

# Discover the genius within your organization: the benefits of personality assessment tools

Tina Carey | Tina Carey and Associates, Inc., San Gabriel, CA

Personality assessment tools can provide a common vocabulary that simplifies and standardizes communication among co-workers, identify the behavioral diversity within a group, provide managers with critical insights into how they can effectively communicate with and lead their staff, and pinpoint not only the technical skill set needed for a specific job but the personality traits and motivational factors that are best suited to a particular job. Understood and leveraged, the behavioral differences within an organization can contribute greatly to its success and to the cultivation of a positive work environment.

**M**any organizations still consider job skills, intelligence, and academic achievement as the most important factors in hiring and team building. It may be surprising to learn that a number of studies have shown these qualities to be far less important than understanding the intrinsic behavioral characteristics and motivational factors of each individual to ensure that he or she is suited to the job and the workplace culture. This is even more important in a healthcare institution, where the relationships developed between healthcare professionals and patients often determine the outcomes of treatment.

In his book *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman described 15 key competencies that were identified as essential for project managers at Amoco. Of these qualities, 73% were actually “soft skills,” such as flexibility, service orientation, cooperation, and teamwork, not merely intellect or technical competence.<sup>1</sup> An independent study of emotional competence, conducted by Hay/McBer in Boston, surveyed more than 300 top executives at 15 global companies. Their research identified six specific emotional competencies that distinguished the top achievers from the average performers: influence, team leadership, organizational awareness, self-confidence, the drive to achieve, and innate leadership ability.<sup>1</sup>

With the emergence of the Internet, real-time global communications technologies, and the accelerating rate of change in business dynamics, organizations have become highly complex and dynamic ecosystems that are as healthy or unhealthy as the

people who inhabit them. This is particularly true within the rapidly evolving healthcare marketplace, where adaptability and innovation are key factors in helping organizations keep pace with the changing competitive landscape.

## Placing patients' welfare first

Recognizing the need to make the welfare of patients the number-one priority while still focusing on profitability, the CEO of the Albert Einstein Healthcare Network in Philadelphia set forth on a mission to totally transform the organization. The ultimate goal was to raise the healthcare status and overall welfare of patients by exploring new disease management techniques and new drug therapies. A new set of values was formulated (Table 1), and workers were told that they would have to do whatever it took to achieve the highest possible level of care and comfort for patients.

A more personal, highly collaborative approach was developed to help the leadership team begin the transformational process. Through a major internal communications program, which included regular meetings, newsletters, and bulletin boards, everyone began to understand the new strategic initiatives and the importance of supporting the organization's new people-driven focus.

Although most workers and managers adopted the new values, a few refused to move toward

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Correspondence to: Tina Carey, Tina Carey and Associates, Inc., 8455 Santa Ynez, San Gabriel, CA 91775; telephone: (626) 286-6857; fax: (626) 287-2297; e-mail: tina51@aol.com

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**TABLE 1**  
**Job values for employees of Albert Einstein Healthcare Network**

- We are compassionate.
- We are totally dedicated to our patients and their families.
- We insist on ever-higher quality.
- We take responsibility and make things work.
- We show respect for cultural differences and the dignity of each individual.
- We strive to put others at ease.
- We promote trust through honest transactions.
- We show respect for the work and ideas of others.
- We express our appreciation and thanks for each other's contributions.
- By giving our support and cooperation, we make each other stronger.

a more collaborative style and were eventually asked to leave. Trained counselors helped workers understand their strengths and weaknesses so that they could effectively leverage them within the teams that were being formed. Personal-development plans assisted workers in understanding how to adapt to the changes that were occurring and how to improve upon areas of weakness. By introducing personality assessment tools that allowed workers and managers to understand themselves and one another better, and by offering training and educational programs that continued to improve skills and competencies, workers became invested in their commitment to personal growth and overall success.

The Albert Einstein Healthcare Network has become a thriving corporate culture that recognizes and leverages individual differences while focusing on its overriding commitment to the patients it serves.<sup>2</sup>

**Tools for building good teams**

We recognize that teamwork is vital to the success of all organizations. What many of us lack is a clear under-

standing of how productive, collaborative teams can be formed. Like most things in life, good teams don't just happen—they are designed. To accomplish this, we need the right tools, tools that help us to recognize the qualities that are required for the individual and the team to be successful.

