

## CASE STUDY — CREATING HIGH PERFORMANCE PROFILES

# Bringing the genie out of the GeneSys bottle

**A sales-driven enterprise wanted to improve its recruitment “hit rate” in the sales department. It turned to psychometric profiling to provide insights into the attributes that made high-performing salespeople special. Leila Wearing describes the process.**

**R**ecently, Coca-Cola Amatil (CCA) came to us with an interesting project. The HR team wanted to profile the company’s top field sales representatives, with a view to finding out whether there were key personality characteristics that were essential for success in the role.

CCA wanted to use this information to improve its recruitment process, hoping to ensure the company was recruiting the people who would prove outstanding in the role rather than average.

Critically, CCA wanted to know what made its high-performing sales representatives unique from the average population. The company would then use the results from this project to recruit more effectively those individuals who may not have the appropriate experience (the previous first-pass measure), but do have a strong correlation with the personality traits that appear to be essential for success in the field sales role.

### Initial data

CCA has been using psychometric tools with the GeneSys online system to recruit its field sales representatives for some years. With reliable performance data available, it was now possible to select a group of **High Performing (HiPer)** sales representatives to attempt to determine the unique characteristics that differentiate the group.

The HiPer profiling exercise examines the reasoning and personality scores of the group and assesses significant group variance; the traits that the individuals in the HiPer group have in common which are abnormal (or unique to this group) when compared to the general population.

**Four significant findings were noted . . . where the HiPer group differed significantly from the average population.**



Through an established scoring system, CCA provided Harbour Future Leaders (HFL) with a list of 35 high performers. These were selected by CCA line managers based on their performance in a number of categories.

During recruitment, CCA assesses all field sales representatives on the 15FQ+ personality inventory and three cognitive reasoning ability tests; verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning. One of HFL’s consultant psychologists collated and analysed the results for each individual on the four assessments.

### Key success factors

The data analysis revealed four areas where the HiPer group differed significantly from the average population. These were noted as the key success factors in the role.

As the group sample size was fairly small, the analysis also identified six smaller trends. These trends were potentially significant characteristics but we would require a larger sample size to definitely rule them in or out as success factors.

The four significant factors were “hard-headedness”, “self-discipline”, “composure” and the

## By profiling its top performers CCA has now gained an understanding of what makes an individual successful in a field sales role.

second order factor of “self-control” on the 15FQ+. This suggested that the successful CCA field sales representative is likely to be objective and unmoved by criticism, persevering and meticulous, calm and composed, and should be driven to meet deadlines and close off on tasks.

The smaller trends suggested that the successful field sales representative may also be socially confident, self-assured and team-oriented.

### Cognitive results

The cognitive reasoning results showed no significant differences. This suggested that verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning ability was unlikely to be a determining factor in the success of future field sales representatives. This finding is consistent with current profiling literature which states that personality attributes are more important for success in a sales role than cognitive ability or skill.

Interestingly, another significant factor identified in the HiPer group was the measure of “social desirability”. A high score on this measure indicates that the individuals have presented themselves in a more socially desirable manner. High scores on social desirability are not uncommon in sales positions as, typically a function of sales is to be desirable to the customer or client. As a result, it was suggested that a successful field sales representative would score higher than the average population on this measure.

The profiling exercise with CCA highlighted a number of key personality characteristics that were essential success factors for their field sales representatives. The exercise analysed CCA’s field sales team and provided the company with an understanding of the essential requirements and culture of the group.

CCA now has an “ideal” profile for field sales representatives which will further enhance the company’s assessment and selection of future employees. From here, there will be continual updates to the profile as more individuals join CCA.

Furthermore, we will assess CCA’s values and

### The significant factors

The four significant factors that made high performing sales representatives stand out from the average population were:

- Hard-headedness
- Self-discipline
- Composure
- Self-control

It should be noted that every sales role is different, and a separate exercise needs to be conducted for each different sales group to determine significant success factors.

motives inventory results to see whether there are any unique motivators that make a successful field sales representative with CCA.

By profiling its top performers, CCA has now gained an understanding of what makes an individual successful in a field sales role. It has taken an objective and scientific look at the company’s workforce and provided invaluable information to use in this market of employee shortage.

**Leila Wearing is Consultant Psychologist at Harbour Future Leaders in Sydney.**

### Want greater accuracy in deciding who to hire and who to retain?

HFL has produced a **Guide to Predict High Performers**. To get your free copy, and find out how to create a scientifically valid profile of your high performers, call Leila Wearing on +61 2 9929 4044 for Sydney; Dr Rob Kerr, General Manager, on +61 3 8648 6490 for Melbourne; or Cameron Francis, CEO, on +65 6329 6450 for Asia.

### References

- Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Grange, L. L., & Roodt, G. (2001). Personality and cognitive ability as predictors of the job performance of insurance sales people. *Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 27(3), 35-43.

### About HFL

Harbour Future Leaders is an HR consultancy that specialises in assisting enterprises to identify and grow their leadership capability. We uniquely combine world-class assessment methods with effective blended leadership development programs. We have designed and executed over 100 programs for over 40 clients across the region in the last six years. We are privileged to work with some of the Asia-Pacific region’s most admired companies, who entrust us with the planning, measurement and development of their most valuable asset — their future leaders. The company has offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Singapore.