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From the trenches

Behavioural profiling and assessments can put the art of science into building your team

Most organizations consider their people to be their greatest asset, so when those people leave the company, or their performance is less than stellar, it can create serious problems for leaders and managers. Why do some employees and teams succeed, while others fail miserably? Often it's because most companies don't understand how to recruit the best talent and then foster the right work environment for success.

Navigating without a road map on a long trip is a disaster; similarly, it's a poor way to run a business. Yet this is how most businesses behave in the way they attract, develop, and promote their employees.

The hiring process most often begins with an ad in the business section of the local newspaper, or on one of many Internet-based services currently in use. The position is usually described from a "skills required" perspective, less so from a behavioural science approach.

The world is composed of people who fall into several basic and identifiable behavioural categories. Each behavioural style is unique and consists of specific strengths and weaknesses. No one is better or worse than another, but some are better suited to certain jobs than others.

People generally gravitate to jobs that fit their individual preferences and personality styles, and certain styles match well with specific job families. Engineering positions, for example, generally attract detail- and procedure-oriented people. Individuals who are more people-oriented are usually better aligned to human resources and sales positions.

In order to be most effective, a leader must understand and relate to every kind of person, and, therefore, every type of behavioural design. The best way to retain high-quality employees and reduce turnover is to create an environment that fits each individual's natural style.

DO UNTO OTHERS AS THEY WISH TO BE DONE UNTO

The Golden Rule says, "Do unto others as you would like to be done unto," whereas the Platinum Rule states, "Do unto others as they wish to be done unto." There is a fundamental difference in the latter philosophy and approach. Everyone is different in terms of their behavioural design, and it's important to adapt to their natural style to open the door to effective communications.

BEHAVIOURAL PROFILING TOOLS

In less than 10 minutes, individuals can complete a behavioural-style questionnaire and begin a process of self-understanding that will benefit them both professionally and personally. This information will provide a better understanding of work and management style, and can lead to the development of an action plan to enhance both professional and personal growth. There are numerous behavioural profiling tools on the market—a few of them are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Insights Discovery Profile, and DISC profiling. In terms of business application and usability, DISC is well-known and utilized in over 40 countries.

DISC behavioural profiling is designed to accomplish several things:

- enable people to learn more about themselves,
- allow leaders to understand how to deal with different people differently,
- improve communications and working relationships,
- augment the hiring process, and
- put people in roles where they can play to their strengths.

Leaders can use this information for the benefit of the individual and the team. By understanding how their employees see the world, leaders are better able to provide the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and work assignments that can engage people at a higher level.

"AT WORK, DO I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT I DO BEST EVERY DAY?"

In Marcus Buckingham's recent book, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, he writes that most organizations are built on two flawed assumptions:

- that each person can learn to be competent in anything, and
- that each person's greatest opportunity for growth is in his/her greatest weakness.

Buckingham goes on to propose that there are two assumptions that define the world's greatest managers: that each person's ►

talents are enduring and unique, and that each person's greatest opportunity for growth is in his/her greatest strength.

Using Gallup's total database, Buckingham and his associates asked the "Do I have the opportunity to do my best" question to more than 1.7 million employees in 101 companies from 63 countries. Globally, only 20 per cent of employees working in the larger organizations felt that their strengths are in play everyday. In North America, recent surveys show that fully 71 per cent of employees are disengaged.

North America Engagement

Employees Engaged	Employees Disengaged	Employees Actively Disengaged
29%	54%	17%

Buckingham rejects the traditional approach to performance management and employee development. He reinforces the importance of identifying and developing people's strengths, while devoting little time to trying to correct their weaknesses. By asking the question, "At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?" you can identify those who are working to their strengths and who are most likely to be productive and flourishing in your organization, versus those who are disconnected and likely to flounder and eventually leave.

A simple tool to get at an individual's strengths is "like-loathe." By asking each member of your team what they specifically like best about their jobs and what they loathe about them, you can take action to restructure their responsibilities to reflect more of the like and less of the loathe.

TEAMWORK REMAINS THE ULTIMATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

In his book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Pat Lencioni writes that the first and most important dysfunction a team must learn to overcome is the absence of trust. Trust is about vulnerability—team members who trust each other are comfortable being open with one another about their failures and weaknesses. In high-performing teams, this behaviour begins with the leader and is shared by all the team members.

So how do you do this? Answer the following questions, related to your personal history, in a team setting:

- Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school?
- How many siblings do you have?
- What was your first job? What was your worst job?
- What was your most difficult challenge growing up?

After going around the table and having each team member share their personal history, it is amazing how people start to open up to each other and begin to develop trust.

A leader's job is to attract, develop, and retain the best available people to fill any and all positions in their organization. Gone are the days when hiring and promotions were based on whether the candidate was most like the leader—"If she looks like me, thinks like me, and acts like me, she must be the best person for the job!"

The opportunity to be more scientific about how we deal with "our greatest asset" will create the platform for winning at the talent game.

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