



## MEETING CRISIS WITH CREATIVITY

---

Accelerated changes in public safety recruitment, hiring and promotion

June 2021

# In It Together

## Not a single person was untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When our services were declared essential by the Governor’s Office, the operational changes had to come fast. Our ability to respond effectively wouldn’t have been possible without the trust and collaborative spirit of our partners and clients. We were all in it together.

We have compiled this report to reflect on what was accomplished through the pandemic and what we have gleaned from it—with an eye toward the new landscape that lies ahead for the public safety sector.

How we—all of us—recruit and interact with candidates and our communities in the future is going to shift. These changes are already well underway.



## PST TURNS 20!

It has been 20 years since we administered our first test! While we’ve had to postpone the champagne, the sheer amount of creativity, determination and growth that have occurred are all worthy of celebration. Our thanks go out to everyone who played a role in achieving this milestone.

### PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTING

Proctored and certified online, at-home testing of candidates is now a reality and set to continue.

### PHYSICAL ABILITY TESTING

Newly expanded access allows for remote and timely testing in the PNW and nationwide.

### WORKPLACE / PRE-EMPLOYMENT INVESTIGATIONS

Expanded online procedures and platforms complement PSTi’s traditional investigative methods.

### CAREER FAIRS & RECRUITMENT

Given the popularity and accessibility of online events, they are expected to increase.

### PROMOTIONAL TESTING

New virtual approaches will remain available alongside traditional methods.

### EXECUTIVE SERVICES

We’ve expanded our professional talent pool and are ready to help cities that need interim chiefs and administrators.



# Pre-employment Testing

## UNPRECEDENTED ACCESSIBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY FOR CANDIDATES AND AGENCIES

Virtual, live-proctored, in-home testing of candidates began out of pandemic necessity. Secure and fully recorded via live audio/video feeds, this option has proven popular with candidates and has many advantages. Agencies likewise have the ability to use the PST platform to test virtually—even for positions that are not listed on the PST website.

- In-home testing dramatically expands recruiting reach and is increasing the diversity of the talent pool.
- Access to testing is easier than ever—candidates now have a full range of options to pick where, when and how to test; whether online or in person; and locally or remote and nationwide.
- More than 50% of candidates are opting for testing online.
- In-home testing saves time, travel expenses; scheduling conflicts are minimized.
- Certified college testing locations across the nation remain popular for candidates deterred by travel for initial testing.

### **POLICY UPDATE**

All PST written exams—whether conducted online or in person, locally or at a certified remote location—and all physical ability tests (PAT/CPAT)—whether administered by PST, agency representatives or our partners at Anytime Fitness—meet or exceed rigorous standards for security and integrity.



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
**ANYTIME  
FITNESS**

## Physical Ability Testing (PAT/CPAT)

EASIER ACCESS AND SCHEDULING—LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

Given that most testing over the past year happened online and remotely, it wasn't possible to complete a CPAT or PAT on the same day as a written test. The pandemic consequently forced a change to the rules governing the timing of physical ability test completions. In this new scenario, we accelerated the expansion of our Anytime Fitness affiliate network to offer more options to more candidates in more regions.

- All physical ability test protocols were adapted to follow COVID safety and sanitation mandates; testing groups were smaller, physically distanced and spread out over longer time.
- Anytime Fitness network affiliates continue to grow.
- Hundreds of sessions were conducted remotely over the past year.
- CPATs for firefighter candidates were adapted to accommodate COVID safety protocols, to remain in lockstep with agency testing schedules and hiring needs.



# Workplace / Pre-employment Investigations

## VIRTUAL INVESTIGATIONS PROVE TO BE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE

It was an open question if PST Investigations could continue to conduct effective pre-employment background and workplace misconduct investigations in a largely virtual context. We now know that it can be done extremely efficiently and serve as an essential complement to traditional in-person interviews. The investigations handled in a virtual format were effective and in some cases more efficient with turnaround time in under 30 days, so we expect to continue exploring this approach in the future as a way to better serve agencies.

