



*Our Thinking Series:*

## Personality Profiling - I've got your number!

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Run a search for the word personality on the web and you will probably find something like this: "...somebody's set of characteristics: the totality of somebody's attitudes, interests, behavioural patterns, emotional responses, social roles, and other individual traits that endure over long periods of time"

In the workplace people tend to label their colleagues, but with a deeper appreciation of people's natural styles and preferences and by understanding their personality profiles, a far more insightful and less rigid understanding emerges. For example, if a person appears overly controlling but colleagues know they have high control, low affection and high emotionality levels, they are more likely to understand that it is their personality traits playing out rather than them being unreasonable.

Psychometric testing tools that enable organisations to assess an individual's personality have been available for decades, but their use has predominantly been confined to the recruitment process. Recently, however, a new and more intimate generation of personality profiling that also takes into account the individual's more emotional side has emerged. This means that employers and individuals can drill down deeper than ever before into the more subtle dynamics of a person's make-up and how their behaviours might play out at work.

HR as a function is increasingly integrating personality profiling into the talent management lifecycle from the initial recruitment phase and on-boarding through to team working, leadership development and the final exit. This heightened understanding of the power of personality can be used to help predict and shape behaviour, enhance team working, support personal development and career progression and foster leadership skills.

And this is more than just a nice-to-have. It can help to build high-performing teams and leadership pipelines, both of which are essential to maintain competitive edge.

So how does personality feed into the talent management life-cycle? The short answer is that an individual's attitudes, characteristics, interests, responses and patterns of behaviour are some of the key ingredients that determine how well they perform.

The importance of identifying these ingredients at the recruitment stage has long been acknowledged and personality profiling is widely accepted as adding value by predicting how a person will perform. This can be particularly useful in high-volume recruitment situations.

If an employer knows what behaviours are important in a role, they also can extrapolate back to the kind of personality attributes that will naturally suggest these patterns of behaviour. For example, if a job requires a high level of planning and attention to detail, recruiting people who have high or moderate levels of control on a personality scale is likely to enable them to play to their strengths and behave in a way that will deliver results.

It's important to stress that personality isn't the only driver of behaviour and real-world job performance, but it is certainly a valuable indicator. But more than that, an understanding of personality traits enables those recruiting to build a high level

of consistency into their interview process and other aspects of the recruitment lifecycle.

So if a person's personality profile isn't the exact fit for the role, their adaptive behaviours can be tested to give a better indication of whether they could grow into it. Similarly, if profiling reveals that a person has potential to do the job well but they require support in specific areas, then this can be fed into their career development plan at the on-boarding or induction stage.

As an employee progresses within the organisation, insights into their personality, natural style and preferred ways of working can also help managers to better manage them. This increased clarity can help both parties to work more effectively together. It also empowers the individual to articulate what they want from their line manager in terms of their own personal and career development.

In terms of talent management, this early-stage profiling can play an invaluable part in identifying potential high-performers and leaders at the outset. Not only can profiling deliver insights into their strengths and natural leadership style but, importantly, it can shed light on potential weaknesses, blind spots and risk factors. Some organisations carry out these types of exercises at development centres or post-recruitment workshops. Typically, lower level managers are profiled and career development plans produced on the basis of the findings to support their progression within the organisation.

Another area in which personality profiling tools are increasingly being used is team-building. We work with a number of global companies in which virtual teams are spread across several countries and impermanent and project-focussed groups are becoming more commonplace. Both scenarios pose numerous challenges for managers trying to create the right team dynamics, all of which are exacerbated when teams are working remotely and opportunities to meet face-to-face are limited.

In these situations, it goes without saying that an understanding of the personality dynamics within a group is invaluable, and that by discussing and sharing this information the risk of individuals making assumptions or judgements about colleagues is reduced. That's perhaps even more true when a team is made up of individuals from different linguistic or cultural groups - which is why effective profiling tools are multi-lingual.

The same process is equally helpful in a merger or restructure situation when you have a new combination of people who need to quickly re-form as a high performing team.

As well as language barriers, global personality profiling can help teams work with cultural differences. Although it is important not to stereotype, managers from a specific country, may exhibit some typical personality traits and leadership preferences. Facet5 author, Norman Buckley, has undertaken extensive research into cultural norms which helps those working with global teams to better understand the differing cultures.

This provides anyone working internationally with a valuable frame of reference into how they may need to adapt their behaviour to fit in. For example, knowing you need to adhere to processes and rules in India and in China it is essential to appreciate that to do business successfully you need to take more time than we do in the West to build the relationship.

It is important to remember that while occupational psychologists and the developers of personality profiling products seek to provide employers with tools that help to indicate performance and fit for a role, their intention is never to be prescriptive about an individual or their career path. They see their role as providing an evidence-based indication of an individual's level of fit for a role.

It is often said that you take your personality with you wherever you go. Personality profiling through the talent management lifecycle provides a strengths-based universal language that can help people to better understand each other and meet on common ground.

For too long the key touch points in the talent management lifecycle have remained disparate, but personality tools now exist to not only unite them but add value at each stage for both the individual and the organisation.

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