When people's perceptions of themselves are mismatched with those of the job or the team, inappropriate behavior may result from discomfort with a situation that seems confusing, overwhelming, or out of control. That is why it is so important to understand behavioral styles when making hiring decisions or forming work teams. The worst behavioral aspects of people often emerge when they feel emotionally unsafe or ill suited to a particular job or work environment. This often impacts adversely on the morale and productivity of an entire department or business unit.

Within the healthcare field, matching personality styles and motivational drivers to the job is even more important than in other industries. The behavior of a healthcare professional can significantly affect patients and their family members. Although excellent care is vital, sensitivity and emotional maturity can contribute greatly to the healing process or to a peaceful passing.

Many organizations are now utilizing personality assessment tools within all areas of their staffing. Personality assessment tools can:

- Provide a common vocabulary that simplifies and standardizes communication among employees.
- Recognize the behavioral diversity within a group.
- Provide leaders with critical insights into how they can effectively communicate with and lead their staff.
- Identify not only the technical skill set needed for a specific job but the personality traits and motivational factors that are best suited to a particular job while bringing complementary assets to the team.

For example, in a team-building situation, a personality assessment tool can be used to identify key elements of each individual's personality. These elements may include introvert versus extrovert (ie, those who "think the process" versus those who "talk the process"); "big picture" people versus those who will need all the details; individuals who thrive on stability versus those who need a lot of variety to keep them from being bored; and those who will jump into leadership versus those who will wait and think first. None of these approaches is right or wrong, just different.

*Making decisions*

Often, leaders will tend to be the big picture people. When faced with a new decision, their initial response will be, "Just do it; if it's wrong, we can fix it tomorrow." Conversely, many of the people on their staff are individuals who would rather do nothing than do it wrong. Therefore, when employees who worry about making a mistake are faced with a new or risky decision, they will agonize over the decision before making it. Once the decision is made, they may worry about whether it was the right decision. The "big picture" boss does not recognize how difficult this was for the employee and therefore may not give the feedback that is needed by the employee. If an individual who is a worrier takes the risk, it's important that he or she receive feedback as to whether the decision was right or wrong. If no feedback is given, the worrier who is faced with an important decision in the future may not be able to be decisive.

Once the manager understands this dynamic, it is easy to see that employees have a "box" of expertise within which they feel comfortable to make decisions. The first time they are asked to make a decision "outside the box," they will experience the agony of doubt. If the leader can remember to follow up with the em-

## Behavioral Diversity

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIORAL diversity is a critical factor in developing effective teams that are based on a well-rounded mix of values and personality styles. Intuitive personality assessment tools can provide insights that go far beyond intelligence and knowledge. They can identify leadership qualities by measuring the following characteristics:

- the drive to exercise one's influence on people and events;
- the drive for social interaction with people;
- the intensity of an individual's pace and tension level;
- the drive to conform to formal rules and structure.

Such personality assessment tools can also measure dominance, extroversion, patience, and the level of formality required for optimal job performance. As part of a management strategy, these tools not only help leaders learn how to inspire individuals to achieve their personal best, they also help build new leaders. The valuable information provided by such tools helps companies make sound hiring decisions, based upon a clear understanding of each person's behavioral style and their key motivational drivers.

In a review session with one cli-

ent, we were able to accomplish the following:

- define the leadership profile needed for key positions;
- compare the current staff profiles;
- identify each individual's strengths and weaknesses;
- determine appropriate placement within the organization.

There was an immediate recognition that not all physicians within the practice fit the profile for leadership. In the case of this practice, the leadership profile required visionary thinking to create a new business plan and delivery model. We found that team members and physicians were:

- adept at maintaining the status quo;
- excellent at implementing someone else's vision within clear guidelines and protocols;
- strong decision makers within their areas of expertise;
- few risk takers in the area of moving the practice forward.

This clarified the current balance within the leadership team as well as outlined potential needs as the practice adds new associates. To ensure optimal success for the practice, their screening process was expanded to include key personality traits as well as technical skills.

