



EffortlessHR April 2010
Employer's Advantage Newsletter



For Your Information (FYI) – Finding Hidden Treasures – Mining for Employee Competencies

Do you really know what your employee brings to the workplace? Oh, you may know that they have the knowledge and skills needed to get the job done in an effective and efficient manner. But, do you know the “soft” skills or attributes they bring that could be just as important as the “hard” skills they offer.

What are competencies? They could be a personal trait or an observable aspect of performance. Competencies represent the behavioral, technical, and motivational requirements for successful performance in a given role or job. A competency is usually defined as a grouping of related:

- Behaviors
- Activities
- Types of knowledge
- Technical skills, or
- Motivations

So, why are competencies important? They can give us a better understanding of why an individual may or may not do as well on a project or why or why not objectives are not met. They provide a basis for coaching the employee on how to improve performance. The more an employer understands the personal strengths and motivation of their employees, the better “fit” there is in the job. Identifying the needed competencies make recruiting easier and can help in coaching and training employees.

The hard skills and knowledge can be fairly easy to assess and identify and can be developed. Attitude and personal characteristics are harder to identify or develop, but are equally important in demonstrating a needed competency in a position. For example, functional requirements might be identified as the technical needs – the things that are specific to a particular job. Behavioral are the soft skill requirements that make a person successful in their position.

If you think of your “star” employee, what competencies have they brought to the job that makes them more successful than another person in the same position? What do they do differently that makes them special? What competencies do they have that can be seen, heard, or documented by colleagues and clients? Those are the competencies you might want to look for in other candidates or employees.

I believe there are five major competencies that are important in the workplace and include several sub-categories:

1. Intellectual
 - a. Analytical
 - b. Creative
 - c. Problem Solving
 - d. Project Management
 - e. Technical
2. Interpersonal
 - a. Customer Service
 - b. Communication
 - i. Oral
 - ii. Written
 - c. Teamwork
3. Leadership
 - a. Visionary
 - b. Change management
 - c. Delegation
 - d. Leading others
 - e. Managing and/or developing others
4. Organization
 - a. Business Acumen
 - b. Cost Consciousness
 - c. Diversity
 - d. Ethics
 - e. Organizational Support
 - f. Strategic Thinking
5. Self-Management
 - a. Judgment
 - b. Motivation
 - c. Planning/Organizing
 - d. Professionalism
 - e. Dependability
 - f. Initiative
 - g. Innovative

I am sure there are many more that you could list. The bottom line is, if we have a better understanding of the competencies needed for a position or brought to us by an individual, we have a better chance of making the job successful and will help you identify the type of person you want on your team. Finding that special person makes the work easier, more enjoyable, and less stressful.

Remember, we should hire for competencies and can train for skills.

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FROM BUD HANEY'S DESK

Going Nowhere Fast? There's an Assessment for That

A popular country song title, "Going Nowhere and Getting There Fast," fits well the philosophy of some organizations. They have an idea of what they want, and maybe a notion about how to achieve their goal. But they set forth on the journey without a plan and little knowledge about what works and what does not.

Sometimes this practice—also known as flying by the seat of your pants—works. For a brief period, the organization might soar with the eagles. More often, it never gets high enough to see anything but tail feathers before coming to a humiliating halt.

With so much knowledge in the workplace about the best way to get somewhere, why does anyone want to fly by the seat of his pants? Yes, sustained success takes hard work and is not for sissies, but it provides long-term gratification. Unlike getting nowhere fast, which provides short-term excitement but little else.

Aberdeen Group, which provides organizations with facts that make a difference, has studied top organizations and their practices. Its researchers have discovered that, no matter the type of organization, the best ones have these things in common:

- They use assessments with **more employees** than do other organizations.
- They use assessments **more frequently** than do other organizations.
- They use assessments **more consistently** than do other organizations.

Aberdeen calls these organizations Best in Class, and discovered that they are more than three times likely to have a clear process of assessing new employees during their first year than do "Laggards"—Aberdeen's name for organizations that trail behind the best in important measures of how the organization is doing. Also, Best in Class companies are twice as likely to assess workers who have stayed with a company longer than a year. The numbers show that assessments succeed because workers who have bought into performance expectations, as well as their company's plans for development, have a strong connection to their companies. Simply put, **they are engaged**.

