



eSkill



CASE STUDY

CCRI uses skills and behavioral testing together to hire person-centered, digitally proficient support professionals

By using eSkill, Minnesota-based nonprofit CCRI ensures that new hires in people-facing, care-oriented roles have both the compassion to serve individuals with disabilities and the digital proficiency to document their work effectively.

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Rachel Gustofson, Talent Specialist

CCRI is a Moorhead, Minnesota-based nonprofit that has supported individuals with disabilities for almost 50 years. The organization assists more than 400 people with disabilities and employs more than 500 dedicated team members, offering services from 24-hour in-home support to rehabilitative mental health care.

The team at CCRI operates according to one overarching belief: every individual, regardless of ability or circumstance, deserves a fulfilling life and a place to call home. Their team members are passionate about fulfilling their mission of helping those with disabilities live more independently and reach their full potential.

Lisa Nicholas and Rachel Gustofson are the talent specialists putting that team together. The two handle hiring from beginning to end: recruiting new hires, reviewing applications, performing screening calls, leading interviews, onboarding, and conducting orientations.

Their primary goal is to hire “people” people — those who thrive when working with others and helping those around them. At the same time, they need hires who have adequate digital skills, since online documentation is crucial to maintaining funding in home and community-based services in Minnesota.



THE CHALLENGE

For the last five years, both Lisa and Rachel have been involved directly in recruiting at CCRI. However, they both started their careers doing direct care with clients. Lisa began as a part-time direct support professional in 2017 alongside her full-time job at another company, and Rachel began in 2004, also initially in direct care before moving into administration and then HR.

As a result, they both understand through first-hand experience the importance of hiring the right people to work with their clients, particularly when hiring for direct support professionals — those who provide medical care, hands-on help, and encouragement to their clients to get out into the community.

For seven years prior to transitioning to eSkill, the hiring team used a ten-question, paper comprehension assessment for each candidate, with a 60% cut-off score.

And yet, while that assessment screened out a large portion of unqualified candidates, it didn't address their biggest painpoint: finding those with adequate digital skills. They felt that struggle most acutely during the first day of orientation for new hires.

"We got to the day of orientation, and some of the hires could not figure out how to hit the shift key to make the @ symbol. They couldn't understand how to hit caps lock, or take caps lock off. They didn't understand the keyboard," Lisa explains.



That's a problem when a crucial part of the role is documentation. "If we're not documenting correctly and putting that information in, the state of Minnesota could actually pull our funding and our resources. They can hold that funding for up to three months," Lisa says. "We have more than 400 people we provide services to, and we employ more than 500. If people are not documenting and clocking in and logging information accurately, and we were to be closed down, it would affect hundreds of people in our community."

That's not the only thing that could happen. They know the importance first-hand of not only documentation, but staying up-to-date with internal email alerts.

"Rachel and I do direct care," Lisa explains. "We work in the homes. I worked last night and there was a med change. If I wasn't reading my e-mail, logging into Data Plus and looking at the notes by the supervisor, I would have missed that," which would have adverse effects on their most important people: their clients.

"This is a human's overall health and quality of life that we're testing for," Rachel emphasizes.

Not only did a lack of baseline familiarity with computer systems extend orientation times, but even after, some couldn't handle the digital part of the role, resulting in poor or no documentation when on shift.

"With the technology issues we were seeing in orientation, we knew we wanted an assessment that was online using a computer," Lisa concludes.

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THE SOLUTION

Rachel and Lisa wanted to expand their hiring assessment to digital skills, but knew they still wanted to keep comprehension as part of it. They also knew they wanted to keep screening in-house, with direct oversight of the process.

“Lisa and I really want to be hands on and review everything ourselves, but we knew we needed something that could help us test that basic skill of knowing how to use a keyboard,” Rachel says.

Altogether, the team wanted to assess three things: technology, reading comprehension and whether their hires are “people” people. With eSkill, the team found that not only could they test digital skills like typing and navigation on location, but they could continue testing comprehension and additionally test personality fit for the role, all in one go.

They created two assessments: a five-question skills assessment and a behavioral assessment. Each assessment requires about ten minutes to complete and is completed on the premises, and results are delivered to applicants on-the-spot.

The skills assessment contains three questions based on short stories that target reading and comprehension. The fourth question is an email log-in simulation. The fifth, a typing assessment.

The behavioral assessment, which follows, is a battery of 63 personality questions – the eSkill Behavioral Profile (EBP), which most people complete in ten minutes or less.

Digital Skills

“If somebody can’t even log into an email, there’s no way they’re going to be doing the online documentation that we have to do,” Rachel reiterates.

The digital skills simulation covers the basics: Can someone log into a computer using a given name and password? Part of the simulation is assessing

whether a candidate can use the shift key to create special characters. Per Lisa and Rachel’s setup, the candidate has three attempts at the simulation.

The question following the simulation is a form fill typing question. The candidate is presented with ten boxes with information that needs to be retyped in corresponding boxes. They must get six of the 10 boxes filled in correctly in order to progress.

The assessment is designed to save Lisa and Rachel time addressing their biggest bottleneck in hiring – checking for adequate digital skills needed to log into a computer, type documentation, and navigate CCRI’s multiple systems. “We don’t have as many people failing the comprehension. It’s more the technology piece,” Lisa explains.



THE SOLUTION

Behavioral Skills

Making compassionate hires is a top priority for the hiring team at CCRI. Working directly with those who have disabilities demands resolute attention, empathy, and a love for the work and the people.

