*Written by Herb Greenberg, Ph.D.,*
*President & CEO,*
*Patrick Sweeney,*
*SVP of Marketing & Communications*

WHITEPAPER

# Uncovering Talent & Potential at Every Stage of Employment

## OVERVIEW

It is a widely accepted business practice to use a personality assessment, such as the Caliper Profile, during the hiring and selection process. The assessment uncovers aspects of the candidate's personality that may be hard to identify during the job interview. By using a personality assessment, the hiring manager is taking that extra step to ensure a strong fit and that the candidate is truly matched to the job. The assessment can be integral in developing behavioral-based interview questions that uncover a person's motivation, potential and overall suitability.

However, while using a personality assessment during the hiring process is widely accepted, using assessments for other aspects of employee development has been far less common. This paper will explore other areas of talent management—team building, succession planning, employee selection and development, and performance management—where the integration of personality assessments is highly beneficial and can provide the organization with more opportunities to develop the potential of their people.

## TEAM BUILDING

Although it may not seem obvious, team building sessions offers the opportunity for the effective use of personality assessments. Team building is the process of enabling a group of people to reach their common goal and many issues arise when trying move a team forward. Complicating the issue of teamwork is the fact that many teams today are virtual with many people working off-site. Often, team members do not work in the same office and may not even be from the same country. This places even more emphasis on team communications and the personality style of each team member.

A team building facilitator can analyze the personality assessments of each individual team member and use this information to encourage stronger communication between members and create better working relationships. Assessments are used to inform the team about the overall strengths and weaknesses of the group and also to compare differences between members that could cause conflict. By getting very specific with each individual about their work style, and how it may agree or clash with other team members, a greater understanding of the overall team emerges. The assessment results can also be discussed in a group setting with some analysis of the specific roles of each team member. Facilitators can often illustrate how different people bring different qualities to the team and how that can used to everyone's advantage.

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In addition to teambuilding programs, many managers use personality assessments when planning for projects and assigning specific tasks. By using assessments, they are able to do so according to the personality style of individual team members. This is sometimes called a *team audit* or *team analysis process* and it helps managers to maximize the potential of their teams and individual members.

By using team building combined with assessments, companies can create high-performing teams that exceed everyone's expectations. Those organizations that employ these types of talent management strategies see a relationship between team building sessions and powerful business results, e.g., new products created, revenue growth achieved, project management milestones met.

Assessments used in team building and team analysis are often different than those used for hiring or other talent management solutions; however, many of these assessments are not validated for selection and hiring. There is tremendous amount of

competition or "talent wars." Succession planning focuses on finding those people who can fill leadership roles in the future and it can include both internal and external candidates. Companies are proactively creating systems to retain high-potential employees who will either replace current leaders or advance to newly-created leadership roles. Personality assessments are becoming an important part of this process since they offer an objective measure of an individual's leadership potential.

Succession planning starts with identifying individuals who are strong performers in their current jobs and/or high-potential employees (often called HiPo's) in the area of leadership. The identification process can include an assessment of the personality traits and motivations that have been aligned with specific leadership qualities. Using personality assessments in this process is especially important to organizations that want to eliminate a more subjective measurement of potential, such as individuals being rated or ranked by

prepare them for leading others. These may include special training, action learning, coaching sessions and mentor programs. When used as part of a 360 assessment, the personality assessment can add insight and assist the person in developing a plan to strengthen their overall leadership ability. Personality assessments can point out to HiPo's specific growth areas and provide advice for capitalizing on current strengths and motivations. In this process, the assessment often travels with the person throughout his or her development period, being utilized over and over again as a resource for self-knowledge.

In smaller and family-run companies that do not have HiPo pools, individual family members or star performers are groomed for senior leadership roles. Often, too many companies place individuals into these jobs without preparation and with the hope that the new senior leader will "learn along the way" and eventually develop the proper skills for success. In fact, it is much more prudent to identify those areas for development before the individual is moved to a senior role, and to provide developmental coaching before and after the individual assumes a senior leadership position. This kind of coaching can be enhanced by the information provided by a personality assessment. The information can also be used in creating individual development plans that focus on specific areas required for the person's ongoing growth in a leadership position.

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information that can be utilized if the assessment used for hiring is the same assessment used for team building. First, many individuals within the team are already familiar with the terminology of the personality assessment used for hiring and have some level of skill in interpreting the data. Second, the teambuilding process often utilizes a similar methodology to the hiring process, in that there is discussion about role clarification and the goal of linking roles to personality attributes.

Using the same instrument for both purposes eliminates the additional cost and time involved in re-assessing people, not to mention confusion if the two assessments do not "agree." Using a different assessment for team building fails to capitalize on the knowledge and experience that team members may already have related to the assessment used for hiring.

## SUCCESSION PLANNING
Succession planning has become increasingly important in the current environment of hiring talent away from the

managers within the company. By utilizing the personality assessment that was used during the hiring process, a company can evaluate data already on hand. Doing so eliminates the time and cost of having an individual take another assessment. Also, when the hiring assessment is linked to succession planning, companies can identify those with leadership potential at the very point they are hired. With this kind of information, a person can be developed for a leadership role from their first day on the job.