Let's look at each of the three uses of assessments listed above to determine what each means.

- **Using assessments with more employees.** Some organizations start out slowly with assessments. They might use them only with executives, for example. Perhaps they are trying to develop a succession plan, or build a team for a project. They may use them only when recruiting and hiring new workers. They may use them only when they have a problem they want to solve. Research shows that best-in-class companies use assessments with *all* employees. The march toward progress and growth begins with a single step, but this broad use of assessments gives every worker the message that all roles are important and every worker must meet a standard. This is an important message in an economy when more productivity is required from each person.
- **Using assessments more frequently.** Every worker everywhere likely recognizes

the performance evaluation model. These glancing blows at how an employee is performing occur maybe once a year—if a worker is lucky—and often make both the manager and the employee uncomfortable. Better than nothing, yes. But they could be so much better! Instead of annual performance reviews, think of coaching sessions that occur daily, weekly or monthly, depending on the team member's needs. Why not use an assessment to help determine which workers are the right ones for a team, depending on their needs and competencies? That is a way of using reviews in a positive way, to choose the right employee for the role, instead of a negative way. Or how about using assessments for retraining workers when changes in the organizations occur? Best-in-class organizations fill in the blanks, using assessments *when they need them*. This is a key element of training a workforce to be first-class.

- **Using assessments consistently.** When people say they don't like surprises, they generally mean that they don't like unpleasant surprises—like those that inconsistency brings. Such surprises include not telling workers how they are evaluated and chosen for leadership roles, what has to happen before their salaries increase, or not informing employees how they can be players on an important team. Employees need to know how things are done at their workplaces so they can play a part in exciting company changes, perhaps even volunteering for positions that no one else wants, or seeking retraining if necessary. Workers will buy into the way their employer does things if they get the chance to grow at their jobs and become the leaders. Responsible executives can avoid springing unpleasant surprises by being even-handed, and assessments help by providing objective guidance throughout the employee life cycle.

Organizations often need to move fast, but just as important is knowing the goal and having a clear idea of how to achieve it. Best in class operators are unfazed when they have to stop along the way to make adjustments in the pace. They know exactly what is working right and what requires repair and maintenance.

Best in class organizations have a schedule for getting to their destination, and usually arrive right on time.

Bud Haney, President Profiles International

Feature Article **Predict Conflict with Employee and Team Assessments** *by Megan Bullard*

In a perfect world, work would always be enjoyable, and work environments would promote productivity and engagement. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. People find themselves in sticky situations or conflict with coworkers. Some personalities and behaviors are oil and water, and they will never mix. What if there was a way to solve or even proactively stop these conflicts? Employee assessments offer quantitative insight into employee's natural tendencies and personalities. This information can enable managers to build balanced and effective teams, or solve conflicts between existing members.

Personalities and behaviors are complex and occur for various reasons. Each individual employee brings their own past experiences, and learned behaviors with them to the job each day. These experiences and personality differences can often lead to conflict between coworkers. Disagreements are a necessary evil that is required to make progress, but too much of it can inhibit productivity. Employee assessments reveal crucial information, about each employee, that

is useful for solving differences.

Conflicts are easily solved if the root of the problem can be identified. Managers or team members may spend too much time trying to discover what the cause of an issue may be, but an employee assessment can easily predict problem areas.

The guessing game is not a professional's favorite, and playing it to solve conflicts does not resolve the problem in a timely fashion. Conflicts that are not addressed between employees can cause lasting friction between team members, and will ultimately destroy a team's efficiency.

On the other hand, it would not be wise to hire someone who has a personality that is not compatible with the other team members. It is difficult enough to introduce a new face into an established team, but it doesn't have to be with the help of employee assessments. The same process is applicable when evaluating established teams. Assessing teams can lead to finding new ways to improve the work culture and the way all of the moving parts work together.

Assessments act as a refined tool that focuses on areas of behavior that impact an individual's work life. A mechanic would not work on a car without proper tools, and managers should not try to resolve conflict or hire an employee unprepared. Employee assessments can introduce a wealth of information that will educate professionals in a way that enables them to develop personally. If knowledge is power, then assessments are powerful, and can only bring positive change through understanding. Consider using employee assessments during times of conflict, for hiring, and as a tool for constructing an effective and productive team.

