



Politically correct profiling

How to win in the employee-recruitment sweepstakes / by Wendy Eustace

These days the term “profiling” can carry with it nasty connotations of screening for “appropriate” people at border crossings. However, in the world of human resources, it can be an effective methodology for finding the best woman or man for a job. In this context, profiling is defined as a set of assessment tools that help a company make decisions regarding the workers in question when it comes to succession planning, hiring and training. One local company that has seen the benefits of profiling is Hamilton’s Canreg Inc., which specializes in consulting on regulatory processes and is a regular business award winner in this region and at the Ontario level. Anne Tomalin, president of Canreg, has used profiling to help her understand her employees’ strengths and to increase their productivity and effectiveness. She has incorporated assessments as part of a “working styles workshop” in order to build her team’s understanding of these issues.

give a percentage compatibility fit, offer suggested behavioural-based interview questions for applicants and provide coaching recommendations for existing employees.

Behavioural profiles. These tools are designed for use with current staff. They are very popular because they take less than 15 minutes to use and can identify style preferences and teamwork compatibility. Leaders and coaches are able to guide, motivate and inspire their teams to reach new heights.

When used properly, employee profiling tools can offer various advantages:

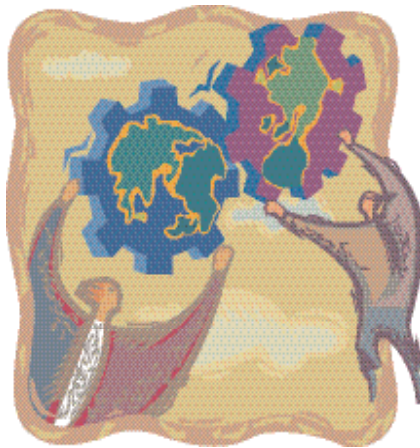
Benefit #1: A good fit

Early 20th-century manufacturing guru W. Edwards Deming once commented that “if a person is not performing as expected, it is probably because he is miscast for the job.” Studies have shown that this is the case for as many as four in five workers (in the U.S.). It has become popular today to “job hop” every six months or so. The knowledge worker, for example, often sells him or herself to the highest bidder and, as a result, may be more demanding, more portable and less loyal. This is obviously costly to your organization as employees don’t stay around long enough to build their worth to the business. It can take six months for a new employee to reach a consistently high output. The overhead expense to find, hire, orient and train people is a major investment that many businesses fail to track. Depending on the job, it can be as low as 25 per cent of a person’s annual salary or as high as 300 per cent.

Some of the more popular tools and their payback include the following:

Pre-employment attitude-screening profiles. These tools are only used with applicants. They take less than 15 minutes to perform and measure such important attitudinal aspects as work ethic, honesty, substance abuse (where permitted by law) and dependability. The least expensive of all employee assessments, they screen out potential problem applicants, saving both time and money.

Total-person profiles. A good tool measures many things about a person and compares the results with a benchmark of those characteristics shared with top performers. It is recommended that an assessment measure cognitive abilities (thinking styles), motivational interests and key personality traits. It should take about an hour to perform,



“If a person isn’t performing as expected, it’s probably because he’s miscast for the job” . . . and that could cost you as much as 300 per cent of an annual salary

Profiling tools designed to predict who will succeed in a job speed up the selection process. When applicants are hired who are a good fit for the job, retention and productivity increase substantially. This alone frees up a fortune in overhead and makes a business much more profitable, even if sales do not increase.

Subway restaurants in Eastern Canada decided to use assessments as a pre-employment tool and, in conjunction with supervisory training, reduced turnover in its participating stores by 80 per cent. This also resulted in significant bottom-line increases on same-store sales.

Benefit #2: Improved culture

Workers today are more vocal in expressing dissatisfaction with their jobs. Much of this is due to stress resulting from a poor job match. A true job fit brings out the best in everyone. When employees are forced to work on things they do not enjoy, they become less happy over time. This affects their co-workers and can create a less-than-positive “domino effect” throughout the organization.

Benefit #3: Recruiting with ease

Those companies ranked as the best places to work typically get 20 or more applications for each job filled. Management consultant Peter Drucker says, “The single most important competitive advantage will be . . . the ability of a company to attract, hold and motivate workers.” When you have employees who are right for the job, the word spreads that your company is a good place to work.

A recent study found that more than 95 per cent of applicants had no objection to taking a pre-employment profile. These tools can be given at the job site or completed at an applicant’s home via the Internet.

Benefit #4: Better information

Profiling tools — assessments for job fit, succession planning, coaching, success and motivation indicators, learning indexes and many other features—allow a more complete picture of an

individual. Drucker claims that up to 66 per cent of a company’s hiring decisions will prove to be mistakes in the first 12 months. The U.S. Department of Labor endorsed the use of profiling tools in 1999, as long as they are reliable, validated and look at the “whole” person — meaning their speed of learning, aptitudes and attitudes. The conventional job interview rarely generates the information needed to make wise employment decisions.

Sixty-six per cent of a company’s hiring decisions will prove to be mistakes in the first 12 months

Benefit #5: Economic sense

It’s estimated that when an employee leaves, you lose two times the person’s annual salary, whether they’re entry level or senior management. A small investment in profiling could yield a good return when compared with the alternative.

Benefit #6: Targeted training

By incorporating assessments into the professional development process, companies ensure that they address the specific needs of their employees. For example, use of the “sales indicator” type of profiling in conjunction with a spaced-repetition sales development program can tell you just how much sales drive your employees have, which ones are highly persistent and how energetic and self-reliant they are.

Companies in the Golden Horseshoe are competing for that elusive top five per cent of people. How will your company attract, hire and retain star performers? By determining the unique success patterns within your organization — whether it be in sales, IT, customer service or even leadership and management — you can increase the probability of finding the right person for the job.



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