

# Talent Assessment: Three Steps To Ensure High Performance

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What factors contribute most to accelerated leadership performance? The answers to that question are of vital importance to a company’s success – perhaps more now than ever. Indeed, to succeed in today’s challenging economy, organizations need employees who can function at full throttle. And to ensure they have the right leaders to get the job done, companies must not only identify the factors that lead to accelerated performance, but also assess whether current and prospective leaders need a plan for developing the factors that lead to accelerated performance.

A recent Right Management study of close to nearly 900 senior leaders and Human Resource professionals revealed surprising insights into just what factors lead most frequently to on-the-job success. Respondents overwhelmingly pointed not to employees’ technical skills, expertise or experience, but to other, very different qualities: organizational culture and motivational fit, as well as savvy, appropriate interpersonal skills. For example, the number of respondents who felt that “organizational culture/motivational fit” contributes most to accelerated performance was more than 2 ½ times greater than those who pointed to “technical skills” or “relevant experience” as the most significant factor.

In other words, it’s not what leaders know, but how they fit in the culture, are motivated by opportunities within the organization, and interact with those around them that result in high performance.

<b>What contributes MOST to accelerated performance?</b>	
Organizational culture/motivational fit	31%
Interpersonal behaviors	26%
Critical reasoning/judgment	21%
Technical skills	12%
Relevant experience	11%

Source: Right Management online poll of 895 senior leaders and human resources professionals conducted February 9, 2010 through March 9, 2010.

## **Pinpointing, Assessing and Developing the Right Stuff**

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These insights have critical implications for an organization’s overall talent management strategy – most importantly for how to assess and develop high-potential leaders. While it’s possible to assess current and prospective employees for all factors cited in the Right Management survey, two factors – cultural and motivational fit – involve innate characteristics that can be difficult to coach or develop. How, then, should organizations proceed?

Organizations should consider these three steps to ensure high performance:

## Pinpoint

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Analyze the basic elements of their organizational culture. Before determining whether individuals have the appropriate cultural and motivational fit, companies must first determine the key attributes of their own values, such as whether the organization prizes innovation or has a rigid chain of command. They also need to pinpoint the types of opportunities available throughout the organization. For example, a company in a highly regulated industry that requires strict procedures to be followed wouldn't be a good fit for an individual who thrives in an atmosphere of ambiguity.

## Assess

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Assess employees for organizational culture/motivational fit and interpersonal behavioral skills. Organizations should identify a pool of high-potential leaders, both at a junior and senior level, using past performance as a starting point. Then they can assess these individuals to determine, for example, those whose values are aligned with the corporate culture and who would be most likely to enjoy high levels of job satisfaction working in leadership roles within the organization.

In some cases, companies need to assess existing leaders for how they align with the organization's current culture. If, however, the business is contemplating a change in strategy, the organization might assess individuals for their compatibility with a future environment. In these cases, it's likely the company also will need to assess talent from outside the organization.

## Develop

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Create a program to develop those leaders who make the cut. Once the most promising leaders have been identified, companies can take the next step: using assessment results to help individuals improve their interpersonal skills. That can include learning how to do everything from planning and delegating to building trust. Probably the best way to address gaps in interpersonal savvy is through coaching sessions during which people focus on appropriate behavior in specific business situations. In addition, leaders can be given job assignments aimed at addressing a broader range of interpersonal behaviors, or attend workshops to learn a discrete set of skills.

### *Case Study: Develop the Right Leadership Competencies*

A global software firm faced a problem. Through organic growth, as well as mergers and acquisitions, it had recently become the world's largest independent provider of business infrastructure software. But continued success required that the reorganized global leadership team develop new skills for coping with change – and learn to embrace a new culture of innovation.

To that end, the company brought in Right Management to help evaluate the top 102 leaders' capabilities, taking into consideration not only the organization's strategic goals and day-to-day

business requirements, but also the company's values. After helping the organization to identify its critical leadership competencies, Right Management created a thorough assessment process that included behavioral interviews, case studies and specific exercises in conjunction with proven assessment instruments. A global team of 20 assessors and four project coordinators delivered leadership assessments in six countries in just six weeks.

The upshot: This global software firm gained vital insights into its leadership team. It was able to initiate development programs for individual leaders; understand better both leadership potential and gaps across regions; and make cross-country comparisons of specific job functions. Furthermore, the company obtained a clear understanding of the organization's ability to cope with change, identified critical cultural conditions necessary for successful future development, and gained insights into next steps needed to develop a culture of innovation.

## **The Right Leaders, Right Now**

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Ultimately, companies that fail to address these issues risk losing valuable talent. Why? Right Management has conducted comprehensive global benchmarking research into the drivers of workforce engagement. This research reveals that when employees sense there's a disconnect between leaders and the organizational culture, or that management behavior is not supporting organizational values, they often become disenchanted, thereby lowering organizational performance. What's more, without the right leaders suited to move the organization forward, the company is likely to lose momentum and its competitive edge.

Perhaps most important, in today's uncertain times, companies urgently need the ability to adapt their culture quickly, to create an agile organization able to turn on a dime. Without the appropriate leaders in place, organizations may find they're unable to perform up to stakeholder expectations and move forward as rapidly as is necessary. On the other hand, those enterprises with the right leaders who fit the organizational culture – motivated by opportunities in the company and effectively interacting with peers and subordinates – stand a good chance of meeting the challenges of the current economy and thriving when conditions improve.



# Linkage

Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

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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