

Using Assessments to Develop Managers and Others for Professional and Personal Growth

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Why do people see things differently?
Why are children in the same family so different?
Why do opposites attract in marriage?
Why do opposites cause conflict at work?
Why do some people like challenges while others avoid them?
Why do some people enjoy breaking rules while others stick by those same rules?
Why are some people so easy to make friends with?
Why are others so difficult to get to know?

I began to find answers to these questions when I started using DISC-based assessments and profiles in my consulting practice.

DISC profiles have their origins in the work of Dr. William Marston, whose book, *Emotions of Normal People* (1920), explained how people can be understood and fall into four distinct and predictable types or styles of behaviors:

D-DOMINANT
I-INTERACTING
S-STEADINESS
C-CAUTIOUS

Using DISC profiles will help you see people differently. A DISC profile is not a test or an evaluation of goodness and badness. It builds a “doorway of communication” allowing you to better understand yourself and others. When you understand why people do what they do, you can place them in an environment where they can become a “top performer”—not to mention a more loyal and productive employee.

These four quadrants shown above are further subdivided into eight descriptors as shown in the Success Insights Wheel™.

In my experience, about 60 percent of turnover results from bad hiring decisions. A DISC profile is the quickest way to understand a person’s motivations, abilities, Emotional Intelligence, (EQ) their strengths and limitations. Perhaps you hired someone to fill a customer service job who hated people, or brought on a manager with no management experience. A DISC profile can’t fix a hiring mistake, but it can enable employee and manager to better understand each other in order to create alignment.

When I first began using DISC profiles, I was skeptical. But the more I used them, the more confident I became in their validity, and the more benefits my clients and I experienced. Helping individuals understand themselves and their behavior patterns and aligning their skills with the right job allows them to become “top performers” with high job satisfaction. Other benefits of DISC profiles include:

- Better understanding and acceptance of differences
- Higher productivity
- Reduced stress
- Reduced conflict
- Improved communication
- More effective teambuilding
- More effective personal development
- New opportunities for potential

With only 24 short but revealing questions, a DISC assessment takes only 10 minutes to administer. The assessment is scored by computer software and provides a customized 26-page report that includes a two-page overview on the individual and his/her value to the organization. The report—

- Rates the individual on 12 leadership skills/competencies
- Provides a checklist, do's and don't, and tips on communicating
- Explains the individual's ideal work environment, natural work styles, and areas of improvement
- Tells the manager how best to motivate and manage the person.

Four Behavior Styles

D-Factor: Dominant, Driver, Director

Business Focus: Problems & Challenges

General Tendencies of the high D:

Needs: Control, Direct, Challenge, Win

Looking for: Results

Emotion: Anger/short fuse

Change: Love it!

Conflict: Fight back

Rules: Break them

Read: Cliff Notes

Talk on Phone: Short

Talk to people: Direct while jumping to next issue

Office: Status symbols

Value to the Team:

- Initiates action
- Innovative
- Goal oriented
- Strategic vision
- Task oriented

I-Factor: Interacting, Inspiring, Sociable

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Business Focus: People & Relationships

General Tendencies of the high I:

Needs: To talk and be liked

Looking for: People

Emotion: Optimism/trust

Change: Not afraid of change

Conflict: Flight, run

Rules: What rules?

Read: Fiction, self-improvement

Talk on Phone: Long conversations

Office: Memorabilia of experiences

Value to the team:

- Enthusiastic
- Optimistic
- Motivates others toward goals
- Team oriented
- Good at resolving conflicts

S-Factor: Steadiness, Stable, Amiable

Business Focus: Pace or Activity Level

General Tendencies of the high S:

Needs: To serve

Looking for: Trust

Emotion: Non-emotional (Masking)

Change: No change please!

Conflict: Tolerate it

Rules: Follow

Read: Fiction/non-fiction- People stories

Talk on Phone: Warm

Office: Family snapshots, “homey”

Value to the team

- Dependable
- Empathetic
- Works hard on projects
- Service orientation
- Patient
- Good listener

C-Factor: Cautious, Compliant, Accurate, Analytical

Business Focus: Procedures & Rules

General Tendencies of the high C:

Needs: Proof & Accuracy

Looking for: Precision

Emotion: Fear

Change: Concerned

Conflict: Avoidance

Rules: "By the book"

Read: Technical journals

Talk on Phone: To the point

Walk: Straight line

Office: Charts, graphs

Value to the team:

- High standards
- Defines, clarifies and gets information
- Objective thinker
- Good problem solver

By applying the results of a DISC assessment, you can begin the process of aligning an employee's drives with the company's mission.

This is the very heart of retentionship. Developing people is always cheaper, and has long-term benefits, than replacing them. Through a DISC assessment, managers can learn more about their employees and begin training, developing and helping people maximize their abilities in ways that benefit an organization and make them star performers.

DISC assessments can be very revealing. It told me why one executive-level group was having problems accomplishing its goals: because the executive director and two assistant directors were "high I's" and their natural inclination was to put more effort into pleasing people and building positive relationships than planning and directing the affairs of the company. To get more direction and make their organization more effective, they needed to rely on outside assistance and place more time and energy in the other three quadrants.

DISC assessments also help co-workers understand how to get along better. I've found that while opposites attract in marriages, on the job people like to work with similar people. DISC assessments help coworkers understand that each person has unique strengths and abilities. People have a tendency to evaluate each other based on their own prejudices and expectations. For example, a person who is slow, methodical, and concerned about quality might look skeptically at another who values speed over quality and works like a bat out of hell. When people can see that a behavior is different but has unique benefits they can accept differences better.

