



## **Retail Careers are not for everyone but finding the right people *is* for everyone.**

**By Doug McCann**

When you think of the characteristics which describe any good retailer, adjectives like passionate, dedicated, driven, hard working, service oriented and “multi tasking” come to mind. However, with the broad variety of generations in today’s workforce, the reality is that finding the right person, is never ‘one size fits all’ especially when it comes to retail employees.

Many retailers can relate to having met a candidate with a well-written résumé and good personal references; someone who seems to be the perfect match for the job. They are convincing in the interview and have a clean background check and verified credentials. Their skills test showed a wealth of potential. Yet, it was only when he /she was brought on board that you found out they weren't the team player he appeared to be, or that he would crack under an ounce of pressure. Perhaps he really didn't like the fast paced, multi priority retail setting. Personality assessments could have told you all that and more.

Companies get into trouble when they make decisions based on personal biases, intuition, and hearsay, as opposed to logical reasoning and objective data. Given the current employment environment, the tendency might be towards getting a ‘warm body’ to fill an open position. However, in today’s competitive, service oriented retail environment, simply hiring ‘anyone’ could be far more detrimental than taking the steps necessary to find the right person. The cost of one bad hire can easily be in the tens of thousands of dollars. Fitting a square peg in a round hole *is possible*, but it leaves far too many gaps around the edges to make an effective fit between the employer and employee.

Instead successful companies must consider three things when hiring, leading and keeping good people:

**Knowledge** - This is what candidates bring to you when they come to the table, this can be in the form of experience in related retail fields, or experience in other customer service related businesses (such as the hospitality industry).

**Skills** –Skills may be transferrable or you may need to train the candidate based on your own retail environment or business offering.

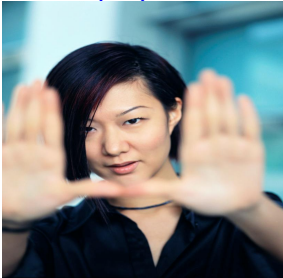
**Talent** – The recurring personality patterns that define behaviours. You can not (easily) teach talent, you can only select for talent. There are three main types of talent

- Striving Talents – why is he or she motivated / driven?
- Thinking Talents – how he or she thinks or comes to decisions
- Relating Talents – how a person engages in relationships

The basic scientific rationale (dating back to the 1930's) is that employees who are successful in given jobs have certain patterns of talents / personality that can predispose them to a successful job fit. These concepts such as Dominance, Extroversion, Confidence, Work Pace, Decision-Making, etc. can be measured. More importantly as employers we have the advantage that they can be measured objectively with good predictive validity through the use of personality assessments.

In a recent article in Talent Magazine Dr. Todd Harris explains that "...personality traits have a direct impact on job performance. Research indicates between 20 percent and 25 percent of an individual employee's effectiveness on the job is attributable to his or her personality. The data speak clearly; the assessment of common personality attributes is extremely valuable." Dr Harris goes on to explain, "In today's increasingly customer focused service and team oriented business environment, companies are discovering that understanding the personality attributes of their key performers can be a significant competitive advantage,"

Additionally, once hired, employers fail to manage the employee in a fashion that motivates and brings out the best in the employee. The result being new hires that fail to be fully engaged, or who become disengaged and ultimately quit thus leaving the employer back at square one.



Success in finding and keeping the right people is quite straightforward and is not an overwhelming task.

Start by:

1. Identifying a set of behavioural characteristics (or talents) that will help to predispose success in your specific role, or company.
  - o The key lies in being clear about what you are looking for, and matching those demands (as much as possible) with the candidates for the job. A job description is often not enough to describe the type of person for your specific environment.
2. Using the behavioural characteristics in your ads when attracting candidates and by carefully considering how and where you advertise for the people you are looking.
3. Hiring to those characteristics – during the interview process use a variety of criteria to ensure that a person's behavioural characteristics are an integral part of the consideration.
4. Understanding your own behavioural motivations (as a manager) and leading your team according to the things that will motivate them to become loyal and productive employees. By using a reliable behavioural assessment in the hiring process is that it provides employers with an accurate road map of the teams

motivating behaviours. Managers will lead better if they know what motivates their employees.

- For example, some employees need more recognition. Others are impatient and get frustrated. It helps to develop management strategies individual to the employees, which will result in higher levels of loyalty engagement and retention.

The Predictive Index® is one personality assessment survey ([www.piworldwide.com](http://www.piworldwide.com)). Assessments have a common goal: to uncover information that can be used for leadership and management development, recruitment and retention and team building. The Predictive Index takes a scientific approach to personality assessment and can predict job performance in an easy to apply and non-discriminatory way. Regardless of what program you decide to use, always ensure that the tool has been sufficiently validated for use in the hiring process. Ensure that the program has both reliability and validity and is free from bias.

Finding someone who shares the passion and dedication to help you build and grow your business is not an easy feat. Behavioural assessments provide you with one piece of the puzzle that each person brings to the table. It should not be the sole decision making tool, but having an understanding what motivates a person would provide you with critical information on how those behaviours will manifest themselves in front of your customers. The clearer an employer can be and the more committed they are to seeking the "right" employee the greater the degree of retention, engagement and sales success.