



## RECRUITMENT

## DOUG MCCANN

*Hiring:**Get it right the first time*

**P**icture Mary, a seasoned manager at a large pharmaceutical company. She's interviewing Jeff for a key role on her team. She's very impressed.

He's almost perfect on paper – industry experience, highly skilled, solid education; his credentials leap off the page. What's more, he's dynamic and polished; he even shares Mary's passion for sailing.

Convinced Jeff's a great fit, Mary hires him. On the job though, it's a different story. His lacklustre performance is disappointing, and no amount of coaching turns it around. Eventually, Jeff is let go. So, what went wrong?

This poor outcome is all too common, because Mary responded to Jeff as most of us would – in a very human, emotional way.

While it's natural to be influenced by appearance, geniality, education and shared interests, Mary didn't uncover what drives Jeff or his aptitudes, attitudes and beliefs.

The interview left her no wiser about his stability, persistence, temperament, level of maturity or judgment. These critical qualities are rarely uncovered in the traditional hiring process, yet they nearly always play an important role in initiating the firing process.

So what can businesses do to make smarter hiring choices? Many are exploring more scientific, data-driven solutions, such as custom personality assessments, which take the subjectivity and risk out of the process.

Assessment tools of this na-

ture have actually been around for quite some time. Decades ago, corporations used them mainly to identify the characteristics of their hardest workers to replicate them through hiring or emulation.

Today's more refined tests focus on understanding employees better and determining what motivates them. Not only do they help in hiring the right people, they can also ensure existing employees are in jobs that align with their innate characteristics, so they can truly shine.

Increasingly, businesses of all sizes and in all industries are recognizing personality tests as powerful people-management tools. In fact, the **Aberdeen Group**, in a 2009 study by **Saba, Martiz and Madden**, showed 61% of the better-managed companies were using at least one type of personality assessment, such as reference checks, intelligence tests or personality tests – and often more than three.

**Nicola Wealth Management** is a full-service financial planning firm with a head office in Vancouver. The company has been using the Predictive Index (PI) personality assessment for three years, largely to complement an already rigorous recruitment process.

"Our firm's strength lies in the quality of our people, so we have to hire wisely," said **Jamie Duncan**, chief operating officer. "The PI provides valuable insight into a candidate's personality and potential fit, which even the most in-depth interview might not reveal.

"It also helps us determine what to explore more deeply in

the second interview; even which questions to ask. It's one more way to ensure we've got it right before we make an offer."

So, what exactly is "personality" and how do you test it?

Personality is determined by traits that explain why an individual behaves in characteristic ways. Traits are relatively stable over time, are partly inherited and genetically determined and can be described and measured accurately.

Importantly, in relation to hiring, personality traits have a direct and substantial impact on job performance. In fact, **PI Worldwide** research indicates that between 20% and 25% of an employee's effectiveness on the job is attributable to personality.

The PI measures traits such as extroversion, dominance, patience and judgmental thinking by asking individuals to describe themselves both as they see themselves and as others see them by checking off a list of adjectives.

A software program then calculates and analyzes the results. A good personality test should provide objective, reliable, information that's not achievable through one's own life experience or gut feelings.

"We also use PI to ensure our existing employees are in roles that suit them," said Duncan. "Everyone has taken the test. It helps with staff development and performance evaluations and is a great discussion starter."

PI has also enabled employees to gain valuable insight into what they need to be happy in their job.

"If a person scored high on their PI for needing social interaction in their role, it's unlikely they'd enjoy a number-crunching, solitary type of job," said Duncan. "It enables us to make smarter, faster decisions about internal moves."

Being able to predict the job performance and behavioural fit is becoming increasingly important for a number of reasons.

First, organizations are becoming leaner, flatter and less structured and are relying more on teams and collaboration, so personality counts.

Second, there are fewer dollars for training or coaching when behavioural challenges demand it.

Finally, today's competitive market means customers have choices. Why should clients return to a company whose representative made them feel bad? Again, personality is key.

Yet, while hiring and retaining talent continues to be cited by business leaders as key to their organization's success, many decision-makers make their hiring choice in the first five minutes of an interview and then spend the rest of the interview rationalizing their emotional choice.

Personality tests can provide practical, reliable indicators of workplace behaviour. Bottom line: if there's a proven tool available to help ensure you hire only the absolute best person for the job, shouldn't you be using it?

*Doug McCann, dmccann@predictivesuccess.com, is managing principal, Predictive Success Corporation, 604-568-3547 and www.predictivesuccess.com*