

## The Personality Factor

Suppose you are hiring someone for an important position in your company. You've checked their past employment and scholastic records and have determined that they have precisely the right knowledge and experience base to fit the position. All that's left to do is negotiate the specifics of their contract and hire them, right? Many would agree and in fact follow this exact process when hiring, however they would be remiss in doing so. Why? Because one of the most important considerations (if not the most significant one) in hiring or appointing personnel for a given position is that of their personality or character.

Ok, so which "personality" type should you hire? Should you favor the extrovert over the introvert? The glib comedian over the serious analyst? The dynamic leader or the reflective follower? The answer, of course, is that there is no one fixed answer. Each of the above types will present potential benefits and drawbacks. The key is to not generally favor one type over another, but to match a personality to a given set of responsibilities. However, your detective work does not stop there. Not only is it important to match a personality to one's duties, you should also take into account how it will contribute to the overall atmosphere you wish to create or maintain in your place of business. For example, you may select a methodical yet somewhat introverted individual to fill a role in your accounting department. Even though the person's work may be excellent and his or her conscientiousness beyond reproach, if that person's introversion is pronounced to the point where they tend to avoid discussions with co-workers and superiors, their excellent work may be discounted by problems brought about by lack of communication. This is particularly true if that person is expected to delegate to others. Perhaps you've selected a dynamic extrovert to lead your sales team. During the interview process she was charming and intelligent. She is in fact a proven top-notch salesperson in her own right. Yet over time, you come to realize that this person is inflexible and intolerant when it comes to communicating with staff. Your sales team's moral will almost certainly be negatively impacted and their performance will likely decline.

As demonstrated by the above two examples we can see that it is extremely important to be proactive with regards to assessing personality when making vital personnel decisions. The stereotypical (yet often very real) model of the highly sought-after genius with little or no social skills has very little merit when viewed pragmatically. This is especially volatile when your genius becomes indispensable to your business process, but at the same time develops an ego the size of a continent and adopts an attitude that constantly brings havoc and conflict to the team life. The vast majority of positions today require some, if not a large amount, of interaction. Therefore interpersonal skills should be sought and valued at least equally, if not more than technical skills. Many managers who have experience with such "Diva behavior" learned that often, it's better to hire for attitude and train for skills.



When faced with the task of evaluating a candidate's personality, companies frequently rely on first impressions and gut instinct. This method does have merit, particularly if the person making the evaluation is a keen judge of character. However, first impressions are just that, impressions, and as such are prone to error. Nowadays, job candidates are well-trained and well-experienced when it comes to interviewing skills. How many times have you heard that a candidate's biggest and only weakness is perfectionism? Add to that the inevitable personal bias of the interviewer (especially when dealing with a charmer), mix it with a résumé spun in a way that would make a seasoned PR professional green with envy, and you have a recipe for a bad hire (with associated costs going into thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of dollars). This is where objective, standardized personality assessments such as PsychTests' AMPM (Advanced Multidimensional Personality Matrix) can prove to be a valuable aid to HR professionals.

Personality testing has been proven to be extremely helpful in predicting job-related behaviors, with substantially higher predictive value than interview alone. Granted, virtues such as integrity, loyalty, diligence and open-mindedness cannot be gauged in advance with 100% accuracy (even though the success rate is double that of a regular interview). However, the correct use of personality assessments, combined with a thorough interview process and perhaps even a little old-fashioned gut-instinct can contribute greatly to your company's long-term success.