

Hiring With a Map

Behavioural assessment tools are common in today's hiring practices. Hiring managers lean on them hoping to discover a silver bullet – a tool that will tell them exactly who to hire and why. The problem is most companies do not use behavioural assessment tools accurately or effectively to make the right hiring decisions.

Consider a GPS unit for a moment. I get a kick out of watching my GPS plot my location as I drive down the highway. Seeing where I am on a map is interesting, but it does not offer me any real intelligence – it's just an arrow on a map. However the GPS quickly converts from a toy into a powerful guide the moment I program in a destination. When it knows where I am going, it starts barking orders on where to turn, which exit to take, how far I am from my destination and how long it will take me to reach it.

Just like the GPS, a behavioural assessment is a very interesting tool. It is always enlightening to see a person's natural traits, communication style, leadership style and personal drivers. Yet how does this information benefit the hiring process? It doesn't. An individual's profile on its own does not provide an indication if a candidate will be successful in the role. It does not demonstrate how the candidate compares with your top performers and where they differ. Using an assessment without a benchmark is the same as using a GPS without a destination.

To fully leverage the power of assessment tools, managers must measure a candidate's results against a profile of an ideal applicant. The criteria for success already exists within your top performing salespeople. What traits do your most successful sellers have in common? What separates them from the B and C players? How do they use their natural strengths to achieve their successes?

David Lorenz, CEO of a mid-size software firm, struggled to define the makings for success within his sales team. "I hired top quality salespeople, but I witnessed over and over again an inability in most of my reps to get client commitment, regardless of their product knowledge," he explains. David invested heavily in training and coaching to equip each of his reps with the knowledge and skills to sell million dollar solutions. Yet only three of his 10 reps were able to consistently achieve quota and maintain average sales cycles of less than six months.

In order to develop a baseline and identify the gaps between his A players and the rest of his team, David had each of his salespeople complete a PDP Survey – a behavioural assessment tool. He was shocked by the results. "I had only a 12 per cent match between my top three sales reps and the rest of the team," he says. "No wonder these reps were struggling." By combining the assessments of each of his top performers he was able to determine the unique traits that made these reps so successful. Based on their behavioural attributes he created a benchmark of the ideal behavioural profile.

By defining the gap within his team, David was armed with the information he could act on: who to keep, who might be repositioned and who to let go. It also gave him a baseline to compare any future candidates to hire against. "I now use PDP to find

people that will excel in our business," he explains. "If a candidate has less than a 70 percent match to our ideal profile I know that they will face an uphill battle." Yet a profile match is not enough for David. "We might find a person with a 90 per cent behavioural match, but if they lack the basic industry experience and sales skills they will still fail." He uses the tools to get beyond the resume and see if the sales person will succeed in his company.

Building a top performing sales team always comes back to the old accountant's adage, "If you don't measure it you can't manage it." Behavioural assessments on their own only provide basic information on people – you need an anchor to measure them against. The traits for success exist inside your organization. It is not about adopting someone else's generic profile as an ideal fit; it's about identifying and quantifying what sets your top people apart. Just as a GPS can become your co-pilot leading you to your destination, an assessment tool will steer you to the salespeople that will achieve your sales goals.

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