Many of these HiPo's will later move into management and senior management roles where they will be responsible for hiring. By using the personality assessment originally used for hiring within the succession planning process, the company familiarizes its future leaders with the company's hiring tool. This gives future managers a "leg up" in their effectiveness for future hiring and selection.

Personality assessments can also helpful for developing individuals who are identified as HiPo's so they can participate in special learning programs designed to

## EMPLOYEE PROMOTION
An unfortunate reality is that many companies do not have formal succession planning. Instead, these companies replace leaders with employees who are successful in their current roles. One reason for doing this is that it creates the sense that employees—if they work hard—have a future inside the organization. Even so, companies should be certain that an employee is job-matched for a new leadership role and the processes used during hiring and selection should be utilized once again, including assessments and interviews. The success of a person in one job does not necessarily predict success in different job.

The sad fact is too many individual contributors, or those employees who do not have any direct reports, have been

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promoted from within to management roles without having the qualities needed for success. This could lead to a dismal job performance and overshadow the achievements the individual realized in his or her former role. One way to avoid this trap by re-analyzing the results of the assessment the individual completed at the time they were hired. Because personality assessments are most applicable and reliable when used as part of the job-matching process, it is critical to use the original assessment to uncover gaps or concerns. By using assessments at the time of promotion, organizations help to eliminate the chance of setting up an otherwise successful employee for failure.

## EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

In order to keep their employees engaged, many companies have made a solid commitment to developing the potential their employees. As a result, business results are more predictable, and they are able to retain more of their top performers. One popular method for employee development is personalized coaching.

Similar to the development of HiPo's in succession planning, the employee development process can utilize personality assessments to provide insight about an employee and what developmental areas would benefit from coaching. This process often includes feedback from a coach who understands the assessment results and can helps the employee craft an individual development plan. If a company invested in an assessment at the time of hiring, an individual development plan provides a chance to capitalize on the information as well as provide valuable feedback to the employee.

Meanwhile, individuals who did not completed an assessment at the time of hiring can do so as part of the development process. When the company communications to its employees that the assessment is for development purposes only it shows that the company is committed to its people. However, it is important for the company to follow through on that promise by providing feedback and coaching so that employees feel valued and that the assessment is meant as a tool to assist in the employee's growth.

Training programs sometimes involve assessments before and after the formal training. Too often, these assessments are *skills tests* that focus only on a person's technical knowledge. They are sporadically used by training companies to measure the changes in the person's comprehension of technical information and are presented as a form of "Return On Investment" or ROI data. However, it is beneficial to include personality assessment information along with certain training initiatives. First, personality assessments can provide insight to individuals about their strengths and weaknesses, and this is especially helpful when programs are related to their "people skills," such as leadership, management, sales and customer service. This insight can help individuals enter into training with a better idea of where they need to focus their efforts. Second, the analysis of a group of people who are attending a program together can help to drive the contents of the overall program. Training ends up being competency specific and based on the needs of the group, making it more effective.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Too often, performance management is not connected to other talent management initiatives, and rarely do performance reviews include information from a personality assessment. However, the roadblocks to an employee's performance are often related to personality factors. No person is perfectly matched to a job, and most struggle with some aspect of their required job responsibilities. This is especially true in an age where people are forced to multi-task and share resources.

As part of a quarterly or yearly review, discussing the results of a personality assessment and linking the results to a performance issue, may help an employee create methods for managing the problem. Possibly, the person could capitalize on other strengths in an effort to compensate for weaknesses, or the person might decide to shift priorities, work assignments and/or approaches to job responsibilities. Insights derived from a personality assessment can also help the manager provide in-depth feedback and specific examples that resonate with the person and allows the manager to be, in effect, a coach who wants the person to succeed. Applied correctly, this approach can break down walls between the manager and their team members. By understanding the performance gaps, the manager and employee can create strategies for success.

One note on using a personality-based assessment with performance management interventions: Potential as measured by a personality assessment should never take precedence over measurement of actual performance. The actual performance must always be the driver of the performance appraisal and its associated feedback. Information about a individual's potential simply serves as a way to create strategies for modifying behavior.

## CONCLUSION

When a company decides to use personality assessments during the hiring process, there are many other opportunities to utilize that assessment to deepen understanding, add objective measurement and personalize interventions. Broadening the use of assessment tools into systems beyond hiring and selection creates benefits to the employee, as well as to the company. It raises the company's commitment level company to the employee and focuses the initiatives in a way that increases the likelihood of success. Strategically integrating personality assessments into a company's talent management processes will become a "best practice" and one mark of what it means to be a great company committed to employee development and performance.

Moreover, using the same assessment employed in the hiring process during team building, succession planning, employee development, and performance management capitalizes on an investment already made and creates a common language regarding personality factors within the organization.