

Computer-based distraction test developed

July 3 2007

A British psychologist has designed a computer-based scientific indicator to measure a person's distractibility.

University College London Professor Nilli Lavie said the assessment tool would be useful in new employee screening, especially for vocations in which employee distraction could lead to fatal errors. More easily distracted individuals are at greater risk of being involved in accidents.

The new computer-based test measures subjects' accuracy and reaction times exposed to distractions.

"This test could act as another form of psychometric testing for employers who want to know how focused the staff they are hiring are likely to be," Lavie said.

This test correlates with responses given to the "Cognitive Failures Questionnaire," which predicts a person's level of distractibility provided the subject answers honestly.

"People come away from our test thinking they've done really well and haven't been distracted at all when, in fact, their response times increase and they tend to make more mistakes; showing that they have been distracted," said Lavie. "So the test is objective and there's no way of doctoring the results."

The research appears in the journal *Psychological Science*.

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Citation: Computer-based distraction test developed (2007, July 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-07-computer-based-distraction.html>

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