficient and valid way when using it in a computer based system.

Even if SJTs are focus on measuring soft-stills, there is a part of subjectivity in them as each candidate interprets the situation based on his understanding, his perception and his experience. Each judgment can be different. A strong preparation on SJTs will help candidate to decrease the part of subjectivity while taking these tests, and make judgment respecting recruiters' expectations.

Development process of Situational Judgment Tests

To be valid, aptitude tests need to respect rules during the development. For SJTs, the development process is following three stages. ABILITUS has developed the tests according to this procedure.

1. Identification of the core competencies/skills that the organization wants to follow. In most case, employers are using standard competency based management system with the same core competencies: communication, working with other, problem solving, learning and development, resilience, priority and organization, quality and results, leadership.
2. The development starts with a job analysis and identification of work situations, collected from experienced people (employee, manager, assistant, director, customers...). Each situation has at least to be linked to one core competencies. When all the components of the scenario are identified, the question is build respecting rules: length of the question, text format, job position, words used...
3. The third step is to identify the possible answers (actions or behaviors) to the situation, for which the effectiveness varies. Experienced people are validating the effectiveness of each answer. The answers are also written in a way that there is no obvious answers and minimize the luck factor.
4. Each question is being tested and validated by experts and excellent employees (strong performers, high potential) before including them in a test. This validation step will confirm the effectiveness of each answer. If there are doubts on a question and/or the possible answers, the question is reviewed, adapted and tested again. A question is used in a test only after this validation step.
5. When building a test, each core competencies has to be equally represented, to provide a complete and valid view. A SJT should at least have 20 questions to be valid.

Composition of Situational Judgment Tests

Two types of Situational Judgment Tests

There are two types of SJTs used by recruiters. The difference between them is on the content part and the skills measured.

1. **SJTs measuring standard core competencies** - These SJTs are measuring standard competencies for profiles, and not for particular job roles: employee, manager, assistant, administrator...
2. **SJTs tailored for specific jobs requirements** - These SJTs are designed for precise job roles to assess key skills: sales, technical operator, financial auditors, call center operative...

The most use type is the first one. However both SJTs type can be used in the same recruitment procedure as they are complementary.

ABILITUS is offering only the first type of SJTs (measuring core competencies) as they are the most used by organizations in private and public sectors.

Composition of Situational Judgment Tests

All SJTs are composed of the same components:

1. **The question** – SJTs consist of a series of work based scenarios that an employee could face in a working environment. Scenarios may range from technical issues, ethical dilemmas, difficulties with others people (colleagues or third-party), take action or common everyday problems.
2. **Possible answers** – The answers suggested are most of the time not clearly good or wrong. In practice, all answers can lead to the resolution of the problem. But the efficiency behind each answer is not on the same level. The number of possible questions can varied (from 4 to 6 answers).
3. **Number of questions in a test** – The number of questions can varied in SJTs. It is correlated to the number of core competencies. In average, you have 20-25 questions.

The question label {

The possible answers {

QUESTION :

You are working on a file with a colleague, who is currently on sick leave. The file is for another Unit. You learn that the sick leave of your colleague is extended by four more weeks. The treatment of the file is blocked. How do you react?

	Most Effective	Least Effective
Inform your Team Leader of the progress made on the file and the reasons for blocking.		
Inform your Team Leader of the file progress, and ask for someone else to work with you on the file.		
Wait the return of your colleague. Your part of the work is anyway done.		
Extend your working hours during one week to finalize the file and sent it.		

The practice tests available on ABILITUS are composed with 28 questions, with 4 possible answers and a time-frame of 90 seconds per question. Our SJTs are developed to evaluate 8 core competencies in which each one is measured at least in 3 questions.

Which core competencies are measured?

Each organization can have its own core competencies. However in most case, they are aligned on the standard core competencies defined by Human Resources Management standards. The SJTs available on ABILITUS are following a model with 8 core competencies.



Forms of Situational Judgment Tests and the way to answer

SJTs can be presented in different ways: be paper-based, be computer-based, use text only, use media content (video or image). The most use is computer-based, as it is the most cost effective solution for recruiters for a large number of candidates.

