

## Personality Assessment and Leadership

This may come as a surprise to you, but a person's personality more accurately predicts their business success than the knowledge and skills they possess. Personality functions as the "manager" of a person's workplace abilities. Your personality is the key element at the core of your work experience, and it has a huge impact on personal productivity and job satisfaction.

Powerful personality measures exist that measure a person's strengths, weaknesses, and values that influence their behavior in the workplace. The insight that one gains from understanding their personality will provide insights that can help advance their career.

When you think about it, personality is perhaps the most easily modified of the many factors impacting your career success. Consider the following:

1. You can't increase your IQ because it peaks in your early twenties.
2. You cannot dramatically increase your creativity or common sense, these are stable traits.
3. You can increase your education, but not without huge investments of time and money.
4. You can develop your technical skills, but that requires time and opportunity.
5. You can gain more experience, but this also takes time and time is a constant that operates equally for all.
6. You can increase your work hours, but this often leads to burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Considering all the above, an effort to understand your personality and to consciously modify your behavior is the fast track toward professional development.

### What is Personality?

Not all psychologists believe there is a single definition of personality, but there is strong agreement that personality includes the impression you create in others through your typical patterns of behavior. In other words, it's the reputation you earn over time in the workplace. Also it is agreed, that personality traits can either accentuate or compromise the skills and abilities you bring to the workplace.

Recent studies show that personality and character are much stronger predictors of success than IQ or book smarts. It is estimated that 75 percent of people in the workforce have personality traits that hinder job performance. Such counterproductive personality traits not only hinder job performance but create a huge source of stress in the workplace, for example, in boss-subordinate relationships.

To understand personality, the concept should be defined from two perspectives: (1) How a person thinks about himself – which is a person's identity and concerns his/her most deeply held beliefs and values, and (2) How others think about that person – which is a person's reputation, and reputation is an index of success in life.

There are two important aspects to reputation, which we call "the bright side" and "the dark side". The bright side is the initial impression we make on others – it reflects our social performance when we are at our best, for example in a job interview or on a first date. The dark side is the impression we make on

others when we let our guard down, or when we are at our worst - for example, when stressed, ill, or intoxicated.

Dark side tendencies typically tend to coexist with well developed social skills which mask or compensate for them in the short run. Over time however, a leaders dark side tendencies can erode trust and undermine relationships. Both the bright and dark side of reputation can be studied, and most of the major outcomes in life depend on reputation. Moreover, according to Dr. Hogan, and many other researchers, effective leaders have very distinctive reputations.

## Success Personality Traits and Counterproductive Personality Traits

Research shows that high performers share a set of characteristics that set them apart from the average performer. These characteristics are optimism, hard work, ambition, open-mindedness, patience, persistence, and the encouragement of others. A large body of research supports these traits to be associated with high performance across a spectrum of different jobs. Very few individuals, only about 15 percent, have all these success traits unaccompanied by any prominent counterproductive traits. In fact, most people have at least one or two success traits, usually in combination with a few counterproductive traits that interfere with good performance and job satisfaction. In moderation, none of these dark side traits interfere with success.

## What is Leadership?

What is leadership and what is the role personality plays in a leaders success. Robert Hogan, defines leadership as the ability to build and maintain a group that performs well compared to its competition. Leadership concerns persuading people to set aside, for a time, their selfish pursuits and work in support of the communal interest of the group. Following are several points about leadership that we know are empirically true.

## Personality Predicts Leadership Style and Effectiveness

Who we are is how we lead! And knowing who you are can help you improve your leadership performance. Two generalizations about people and human nature are: (1) People live and work in groups, and (2) Every group has a status hierarchy – that is, there are people at the bottom, in the middle, and at the top and everyone knows who is where. This suggests that the most important problems in life concern getting along with others and achieving some measure of status . Hogan refers to this as getting along and getting ahead, and individual differences in these capabilities predict a wide range of occupational outcomes. It is important to note, that effective leaders are skilled at both building relationships and acquiring status, that is, getting along and getting ahead.

## Good to Great

In Jim Collins' book, Good to Great, he identified two characteristics that only 11 CEOs of the hundreds he studied shared. First, they were modest and humble as opposed to self-dramatizing and self-

promoting. Second, they were phenomenally persistent. These findings differ from the popular business literature that has been promoting the cult of the charismatic CEO, such as Jack Welch, Lee Iacocca, and Donald Trump.

### Leaders Personality Affects Organizational Performance

Various studies show consistently that: (a) personality predicts leadership style (who we are determines how we lead), (b) leadership style predicts employee attitudes and team functioning; and (c) attitudes and team functioning predict organizational performance. The formula is simple; leader personality = leadership style = employee attitudes and team functioning = organizational performance.

### Managerial Incompetence – The Real Problem

Survey after survey shows that 65% to 75% of the employees in any organization report that the worst aspect of their job is their immediate boss. Estimates of managerial incompetence in today's organizations range from 30% to 75%; and a recent review reports the average estimate to be 50%. Hogan's research suggests that managerial failure is more related to having undesirable qualities than lacking desirable ones – that is, having the wrong stuff instead of having the "right stuff."

The **Center for Creative Leadership** summarized failed managers in terms of four themes: (1) poor interpersonal skills (being insensitive, arrogant, cold, aloof, overly ambitious), (2) unable to get work done (betraying trust, not following through, overambitious), (3) unable to build a team, and (4) unable to make the transition after a promotion. Talk about having the wrong stuff.

After 30 years of research, Dr Hogan proposed a taxonomy of personality causes of managerial failure. These personality traits are those dysfunctional interpersonal dispositions that: (a) co-exist with talent, ambition, and strong social skills and (b) prevent people from completing the essential task of leadership – building a team. These dysfunctional dispositions are what Hogan describes as the dark side of personality and identified by the Hogan Development Survey (HDS).