- Interviews (candidates, references, employers, etc.) and investigations were conducted primarily virtually, including workplace investigations, where interviews with all parties (attorneys, labor representatives, subjects of the investigation and witnesses) were handled using virtual platforms.
- On-site visits with prior employers pivoted to a hybrid model where investigators reviewed personnel files virtually or, when necessary, visited in person to review documents.
- While PST Investigations' personnel and our clients had to adapt to a new way of working, we proved that a significant portion of both pre-employment and workplace investigations can be executed effectively in this way.
- At the agency's discretion, PST can go virtual or on-site, or both to help you make the best employment decisions. Depending on circumstances, this tailoring stands to offer potential money savings.



# Career Fairs and Recruiting

## VIRTUAL RECRUITING: THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

We were pleased that hundreds of candidates attended virtual career fairs in real time—our PST LIVE events—and thousands more later viewed the recordings online. Given the increased accessibility and success, we intend to increase the number of online events while also maintaining a hybrid approach so agencies can continue to recruit in person at testing locations.

- The time and money for agencies to participate in the online format is significantly reduced with no travel time, physical setup or booth fees coming into play.
- Agencies are rapidly improving the quality of their videos and online communications, to effectively engage candidates in the virtual space.
- Online events are archived and made accessible to candidates unable to attend in real time, to become resources that live on after the actual event.
- Virtual career fairs attract a greater number of attendees from a broader geographic area.
- Online fairs are necessarily focused by category—whether Police, Fire, EMT, 911, or Corrections—rather than mixed.
- For recruiting at test events, agencies have the option to attend in person or submit recruiting videos.
- With the lifting of capacity limitations, this has returned as an option.

### CANDIDATE RESEARCH INSIGHTS

PST has been conducting one-on-one and group roundtable discussions with recent candidates across Police, Fire, EMT, 911, and Corrections. We intend to better understand their current mindset and motivation in pursuing a public safety career and to develop insights to better inform how PST attracts and engages with these types of candidates.



# Promotional Testing

## NEW PANDEMIC-PROMPTED STRATEGIES, PLUS GROWING DEMAND FOR UNIQUE TESTS

Promotional testing typically requires that dozens of people gather in the same space to run job simulations, personal evaluations, feedback sessions and more. Our challenge during the pandemic was to adapt the pre-existing protocols in order to continue to support agency clients in their quest to fill key positions. Over a 45-day period, we created new communication and delivery models to maintain continuity in cultivating the next generation of leaders; Assessor training processes, candidate workshops as well as the delivery of the test itself were revamped.

As agencies seek both to address the specific needs of their organizational culture and control costs, customization and timely testing are becoming increasingly important.

- All test sessions will continue to be customized based on agency needs.
- Promotional testing will continue with in-person and virtual options, depending on the needs of agencies, allowing them to take advantage of the benefits of both forms of interaction. Virtual testing can reduce costs; time and travel expenses and potentially site rental can be saved.
- Assessor Training may be forever changed, as we know that the most effective and qualified assessors are likely also the busiest. Online training alleviates some of the travel burden for Assessors and allows them to train at their convenience in the comfort of their own office.
- Candidates have substantially improved access to workshops that are held virtually; complementary recordings of online workshops impart yet further accessibility.
- We have returned to conducting in-person Assessment Centers featuring four practical job simulations and integrated scoring, but pandemic response has left us with additional options to share as well.



## Executive Services

### ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES WITH BREADTH AND DEPTH

PST works with a select group of respected and experienced leaders who are available to serve as interim chiefs and administrators. We anticipate demand for interim placements to grow in the coming year, along with the need for leadership development training and other personnel consulting.

- Over the past year, numerous chiefs and command-level officers have been added to the talent pool of proven leaders, all of whom have been vetted for the hard and soft skills essential to being effective public safety executives.
- In 2021, as organizations were increasingly seeking to help internal staff develop specific skills or advance in personal growth areas, we expanded leadership development and management training as a supplement to our consulting services for individuals and groups.
- Reach out for executive coaching services and targeted expertise from a broad pool of experts to support recently promoted individuals in refining the skills required by their new positions.





[PUBLICSAFETYTESTING.COM](http://PUBLICSAFETYTESTING.COM)