

# Using Assessments to Develop Managers and Others for Professional and Personal Growth

*By Gregory P. Smith*

Gregory P. Smith shows businesses how to build productive and profitable work environments that attract, keep, and motivate their workforce. He is the author of the book, *Here Today Here Tomorrow: Transforming Your Workforce from High Turnover to High-Retention*. He speaks at conferences, conducts management training, and is the President of management consulting firm, Chart Your Course International, located in Conyers, Georgia.

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"Success in the knowledge economy comes to those who know themselves, their strengths, their values, and how they best perform." -Peter Drucker

You have worked hard to hire and train a good management team. George has worked with you for three months. His communication style is direct. He has many good ideas and is good at starting projects, but weak on finishing what he starts. Mary, on the other hand, is good at details. She finishes what she starts, but seems to lack initiative. Jose is a great team-builder and keeps the team motivated. His only weakness is time management. He has to be reminded to finish his projects on time. Victoria is bright and intelligent, but is not sociable. She prefers to stay in her office and send e-mail messages to those she works with. You ask yourself, "Why can't everyone just be like me?"

In my younger days, I had a narrow approach to managing others. I believed people who did not respond to my management style were DEFECTIVE. I evaluated everyone with the same broken yardstick. I now know I was wrong.

I now subscribe to the theory that there are eight different, but predictable work styles or behavior patterns common in people. In the workplace, individuals and managers unaware of these behavior patterns will unintentionally damage their personal effectiveness. When a manager understands these unique differences, then they are in a more powerful position. They are better able to manage, understand, and lead people toward higher levels of productivity, lower frustration, higher morale, and better retention rates.

Many organizations are turning to behavior assessments and personality trait testing for both hourly workers and managers. Back in the late '90s, only 5 percent of Fortune 500 companies used some type of assessment. Today, that figure is climbing to 65 percent. A year 2000 study by American Management Association showed nearly half of 1,085 employers polled use at least one assessment in their interviewing process.

Assessments can help:

- 1) Individuals identify their strengths, know which jobs they are best suited for, and design a development plan to overcome shortcomings.
- 2) HR managers predict a job applicant's success before they are hired.
- 3) Business owners understand the temperament and work style of individual employees and managers.
- 4) Supervisors can give performance feedback to people in a style they understand and accept for improving performance and accelerating professional development.
- 5) People enhance communication, understanding, and improve personal relationships.
- 6) Sales managers select, hire, develop, and motivate super sales people.

One client company used assessments to improve their hiring and recruiting process. Previously, they made hiring decisions based on the candidate's resume and then hired the person based on their "gut" reaction. Once hired, many of these new people created friction, had bad work ethics, and their attitudes had a negative impact on their coworkers.

By using assessments they created a visual benchmark (a graphic) of their "top" performers. They used another profile to identify the values, emotional competencies, and behaviors needed for success based on the requirements needed by each department (e.g. sales, customer service, management, tech support, quality assurance, etc.).

They had a roadmap for success. They identified the behavior patterns, communication styles, motivations, and attitudes of their top employees. In other words, they cloned their top performers.

These assessments measure individual attitudes, values, personal interests, and behavior with 85 percent accuracy. Now the company is able to screen out applicants who may have good interview skills, have a great resume, but none the less are not suited for the job. The process saves them thousands of dollars in costs and reduces a lot of frustrations.

Most assessments available on the market today can be administered on the Internet and generate an amazing amount of detail on diverse behaviors, skills, and competencies, including:

- ◆ General characteristics
- ◆ Value to the organization
- ◆ Checklist for communicating
- ◆ "Don't"s on communicating
- ◆ Ideal work environment
- ◆ Perceptions
- ◆ Keys to motivating
- ◆ Keys to managing
- ◆ Areas for improvement
- ◆ Ranking of 12 leadership competencies
- ◆ Action plan for improvement

Successful management development programs first begin with self-analysis. When you understand behavior styles, then you have a roadmap for improved potential and enhanced communication. One assessment identifies eight unique behavior patterns/styles people fall into:

- 1) Implementer
- 2) Conductor
- 3) Persuader
- 4) Promoter
- 5) Relater
- 6) Supporter

7) Coordinator

8) Analyzer

As a management consultant, I work with groups of people who experience difficulty working together and/or meeting objectives. I worked with one organization that failed to reach their sales goals. After completing a behavior assessment on each of the directors, the problem was clear. The executive director and two assistant directors possessed the same personality style -- all three of them disliked confrontation. Their natural tendency was to go overboard to please people. They did like to hold people accountable. After they understood their natural tendencies, they were able to adapt and manage more effectively.

Developing people is less expensive than firing them. By understanding behavior differences, an organization can align an employee's motivations with the company's mission. Assessments also help individuals reduce conflict and get along better. Furthermore, coworkers appreciate each person's unique strengths and abilities. With this knowledge organizations and managers can maximize the abilities of their workforce in ways to help make all employees star performers.

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With a relentless commitment to learning, Linkage also offers conferences, institutes, summits, open-enrollment workshops, and distance learning programs on leading-edge topics in leadership, management, human resources, and organizational development. More than 200,000 leaders and managers have attended Linkage programs since 1988.

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