Without understanding, alignment isn't possible. What happens when goals aren't aligned? I knew a man who always wanted to be in the Army, but couldn't. Projecting his unrealized dream onto his son, he pushed and pushed his son to go to West Point. After a laborious process he got his son an appointment to West Point. It was a dream come true

for dad—until two weeks later, when his son quit. A \$50,000 scholarship went down the drain because West Point was in alignment with dad’s drives—but not his son’s.

Let’s look at one company that has succeeded in creating alignment between the company’s goals and the individual’s goals, and deploy their people in ways that use their abilities.

Singapore International Airlines, for one, has improved its retention ratios by placing more time and effort in selection and training of their employees. Not everyone has the mindset and personality suitable for the service industry. Using behavioral based interviews and assessments they identify employees with service-oriented personalities has created a win-win for all concerned. Employees enjoy their jobs more, the company spends less money recruiting, and customers tend to spend more money with companies that offer above-average service.

Flying Above Mediocrity: Organizational Alignment at Singapore International Airlines

It was the food cart bashing my knee that woke me from a pleasant dream. As I grabbed my knee, I saw the flight attendant with the “hit-and-run” food cart heading down the aisle.

I was on the final leg of a long trip, flying on a well-known but mediocre domestic airline that was once known for its good service. Only hours before, I was traveling on Singapore International Airlines (SIA).

SIA is so superior that it leaves other carriers in its vapor trails—even other overseas carriers known for their good service. The positive experience on SIA makes the Air Passenger’s Bill of Rights completely unnecessary.

How does it create this experience? It places the needs of passengers first, and offers service that is above and beyond the ordinary. Even in economy class, the experience is unforgettable. Pillows and blankets are carefully placed on every seat. Once in the air, smiling attendants offer champagne or orange juice, and carefully avoid smashing passenger’s body parts with their carts! Passengers are presented with a kit containing a toothbrush, toothpaste and special socks for the trip. At the beginning and the end of each flight, passengers receive hot towels to freshen up. Particularly pleasing are the individual monitors on the back of each seat where even the most wearied traveler can select from over 15 videos, telephone, audio programs, Nintendo games and up-to-the-minute travel information.

All classes enjoy first-class treatment. I don’t think I ever saw a peanut on this flight. Passengers are presented with a menu with choices. The food in the back of the plane is better than other carrier’s first class flights. After meals, attendants bring liqueurs, beer, juice or anything else you want—no charge. I almost wanted to say, “Leave me alone—quit feeding me!”

Singapore Airlines can delight its customers with high-level service because it hires and supports workers who like providing service and feel aligned with the company’s overall goals.

In a tight labor market, companies are tempted to hire anyone who walks through the door. My experience shows that the more time an organization invests in finding employees who understand and have values, drives, and motivations that match the

company's, the more successful the organization becomes. Because SIA has spent extra effort and energy in creating alignment between employees and the company, its top-performing employees have a service orientation and truly find pride in what they do.

Here's how it creates alignment:

1. *Staff Training and Development.* SIA's heavy investment in staff development and training—conducted in good times and bad—enables staff members to stay focused and continuously upgrade their performance. Training and development fights complacency and keeps crew members capable of handling demanding situations. It also gives the airline a distinct advantage. First, it demonstrates that continuous learning and development help people do a better job, which in turn helps individuals improve their potential. Second, it allows SIA to stay ahead of its competition while other carriers may be cutting back.

2. *No Fear of Change and Innovation.* SIA is known for innovation. Instead of copying other airlines, it takes the lead. Instead of charging passengers a \$5.00 “entertainment fee,” it gives away headsets. Instead of charging for drinks, it gives them away—along with free postcards and the postage needed to mail them. Passengers in the “Raffles Class” section have seats that recline into beds. SIA benchmarks other service industries such as hotels and restaurants to make its service more comfortable, convenient and creative.

3. *Consistent Communication.* With over 27,000 staff members representing 25 nationalities, communication is critical. SIA keeps staff informed of important matters through newsletters and publications, regular meetings between management and staff, and a “Staff Ideas in Action” program that helps new suggestions and ideas move forward for action and improvement. (Communication, an essential element of retention, is covered in Chapter 6.)

4. *Recognize, Reinforce, and Reward the Right Behavior.* Excellent service is a learned behavior that requires constant reinforcement and recognition. Unless an organization develops systems and processes to reward and recognize the behavior it needs for success, it will never get it. (More on this in Chapter 9.) SIA rewards excellent performance with increased pay and promotions, but reserves its most prestigious award for superior acts of customer service. “The Deputy Chairman's Award,” given yearly to people who have managed customer situations with exceptionally selfless acts of service, is a badge of honor coveted by all employees. Winners and their families fly to Singapore for a special dinner. Information about winners and their families is published in the monthly Outlook magazine.

5. *Customers Always Come First.* Customer service directs and guides SIA in all it does. SIA places a priority on quality service. All questions are answered and decisions made based on the needs of the customer. While other airlines cut back

on service to make more profits, SIA retains the customers' needs as first priority. The bottom line for SIA is not the plane, the seat, or the destination. The bottom line is delivering exceptional service and personifying that service.

Excerpt from the book, *Here Today, Here Tomorrow: Transforming Your Workforce from High Turnover to High Retention* by Dearborn Trade

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Greg Smith shows executives and business owners how to attract and keep customers and build organizations that retain and motivate its workforce. He is the author of the book, *Here Today Here Tomorrow: Transforming Your Workforce from High-Turnover to High-Retention*. He speaks at conferences, conducts management training and is the President of a management consulting firm called Chart Your Course International located in Conyers, Georgia. Phone him at 770-860-9464. More articles available: <http://www.ChartCourse.com> and <http://www.HighRetention.com>

