



Man Hats

## GRAPHOLOGY :

### A PROFESSIONAL AIDE FOR THE PROGRESSIVE RECRUITER

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Many articles have been written on the uses of Graphology, its history, development and theory - very few on the practical and valuable input it gives in the selection and management of staff at all levels of seniority.

Since 1981 I have worked extensively in the recruitment, outplacement, scholastic and personal areas of graphology. Despite some adverse publicity both from the media, professional institutes and even graphologists themselves, many more graphologists are being employed by head-hunters, outplacement consultants, commercial and professional organisations, schools, parents and private individuals. At all times the importance of an accurate, objective and considerate assessment for clients is

paramount and it is for that reason this article has been written.

Assessments should be carefully balanced, giving equal consideration to both the positive and negative features in the character of the individual - highlighting their especial areas of interest and expertise. Always objective, the professional graphologist writes a totally factual report - it is not judgmental and from which their personal considerations and expectations are eliminated.



It is imperative that a graphologist is capable of maintaining an objective and considered view of the writer. Personal standards, expectations, emotions should on no account be allowed to colour the content. The graphologist who has difficulty in separating his or her own views, or the ability to resist highlighting only the negative or positive traits in an assessment, thereby not ensuring a balance of both should desist from working in the business and professional world.

When working for a third party, care must be taken to ascertain the requirement of the client and this should always be fully investigated and understood. Ideally a meeting with the Managing and/or Human Resource Directors of the organisation; Senior Master or Mistress of a School or College; the Parents or Legal Guardians of a minor, should always be arranged. This helps to eliminate any misunderstandings, and should also reassure the graphologist of the *raison d'être* for their being employed.



Whether the handwriting is being assessed for employment or other purposes it is most important to note that for individuals under the age of 23 character has not usually formed a stable pattern or been firmly established until around, or even well beyond, that age. Therefore children and young adults' handwriting should only be assessed bearing in mind that they are usually still experiencing changing views and ideas, experimenting with various opinions, and learning who they are and what they are seeking to achieve. Indeed, consideration should always be given to the fact that physical age, i.e. the number of years lived, has little to do with maturity of character or behaviour.

Children or adults with psychological or behavioural problems need very careful assessment and this should be done, if at all possible, with samples of the 'caring' adult's handwriting also being made available to use either as a 'benchmark' or just for general information which can be gained from a normal assessment. Details of the overall background of events from an independent source, although not essential, give a deeper understanding as to why and how a request for assessment has been made. Should the practitioner feel some doubt as to the motivation of the individual(s) requesting such an assessment, then they should either forego the commission or ensure that the written report is brief, factual and leaves nothing to misinterpretation or, as far as is possible, misuse.

However, the mainstream of this document, is to illustrate how and why graphology is an authentic and totally reliable tool for the recruitment of staff, or the redirection of outplaced members of an organisation.

## Recruitment of Staff


Most employers and outplacement organisations use some form of psychometric testing - being assured that this is the most up-to-date and accurate form of assessment on the market, to-day. Their knowledge of graphology is limited - and often coloured by sensational coverage by both professional bodies, journals and the general media.



However, more and more enlightened and forward looking organisations now realise that there is room in their personnel assessment programmes for both psychometric testing and graphology. One often complements the other - highlighting areas which may give rise to concern, or confirming areas of excellence and ability which may not be readily discerned or expressed in conversation or a formal interview. It is particularly helpful in identifying the potential to diversify, to retrain in a very different area or skill, or even the ease and ability to relocate without needing an excessive amount of time to readjust, settle down and be a productive and useful member of the team.


Whilst it is important for both the client and the practitioner to be assured of the integrity of one another - it is vitally

important that the graphologist acts with scrupulous objectivity toward the 'writer' and the position within the organisation for which they are being considered.

 A detailed job-specification and a general knowledge of the working environment are essential. This is, of course, best known by visiting the client and getting a good overall picture of the company and its ambience. If this is not possible, for whatever reason, then sound, professional knowledge of the compilation of 'job-specs' and 'curriculum vitae' by the graphologist is essential. For whilst the theoretical and academic knowledge and ability of a graphologist will lead to a very detailed and accurate assessment - they may not have the practical experience to hone in on only the actual experience and knowledge required. This could well give rise to unnecessary personal details being divulged that have no relevance to an employer and could well be an invasion of the candidate's very personal life and privacy.

Perhaps, it is also part of the graphologist's responsibility to ensure that the client or individual they are working for understands fully that an assessment is written with a view to benefiting both the client and the writer. It is particularly important that this is understood when being used as part of the selection process.

Graphology is constantly being monitored, researched and developed world-wide. Indeed it is the belief of many accredited graphologists that graphology is 'pure analytical psychology'. Everything that is seen in handwriting is there in actuality within the individual's character and is not subject to the interpretation of any particular theory or belief. Indeed, cause and effect of certain behaviour traits, can be determined from the handwriting to within a few weeks of their happening. Thus, the graphologist, does not have to try to interpret the 'gloss' of the writer's words as they try to explain how and why they think they are as they are : it is all there in the handwriting in the way they have adapted the copybook taught.