“Our goal is to get [our clients] out and to do things with them, to reach their goals — because they all have goals. A walking goal, a cooking goal, it could be a cleaning goal, a community goal. So if you don’t have someone that wants to be engaged with our clients, our clients are going to live a pretty quiet life and they don’t want that. They don’t need that,” Lisa explains. “We want them out and about in the community. I say that’s first and foremost: how it’s going to impact our clients. We want them to live their best lives.”

In typical hiring processes, behavioral assessments serve as an addendum — an additional screening tool that gives hiring managers an added layer of

understanding for a prospect. Yet in roles where certain behavioral traits are critical to successful outcomes, behavioral assessments become an essential aspect of hiring. Since people skills are central to the direct support professional role at CCRI, the behavioral assessment serves as a qualifying (or disqualifying) assessment.

The eSkill Behavioral Profile measures whether a candidate is oriented toward people, data, or things, while also measuring agreeableness, conscientiousness, and work ethic. The team at CCRI developed a scoring scale to determine what constitutes a passing result for behavior — and determined that candidates must score a 2, 3, or 4 in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and work ethic, and a 3 or 4 in people orientation in order to be successful in engagement with their client base.

“If they don’t pass the behavioral assessment, we don’t even move forward with the interview,” Rachel says. “If you’re not a people person, why would you come work with our humans?”



THE IMPLEMENTATION

In developing their assessments, Lisa and Rachel sent prototype assessments to a variety of current employees in various roles. Through that process, they developed a set of assessments they believed was fair and helpful to their candidates.

Assessments are conducted in-person on the day of the interview as an initial assessment. If candidates pass, they proceed to a conversation right then and there. The hiring team receives feedback in real time to determine whether candidates should proceed to the interview.

Customization

Customization played a major role in CCRI's decision to move forward with eSkill. As Rachel explains, the ability to tailor the platform to their specific needs — and truly make it their own — stood out immediately.

“We really, really like how customizable [eSkill is]. That was a huge sell for us because we had the ability to make it our own and we really appreciate that,” Rachel says.

At the same time, CCRI valued not having to start from scratch. While there was an option to build everything independently — editing and creating their own questions with eSkill author — eSkill's existing assessment library provided a strong foundation, with room to explore and refine as needed.

Testing Onsite

Since the assessment wasn't being implemented remotely, the eSkill customer success team set Lisa and Rachel up with a general link so the team could use the same computer and access point for all assessment takers, right from their office.

“We wanted to do it in person. So the fact that Stefan helped us come up with that solution to do that on our laptop and have that general link — we really appreciated that they took that time to figure that out with us,” Rachel says.

Tabulations for both assessments occur in near real-time. “For the behavioral assessment, it takes about 30 seconds to a minute for it to tabulate the data. It doesn't take long at all,” Rachel says. “So we tell people, just hold tight. Once you finish that one, we'll review the data and then we'll come in. So we're going in there within 2 minutes max, letting them know whether they passed or not, and then if they pass, we move forward with the interview.”

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THE RESULTS

The team is seeing great results already. “Prior to doing eSkill, we hired 11% of the applicants that we got. After starting eSkill, we only hired 8%,” Rachel says. “We see that as a good thing because that means we screened out people that probably wouldn’t be successful with us.”

“But the best part is the turnover,” she continues. “Prior to eSkill, we had 27% turnover with the people we hired within the immediate 7 month time frame. And after implementing eSkill, it was 17% over the same 7 months the following year. So, our turnover decreased by 10%, which is fantastic.”

Making the right hires at the outset saves their organization time and resources down the line. “We screened out twenty-some more people that probably would have passed the comprehension that we would possibly have had turnover with, because they come in, and they can’t log into their email or do their documentation. So then it’s more follow-up for the supervisor, more time on their hands. To me, it shows we’re hiring more quality candidates.”



Prior to eSkill, the team saw four recent hires fail the medication class, a necessary part of onboarding before direct support professionals can begin working with clients. “We have a system of passing medications to our people supported, that is electronic. It shows them which medications are ready to administer and then they have to click that it was successful,” Rachel says. “So everything, again, is on the computer.”

“We had four people that, even after all that training, still could not get that down,” Rachel explains. “After implementing the eSkill assessment, zero people have failed that class. I know it’s only four, but still that’s a huge number for us.”

THE RESULTS

Numbers aside, the team has heard positive feedback from many of their coworkers – from the nursing staff all the way to IT – and from clients and their families, too.

“We do an employee appreciation event every year,” Rachel says. “And while at that event, one of our long-term employees came up to me and she said, ‘What are you and Lisa doing differently?’” she recounts. “‘What are you talking about?’ They’re like, ‘We feel it. The people that you’re hiring are so much better.’”

“It was so rewarding and validating for us to hear it directly from the people in direct care, that they feel the quality of their coworkers coming into the home with them is better than what it’s been before,” she continues. “Even the director of our IT department came over, and was standing in this doorway the other day and he’s like, ‘You guys are hiring better people.’”



“And our nurses too,” Lisa adds. “Our nurses do the medication training course, the CPR course, and a lot of one-to-one training for things like feeding tubes and catheters. They said the same thing. They’re just like, ‘Love that group, love this group, this group’s amazing,’” she says. “The feedback has just been great, honestly.”

“We see the feedback from not only the staff, but we’re hearing it from the clients too. So that’s huge,” Rachel concludes.

Knowing they’ve had such great results with hires for direct support professionals, the team plans to implement the assessment with administrative positions as well.

eSkill is proud to be a small part of the important and necessary work going on at CCRI, supporting their meaningful mission to assist those with disabilities in living their best, most fulfilling lives.



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Talent Specialist
CCRI



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