### Applying the tools to oncology practice

In my consulting with oncology practices, we have used the personality assessment tools in a number of situations. In one case, we conducted a vision- and mission-setting session with the leadership of the practice. This session included the physicians, nurse practitioners, and office managers. We began with a review of the history of the practice. Then we examined the personality profiles of all the participants. By understanding the differing personality styles, everyone can anticipate what each team member will need.

The personality assessment becomes the foundation for a "communication framework" session—an agreed-upon set of "rules of engagement" in how people treat each other. It becomes an excellent tool in diffusing and preventing conflict. People will recognize the diversity within their group without taking things personally.

The tool is an excellent way to determine the proper fit for vacant positions—allowing the hiring manager to define what elements are important and how well an individual fits both the job and the team.

ployee the next day and give feedback on that new decision, that manager will, in essence, expand the size of the employee's "box" of comfortable decisions.

#### *Introverts vs extroverts*

Another example centers on the concept of introverts and extroverts. Introverts need to think about things before they are ready to talk about them. So, managers should always send out an agenda in advance to

folks coming to a meeting. This agenda will give introverts time to think about their answers before the meeting and be more prepared when they arrive. Extroverts will use the meeting time to talk through their ideas. Introverts will also tend to be skeptical and slow to trust new people. Once a manager recognizes this, he or she can anticipate the time needed for an introvert to begin to trust a new coworker—or a new boss, for that matter. These introverts will be the "show

me" folks within the organization.

We also can anticipate which employees thrive on stability—and want to do the same tasks day in and day out—versus those who need variety. Imagine the power of having someone who thrives on stability working in a key routine area, whereas another, who needs variety, may be a much better troubleshooter.

#### *Developing a common language*

Using these assessment tools in

a team-building setting provides a common language for people to begin to express themselves, as well as to understand the diversity of personalities within their group. After all, if everyone wants to be the “big picture” decision maker, who will carry out the decisions? Behavioral diversity is critical to a team’s success. Personality assessment tools provide insights into motivating factors that can eliminate a sense of personal distrust or dislike by providing insights into how our colleagues and we are wired.

Once we have gained a basic understanding of our co-workers and ourselves, we can communicate more effectively. Like the management of the Albert Einstein Healthcare Network, it is important to identify and publish core values and define and implement an agreed-upon communications framework. Openly and honestly sharing information provides the foundation for compassion and understanding. It is the only way that we can move forward positively.

**Anticipating an employee’s needs—and acting on them**

Assessment tools allow leaders to anticipate what an employee needs: Is this a person who needs all the details, or will I just need to highlight the essential points. It can help to determine whether an employee would

prefer a private or public awards ceremony. Just because one individual likes public accolades does not mean that everyone enjoys that. Many prefer private time with the leader of the organization versus being recognized in front of the entire group. We can describe this phenomenon as: “We all look at the world through our own window. Our mistake is assuming that everyone else is looking through the same one!”

Personality assessment tools can be used to understand the current staff and predict the type of person who will be the best fit for the existing culture as well as the job requirements. The leadership team can also utilize these tools to understand its own behavioral characteristics.

Understanding behavioral diversity allows leaders to utilize the differences among individuals and turn them into opportunities for collective growth and better performance. Behavioral diversity, when understood and leveraged, can infuse a team with passion and a sense of purpose. It can help to awaken and nurture the genius within each individual.

Regardless of the professional industry in which we operate, companies are social organizations where people can either realize or fail to realize meaningful, productive lives. Understood and leveraged, the be-

havioral differences within an organization can contribute greatly to its success and to the cultivation of a positive environment. Legendary ballerina Anna Pavlova, who overcame great physical challenges to become one of the world’s most famous dancers, once said, “No one can arrive from being talented alone. God gives us talent; work transforms talent into genius.”

Talent exists in every organization and at all levels. The key is to identify and understand how to tap into that talent to create a dynamic and motivated culture that “transforms talent into genius.”

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tina Carey is president of Tina Carey and Associates, Inc., in San Gabriel, CA. She holds a bachelor of science degree in organizational management from the University of La Verne. Her professional distinctions include former Vice Chair of the Literacy Network of Greater Los Angeles, graduate of the UCLA Anderson School of Management’s Executive Program, and recipient of the Medal of Excellence from Women at Work in Pasadena, CA.