Many organisations discard the untidy handwritten letter, with sometimes illegible letters in a word, despite the fact that the writing has not impaired the message. Naturally, dirty, smeared and crossed out pages indicate someone who has little pride in 

what they do and therefore can legitimately be binned. But the handwriting which has been simplified to a high degree, with odd letters missing from a word, but nonetheless flows across the page with little hesitation indicates, more often than not, a high degree of intelligence and enthusiasm - and not necessarily be interpreted as careless, slapdash and/or lacking in consideration or concentration.

Therefore, whilst it is always good for a graphologist to give their client a basic explanation as to how a graphological assessment is made - it is not sensible to go into too much detail - to stress or point out an individual, significant element, in one specimen of handwriting. This could, and sometimes does, lead to all kinds of problems both for the client, the graphologist and/or the author of other samples being assessed. It is very hard, sometimes, for layman to understand - no matter how intelligent they appear to be - that every handwriting is totally unique to that writer. The method of deviation from the copybook that they develop over the years cannot be reproduced, precisely, in the handwriting of another person. For example : the pressure placed upon the writing instrument on a certain letter, means very little on it's own - but it has to be measured and considered with all the other personal idiosyncrasies and formations seen in that particular individual's writing. It is the old adage of 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing' !

Report writing for the client is perhaps the most important purpose of this brief article. It is essential that the assessment gives a balanced record of the character and ability of the writer, together, where appropriate, with an indication of why, or how, they have become the person they are to-day.



Over the years, I have written many reports - some more difficult to write than others. But then, this is only to be expected; some people are much easier to understand, live and work with, than others. People have very different experiences in life - some will be fortunate and have plain sailing; others seem to have the world piled high upon their shoulders. There are those who cope well with adversity, others who buckle under the strain. All this has to be incorporated into the assessment - with equanimity and objectivity. Again it must be emphasised that there is no

place for the emotions and personal preference or expectations of the graphologist to be portrayed within an assessment. Any specific characteristics a client wishes to be highlighted should be dealt with within the text of the report, and not given precedence over everything else. It is the ultimate responsibility of the client to read the report as a whole because only then will they understand or see the individual as a complete person. It is not for the graphologist, to remove the responsibility of decision making from the client - although, of course, even the most professional graphologist sometimes wonders how these people ever considered working and/or living in close proximity !

There are many types of assessment produced - and every graphologist has their own way of expressing and illustrating competently the character and competence of the writer. A full, professional assessment for recruitment or promotion purposes, should include :

- n general personality structure
- n intellectual ability
- n working qualities & potential
- n integrity

less importantly

- i probable interests and leisure activity
- i physical condition (this should be confined to good; poor; suggest a medical opinion/examination - no attempt at diagnosis should be made, we are not medical practitioners)

A request for a brief assessment or 'snapshot' should cover the above, but in less detail, highlighting only the predominant characteristics and abilities. These can be most useful to organisations who feel that they need back up for the other recruitment tools they have in place. Equally important, they will perhaps alert the client as to why 'alarm bells' rang in their head - although nothing untoward had happened to arouse their suspicions.

The professional graphologist ensures that an assessment of character and ability is not misrepresented or misunderstood, by insisting that the client receive a full written assessment. It is essential in ensuring that the

integrity of the practitioner is not brought into disrepute, by the flawed memory or the deliberate omission of relevant parts of a conversation. It is not only in the graphologists best interest but that of the writer and the recipient that a written report is always submitted, no matter how long or how well known the client is to their consultant. A graphologist who only gives a verbal report leaves not only their own reputation open to disrepute, but also does their colleagues and graphology a great disservice.

Confidentiality is of prime importance. Most graphologists give a written undertaking not to divulge any of their findings to anyone other than the individual requesting the assessment to be carried out. What any writer/candidate, client and graphologist must be aware of is the fact that when once it has left the office of the graphologist, they have lost, to a greater degree, control over the use of the document.



However, this is not just relevant to graphological assessments, it applies to in-house technical data; corporate reporting, confidentiality of forward planning and the advancement of new techniques and ideas. There is, unfortunately, always the risk of others seeking to use knowledge gained within an organisation for their own ends or for more malicious purposes.

Some companies and organisations still have problems with budgeting for their recruitment needs. They will often opt for short-term economy and savings, rather than consider and recognise the many dangers of employing the wrong person. The most expensive and most important investment they make, is in their staff. Get it right, and improvement in morale, efficiency and profitability will become apparent within months, get it wrong and morale, efficiency, reputation and profits show a serious decline, which is very difficult to reverse even after taking stringent measures to rectify the situation.

For further information on the use of graphology for the selection of staff; career advice/vocational guidance; in helping resolve personal relationships and/or psychological problems; tuition; please contact [Margaret White by e-mail](#) or telephone/fax 01227 479 566.

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Many Hats