

## The Right Person for the Right Job Pinpointing the Match Takes the Right Kind of Personality Assessment

By Sharon Birkman Fink, CEO of Birkman International

We've written previously about how personality testing provides valuable insights into some of the most important tasks for human resource management and evaluation: identifying new leaders, finding better ways to use the skills of the oldest and youngest generations of employees, and retaining the best existing talent. Yet not all personality testing is the same. Plainly speaking, the more an assessment measures, the more useful it is to predict workplace behavior and the greater the level of understanding it provides on how best to leverage the capabilities of each person.

### Crucial Factors

Extensive analysis of workplace situations strongly demonstrates that three distinct factors account for much of the variance in both job performance and job satisfaction:

- Characteristics of the individual,
- Characteristics of the situation, and
- Interaction of the individual and the situation.

Assessments that account for all three factors in detail maximizes the potential for predicting and understanding job performance and satisfaction – getting the right person in the right place. That means determining whether a given person's personality traits mesh with the requirements of the job that person has or might have. Job requirements go beyond hard skills and experience to include the ability to work with others or lead others productively and effectively, to exhibit and use certain behaviors, and more.

If a personality assessment only measures and reports on personal characteristics and omits all of the situational factors for the jobs those individuals hold, the result is an incomplete picture. Similarly, assessments that do not account for the intensity of each personality trait measured, or how different situations that arise on the job raise or lower intensity level, will throw no light on how a person reacts to stressful rather than normal job situations.

### Better Perspective

In addition to this interactive dimension, the best personality testing should stress objectivity. All of us in the workplace observe human behavior and attempt to interpret what we've seen. We

ask ourselves why people act a certain way and then try to predict future actions. Our assessments are based on the intuitive perceptions that we've developed about others, and sometimes even ourselves. These intuitive skills are inevitably inadequate, because they are subjective and unique to our own experience. Objective personality testing, backed by strong psychometric, empirical and statistical validation, offers a far better perspective on insights into individual motivations, styles and needs.

The definition of an individual's underlying needs and motivations provides powerful insight to what drives that person's behavior. Understanding these needs and motivations allows each person to assume a much higher level of personal responsibility for job conduct. Without this information, people tend to rely on their perceptual filters and few people are able to figure out how to get their needs met or satisfied.

Reports and feedback based on a personality assessment give individuals a perfect frame of reference to look at their interests, their real career needs, their work styles and their definitions of a satisfying career. Personality testing lets employees zero in on the career that fits them, and helps them figure out in which environments they will have a greater likelihood of success. The best tests measure social behaviors, underlying expectations of interpersonal and task actions, potential stress reactions to unmet expectations, occupational preferences and organizational strengths. They express these measurements in an easily understood format, typically a sliding scale showing employees the extent to which particular traits are dominant in their workplace profile

### Objective Insights

Some personality assessments identify whether people work better alone or on a team, whether they prefer a structured or flexible work environment, whether they take initiative or need guidance, or whether they think in terms of details or the big picture. Each person will have his or her own strengths, weaknesses, productive behaviors and stress behaviors that may be similar to or differ from his or her peers. Personality testing identifies

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and brings those characteristics into focus, helping employees understand how to pursue career paths that better fit their core capabilities.

These traits should be described in objective, non-judgmental language, to help employees advance to the next opportunity. The reports derived from the objective measurements should describe desires, strengths, motivational needs and stress reactions for the individual and provide basic recommendations for developing skills when faced with varying environments and people. Based on this information individuals can manage life and work situations in ways that fulfill their motivational needs, and reduce stress that can cause reactions that so often damage relationships and occupational effectiveness. Personality assessment testing is an effective tool to guide self analysis, especially in the hands of a skilled career counselor or coach. Guided by the insights from personality testing, employees can perform to their true potential in careers and positions that are aligned with their interests and work styles.

Despite all the benefits that personality testing offers, there will be those who fear that their test results will be used against them. It's essential to emphasize that testing can make anyone's job more enjoyable. Managers who use testing to understand what drives the people they supervise can be more effective at helping employees to change behaviors that create stress for themselves and others. Personality data, provided in a non-judgmental way, provides employees and supervisors with a common language to neutralize assumptions that people often make about each other, creating a foundation for trust and collaboration. This information can help the companies fit employees where they will be most comfortable and most likely to succeed. That helps the employee AND the employer.

## **About the Author:**

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For a copy of the white paper cited above and entitled: "Business Implications of the War for Talent 2008: How the New Reality is Impacting Organizations Throughout North America and What To Do About It, authored by Birkman International and Stanton Chase International, go to : [www.recruitingtrends.com](http://www.recruitingtrends.com)

## **About Birkman:**

The Birkman Method<sup>®</sup> has been in use for over 50 years and has been used by over 2 million people and 5,000 organizations worldwide, including corporations, not-for-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and individuals in their hiring, retention, motivational and organizational development activities. The assessment accurately measures social behaviors, underlying expectations of interpersonal and task actions, potential stress reactions to unmet expectations, occupational preferences and organizational strengths.

For more information: [www.birkman.com](http://www.birkman.com) or 1-800-215-2760.