HR Marketer

The Most Serious Threat to Employers in this Recession May Be Its End

The following is information gained from HRMarketer:

Employers need to stay connected to their employees in order to stop them from jumping ship once the job market rebounds.

A recent workplace study by the Adecco Group, a global recruitment firm, found that more than half (54%) of employed adults report they are likely to look for new jobs once the economy turns around. This should be warning to employers that they risk losing their top performers if employee engagement and job satisfaction does not remain a priority.

Why jump ship?

The recession has meant longer hours and increased stress for those employees who are being asked to take on more with less by their employer. This leads to low morale, decreasing engagement and job dissatisfaction – all factors that cause employees to look for greener pastures elsewhere. The last thing employers want are their top performers leaving for a competitor when the job market picks up and the –war on talent– resumes.

If there is one thing employers need to know...It's that retaining employees after the recession means staying connected to them during the recession when times are tough. Some employees may not feel comfortable speaking to their managers about their

frustrations and lack of motivation in fear it will increase their chances of being let go, should the company need to make cuts. This is where HR needs to step in to help managers and the organization as a whole stay connected to their employees.

How can employers stay connected?

Have regular conversations

Open the lines of communication by ensuring managers meet with employees on a one-on-one basis to talk about their role in the organization. Executives must also communicate the company's plans for the future to the company in order to keep everyone informed and aligned to current corporate objectives. When employees know what is going on they will focus on getting the most important things done.

Provide the resources employees need

Employees are not always prepared or trained for the new responsibilities or tasks that are thrust upon them by their managers. A lack of training leads to frustration and resentment because employees feel left in the dark with no one they can go to for help. HR needs to find the needed resources and offer opportunities that allow employees learn the skills required to perform their new tasks. This may include a mentor, company training sessions or cross-departmental team support.

This press release was distributed through PR Web by Human Resources Marketer (HR Marketer: www.HRmarketer.com) on behalf of Right Management.

Product Focus

PPI's Team Analysis Turns Individuals Into "Invaluables"

You have assembled an expert team of workers who fit their jobs well and are aligned with organizational goals. They are high performers, and you could not be more pleased with each of them individually.

Yet something important is off. Jason almost never appears satisfied with answers to his questions, feedback from his team leader—with anything, really. He is impatient and often grumbling, and his dissatisfaction is rubbing off on others. Yet he is extremely skilled at his job.

Jason's manager, Julie, consistently ensures her team is performing superbly by meeting deadlines and communicating well with internal and external clients. But there is friction between these two key players, and you have big plans for the team: a project that they will spend most of the year developing before presenting to external clients. You have a nagging feeling about their chronic inability to get along because you have seen small irritations between two people fester and grow until culminating in a huge blowup that threatens the entire team.

So right now, before you involve Julie's team in the new project, step back and assess.

Literally. Take a few minutes to examine the source of the friction and figure out how to dissolve it *before* it dissolves this high-performing team. Profiles Performance Indicator™ and its Team Analysis Report are the prescribed methods of finding the underlying cause of conflict on your team and improving communication. Its reports may help you form a new team, or figure out how to enhance Julie's leadership skills so that the friction disappears. Organizations appreciate PPI's aid in motivating and coaching employees and resolving performance issues. It measures a worker's motivational intensity and actions related to:

- Productivity
- Quality of work
- Initiative
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Adapting to change
- Response to conflict, stress and frustration

The Team Analysis Report will help leaders:

- Enhance team leadership skills
- Form new teams
- Reduce team conflict
- Improve team communication
- Improve their ability to anticipate problems

PPI takes about 15 minutes to complete, and Julie will know the results immediately. So will you—before handing that new project to the team. Let Profiles help you get these two players working together again. Call EffortlessHR at (520) 546-3947.

Announcements

Wanted – a few good people – if you are a consultant, or an individual who knows businesses in your area that might be looking for HR assistance, we are seeking EffortlessHR Pro Advisors. This is a program that will allow individuals to earn a little extra money by bringing new clients into EffortlessHR. Built around the model of QuickBooks, this is a way to augment your income. If you are interested, please send me an email at info@effortlesshr.com and we will give you a call to explain the program.