



6 Myths of Post Offer Employment Testing

Post offer employment testing (POET) saves companies millions of dollars yearly in Worker's Compensation claims. However, POET doesn't work for every job, nor every company. And it's never a hands off, one-size-fits-all solution.

In working with hundreds of companies over two decades, we've discovered the caveats and nuances that merit a deeper look before investing in such a program. Experience is a great teacher, so we're sharing the myths and missteps that we've helped clients avoid when considering a POET program.

Myth #1. Using a POET always makes economic sense.

It doesn't always make economic sense. Anyone considering a POET program needs to consider claims costs, frequency and POET program costs to estimate return-on-investment.

Recommendation: Analyze detailed claims data from multiple years to isolate POET impactable injuries and their costs or find someone who can. Here are the factors to consider:

- Location of injury
- Job title
- Injury cause
- Nature of the injury
- Tenure of employee
- Body part
- Average claims cost of POET impactable claims when fully developed
- POET development costs and ongoing costs
- Factor in an industry average fail rate. Consider a 3.5 – 6% window.



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Myth #2: The physical demands of any job can be accurately simulated through a POET.

Some jobs fit well into a POET program and others don't. For example, if a job has low weights and is repetitive in nature, then simulating that repetition for a sustained period of time in a legally defensible way may not be possible as several EEOC cases have demonstrated.

Recommendation: Focus your POET testing analysis on jobs that do not produce cumulative trauma injuries. Start by looking at your functional job descriptions (FJDs). Not sure if your FJDs are updated and accurate? Invest in a functional job analysis to identify essential job functions and their physical demands. Consult with your safety committees and third-party partners to see if your jobs make sense in a pass/fail environment. Here's a good rule of thumb: Does the job require lifting more than 50 pounds as an essential job function? Jobs that require heavy lifting vs. light lifting and repetitive motion can be good candidates for a POET program.

Myth #3: POET always finds pre-existing conditions.

A POET is built to model a set of essential job functions and their physical demands, not to uncover a pre-existing condition. A POET will tell you if an applicant can meet the physical demands of the job. Pre-existing conditions may exist that could be aggravated by the physical demands of the job.

Recommendation: That is not to say a POET can't uncover a pre-existing condition, but you might also consider pairing a POET with a physical exam by a physician. This will help you protect yourself against those pre-existing conditions that POET testing is not designed to uncover. You should also consider using wearable technology to capture objective baseline data.

Myth #4: My company can just do our POET with our existing team.

An effective POET requires a specialized expertise and experience to minimize the EEOC liability risk that every POET program creates. This expertise not only involves specially trained therapists, but also a comprehensive set of program documentation, a time-tested methodology and ongoing reporting to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Recommendation: The reduction in legal risk for POET programs developed by professionals far exceeds the cost savings of developing a program from scratch using in-house resources. Also, if you've considered developing a single test, it will not be all encompassing for all of your job titles. You'll get the best results from an organization that specializes in creating the proper POET for each job with a consistent set of standards. You also need your testing providers to have the proper training, equipment and methodology in order to keep the program consistent, effective and legally compliant.



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Myth #5: A POET is too hard and will scare away candidates.

By law, a POET cannot exceed the physical demands of the job. As such, POET tests only “scare away” those applicants that cannot meet the physical demands of the job. Employees who cannot physically do the job hurt themselves and hurt your bottom line.

Recommendation: Make sure that your POET has been objectively validated for accuracy by existing employees and management. It’s important to ensure the employee and employer understand the nature and demands of the job. The employee needs to be capable of performing the physical demands of the job that they are applying for in order to stay safe and reduce the risk of injury. A quality controlled validation process is key to ensuring the test is accurate and your employees are being hired in the right position, with everyone’s safety and future in mind. Further, understanding the physical demands of a job helps when considering return to work restrictions and modified duty.

Myth #6: The PWS needs to address “reasonable accommodations.”

While reasonable accommodations certainly require consideration, how often does the need arise in a typical POET program? In our experience, requests for reasonable accommodations by applicants are very rare and should not be an obstacle to considering a program.

Recommendation: Have a well-documented process for identifying applicants who need reasonable accommodations, and adjust your POET accordingly, based on your business necessity.

In addition to these 6 myths, another important consideration is documentation. While POET litigation is rare, be prepared. You’ll want an internal process in place, and a definition of everything that needs documentation. Are the policies written down? Are the pass-fail rules documented? Do you have updated, accurate functional job descriptions, and a detailed process-and-procedures manual?

The bottom line is that POET success requires a deep analysis of your specific situation, from reviewing your existing labor pool and the current injury claims on file to full documentation of policy, processes and the rules.

WorkWell helps hundreds of businesses objectively assess whether or not a POET program is right for them. For more information, contact WorkWell at (866) 997-9675 or network@workwell.com.



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