There is also a variety of ways in which the candidate is asked to respond to the SJT:

- **Most and least effective actions** : the situation is suggested with four possible answers and the candidate need to indicate which is ‘the most’ and which is ‘the least’ effective actions depending his judgment.
- **Rate responses:** the situation is presented with the possible responses for which the candidate need to rate each response for effectiveness, depending his judgment
- **Ranked responses:** the situation is presented with the possible responses for which the candidate need to give a rank order from the most effective (1) to the least effective (4).

The SJTs available on ABILITUS is using the form Most/Least effective actions, which is the most used by recruiters in private and public sectors.

QUESTION :

You are working on a file with a colleague, who is currently on sick leave. The file is for another Unit. You learn that the sick leave of your colleague is extended by four more weeks. The treatment of the file is blocked. How do you react?

	MOST Effective	LEAST Effective	MOST Effective	Effective	Slightly Effective	LEAST Effective	1	2	3	4
Inform your Team Leader of the progress made on the file and the reasons for blocking.										
Inform your Team Leader of the file progress, and ask for someone else to work with you on the file.										
Wait the return of your colleague. Your part of the work is anyway done.										
Extend your working hours during one week to finalize the file and sent it.										

Most and Least Effective Actions
Rated Responses
Ranked Responses

The scoring systems for Situational Judgment Tests

There are two scoring systems for SJTs. Unfortunately it is hard to know in advance which system is being used by recruiters. But in most case, the scoring system will be mentioned in the instructions before starting the test.

Scoring system n°1 : *Considering only the most/least effective answers*

This system only counts the points if the candidate has identified the most and/or the least effective answers. For the intermediate possible answers, the system does not count any point. The scoring range per question is between 0 and 2 points.

Scoring range with 3 values

0 point	1 point	2 points
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Scoring system n°2 : *Intermediate answers have also points*

In the second system, each possible answer can provide points, even the intermediate responses. But the number of points varies between intermediate and the most/least effective solutions. The scoring range per questions is between 0 and 5. The advantage of this scoring system is to consider the degree of effectiveness of each possible answer.

Scoring range with 5 values

0 point	0.5 point	1 point	1.5 point	2 points
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QUESTION :

You are working on a file with a colleague, who is currently on sick leave. The file is for another Unit. You learn that the sick leave of your colleague is extended by four more weeks. The treatment of the file is blocked. How do you react?

Inform your Team Leader of the progress made on the file and the reasons for blocking.	Neutral
Inform your Team Leader of the file progress, and ask for someone else to work with you on the file.	Most Effective
Wait the return of your colleague. Your part of the work is anyway done.	Neutral
Extend your working hours during one week to finalize the file and sent it.	Least Effective

Most Effective	Least Effective
0 point	0 point
1 point	0 point
0 point	0 point
0 point	1 point

SYSTEM N°1
Only Most/Least are considered

Most Effective	Least Effective
0.5 point	0.5 point
1 point	0 point
0.5 point	0.5 point
0 point	1 point

SYSTEM N°2
Intermediate answers have also points

Which scoring system is the most used?

Currently, the second scoring system is more and more used as it is considering the degree of effectiveness and provide a better picture to recruiters. For the European competition, EPSO is using this second system for their SJTs of the recruitment procedure

ABILITUS is using the second scoring system for the SJTs practice tests, aligned on EPSO

How to perform well in Situational Judgment Tests?

Do I need a preparation before taking SJTs?

YES, a preparation will help you to succeed these tests.

Even if no particular knowledge is required to take a SJT, recruiters are using SJTs to assess soft-skills, non-academic behaviors and practical intelligence to select candidates. Candidates will interpret the situation based on his understanding, his perception and his experience. Each judgment can be different, and there is a part of subjectivity in them.

This why a preparation is strongly recommend for SJTs. They are also generally considered as the most difficult aptitude tests, compared to verbal, numerical or abstract reasoning. Having a strong preparation and practicing will help you to increase your chances of success.

Some advices if you need to take a SJT:

- You should only use the information provided in the question/situation. Do not make assumptions!
- You have to identify the 'most' and 'least' effective answers only within the possible answers. You should evaluate the relevance of each answer to solve the problem stated in the question.
- If you know the core competencies of the organization, try to identify which competency is evaluated in the question. It will help you to identify the right answers.

Is there a method to increase the chance of success for SJTs?

