

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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## How to Ensure the Right Stuff by Molly Butz

*Interested in taking some of the guesswork out of the hiring process? Read on for details about WTCA's newest tool to help you do just that!*



You need to fill a position in your component manufacturing facility—yesterday. You've used the newspaper and your network of associates to get the word out about the open position. You've finally lined up interviews with the top three candidates. Here's the dilemma: how will you determine if they have the skills—3-D visualization, trigonometry and geometry—to fit the skill set of your department?

If only there was a way to test the candidate's skills in these specific areas. Now there is: WTCA's Technical Assessment Test Online or TATO. TATO is not a funky truss-shaped sculpture of mashed potatoes; rather, it is a comprehensive, 50-question online test that you can administer right in an interview! Questions included on TATO test the candidate's ability on math and 3-D visualization skills without the aid of a calculator or design software. What's more, you can view the candidate's test results immediately and compare them to the national average.

Brent Hendricks, Customer Service Manager for Idaho Truss and Component Co. was impressed with TATO's flexibility: "I like the idea that a person does not need to have specific truss knowledge in order to answer the questions." Identifying in advance those applicants with a technical capacity will save time and money. "The math and 3-D portions of the TATO are good," Hendricks commented. "3-D reasoning is such a critical part of any new hire's assessment and it is either difficult or impossible to teach if the candidate does not have the aptitude for it."

More than one user has pointed out how easy the exam statistics page is to decipher, listing for each question the category, time spent and average score, based on the national average computed and recorded by the Truss Knowledge Online (TKO) database. And now, each question is available to review, so you'll know exactly which questions were answered incorrectly.

"It's not necessarily a hire/no-hire kind of evaluation, really it gives us the opportunity to observe the technical abilities of a candidate, and to see strengths and weaknesses of a candidate and apply a training approach should we decide to hire them," said David Hughes, General Manager for Oregon Truss Co., Inc. "We let them know ahead of time that this isn't pass/

fail test, but a chance for us to know how they will fit in at the company.”

Hughes has purchased 25 tests and used all but four of them so far. He’s administered the test for both truss design and sales positions, and has been pleased with the resulting employees and their performance.

Hughes is not the only GM using the test to hire for positions other than designers. Patrick Neely, General Manager for Andrews Truss Co., hired two salespeople after administering the TATO. “TATO is one piece in the total evaluation of a prospective employee. The primary objective is to assess the general aptitude of the person and to demonstrate competency with math concepts and three-dimensional visualization,” Neely said. “After we hired them, we allowed each of them to complete Truss Technician Training Level I. It gave them a good foundation in the industry since neither of them had extensive truss backgrounds.”

TATO can answer a variety of questions that you may not know exactly how to ask, from math and design skills, to general concentration and attention-to-detail.

At Chambers Truss, TATO has been a great tool for evaluating both current and potential employees.

Bob Becht, President of Chambers Truss Inc., told SBC staff, “TATO evaluates the skills needed to be a truss technician. After 25 years in business we have learned that some of these skills cannot be taught. And, we offer TATO to all our employees. We don’t want to miss the diamond in the rough out in the shop. TATO helps us recruit technicians from our pool of tried and true employees and lets us catch that talented new-comer.”

Not sure if TATO is right for you? Give TATO a try—for free! Simply click on the TATO icon at [www.wtcatko.com](http://www.wtcatko.com) and select “Take Sample Test.” The ten-question TATO sample test will appear in your course launcher and your results will be available immediately upon completion of the test, just like the real thing!

The future of TATO will include a second test, TATO 2. TATO 2 will be a more advanced truss-industry-specific test that you can use to determine an experienced individual’s level of knowledge and ability in various job related functional areas. It will be a useful tool in helping to manage seasoned truss technicians, by determining current strengths and weaknesses and then orienting their work based on these weaknesses through specific training.

All this talk of TATO might have made you hungry for spuds, but perhaps it will also remind you to give it a try on your next candidate. To order TATO, visit [www.wtcatko.com](http://www.wtcatko.com) or call WTCA staff at 608/274-4849 for details.

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