YES. There are several methods that can help to solve SJTs:

- Get prepared with practices many SJTs. The more you practice; higher will be your knowledge on these tests.
- Have an excellent understanding of the core competencies: definition, aptitude behind them...
- Know and understand the values and business principles of the organization.
- Analyze the components of the questions and the possible answers.
- Identify the comparable intermediary responses.
- Logical analysis with the method 'life position strategy'.
- Advices on how to deal with the SJTs during the recruitment procedure.

ABILITUS can help you to increase your chances of success. We offer you:

- An online and interactive platform to practice Situational Judgment Tests. A testing mode to practice under realistic conditions. A revision mode to review the questions and understand the answers
- Access to study materials (e-books) explaining all the methods to solve SJTs. This e-book is available for the people who buy at least one test package!

Interested? Come directly to ABILITUS' website and buy a package: www.abilitus.com

Examples of questions in SJTs

Below you can find example of Situational Judgment Tests, which will allow you to become familiar. For each situation, you need to identify ‘the most’ and ‘the least’ effective answers.

Question 1

You have joined a new team. During the first months, your Team Leader was taking some time to give you the guidelines and coach you. Now you feel that you need for more autonomy and independence to do your work.

	Most Effective	Least Effective	
Decrease your availability and work more independently.			
Closely monitor the quality of your work, to show to your Team Leader that you can handle it alone.			
Ask for a meeting with your Team Leader to discuss your working relationship.			
Ask for advice to a more experienced colleague after an assessment of your performance.			

Question 2

You are Team Leader. Your team is under pressure with a heavy workload. A training session is planned for the entire team to improve the speed of treatment. One of your Team Members tells you that he does not wish to follow the training, citing his heavy workload.

	Most Effective	Least Effective	
Indicate to your Team Member that the training is mandatory and that he must attend it.			
Go through his workload and indicate which files are less priority so he can attend the training.			
Transfer some of the files to another Team Member so he can attend the training.			
You empower him on the importance of the training in his job and let him take the final decision on his participation to the training.			

Question 3

You are working on a file with a colleague, who is currently on sick leave. The file is for another Unit. You learn that the sick leave of your colleague is extended by four more weeks. The treatment of the file is blocked. How do you react?

	Most Effective	Least Effective	
Inform your Team Leader of the progress made on the file and the reasons for blocking.			
Wait the return of your colleague. Your part of the work is anyway done.			
Extend your working hours during one week to finalize the file and sent it.			
Inform your Team Leader of the file progress, and ask for someone else to work with you on the file.			

For each question, you can see the answers, with an explanation of the right answers.

Question 1

You have joined a new team. During the first months, your Team Leader was taking some time to give you the guidelines and coach you. Now you feel that you need for more autonomy and independence to do your work.

	Most Effective	Least Effective	
Decrease your availability and work more independently.			Strategy where don't react. It can generate frustration, unsatisfaction if it does not change
Closely monitor the quality of your work, to show to your Team Leader that you can handle it alone.			
Ask for a meeting with your Team Leader to discuss your working relationship.			Direct and clear communication to redefine the working relationship with your superior
Ask for advice to a more experienced colleague after an assessment of your performance.			

Question 2

You are Team Leader. Your team is under pressure with a heavy workload. A training session is planned for the entire team to improve the speed of treatment. One of your Team Members tells you that he does not wish to follow the training, citing his heavy workload.

	Most Effective	Least Effective	
Indicate to your Team Member that the training is mandatory and that he must attend it.			
Go through his workload and indicate which files are less priority so he can attend the training.			You listen your employee, search a solution so he can follow the training which is important for the team
Transfer some of the files to another Team Member so he can attend the training.			
You empower him on the importance of the training in his job and let him take the final decision on his participation to the training.			No willingness to assert your position, find a solution for an important initiative in the team

Question 3

You are working on a file with a colleague, who is currently on sick leave. The file is for another Unit. You learn that the sick leave of your colleague is extended by four more weeks. The treatment of the file is blocked. How do you react?

	Most Effective	Least Effective	
Inform your Team Leader of the progress made on the file and the reasons for blocking.			
Wait the return of your colleague. Your part of the work is anyway done.			
Extend your working hours during one week to finalize the file and sent it.			It is not a file with a high priority. You might be in trouble and don't inform your Team Leader of the situation
Inform your Team Leader of the file progress, and ask for someone else to work with you on the file.			Communication of the status, ask for support to your superior to identify the solutions (or priority)

Questions ?

Thank you for choosing **AbilitUs** !
Our team is dedicated to answer you quickly and support your preparation.

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