

PSYCHOMETRIC PROFILING

HiPer profiles: well worth their hype

Imagine objectively isolating the specific factors that make your top performers the best at their jobs and then using these factors to make a High Performance Profile. Leila Wearing explains how you can use HiPer Profiles to streamline your recruitment process.

If you are currently using psychometrics for recruitment — among the 30 per cent of enterprises in Australia doing so according to a recent survey — then congratulations. You've taken the first step toward increasing the accuracy of your recruitment process.

Research conclusively shows that, although skill level and knowledge are important factors when recruiting, one of the most important factors to determine on-the-job performance is personality attributes (or characteristics). Skills and knowledge can be taught. Personality attributes and motivations determine our behaviour.

But how can you further increase the validity and accuracy of the process to ensure you are hiring high performers instead of average or low performers?

Recently many organisations have been asking: "what characteristics differentiate my top performers from my average or low performers?"

We have all experienced those employees who strive beyond the rest, perform outstandingly, are extremely motivated and driven to achieve. Their managers usually use them as examples of the

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"perfect employee" or the future of the organisation and as a result, they become the type of people "we would like to hire more of".

So long subjectivity

Until now, many of our assessments of employees' characteristics have been subjective. Managers will say they had a "good feeling about this one" or that the individual had the "x factor" or "a presence". But does that determine whether they will be the stars of



the future?

Recently Harbour Future Leaders (HFL) has undertaken a number of profiling exercises with our clients, attempting to determine what characteristics make their high performers unique from their average or low performers.

By using a scientific and objective measure we can isolate the specific personality factors and motivational forces that make the top performers the best at their jobs. To do this HFL uses the GeneSys suite¹ of assessments focusing on cognitive reasoning, personality, values and motivations (see "The Practice of Profiling"). Once these factors are isolated we can determine a "HiPer Profile" (**H**igh **P**erformance) for particular roles, which can then be

Where is the ROI?

- Profiling high performers provides enterprises with the ability to save costs in lacklustre recruitment
- Profiling enables enterprises to significantly increase productivity and performance

Staff turnover cost CCA an estimated \$2.3 million per annum in lost salary alone

used as a point of comparison for hopeful candidates as part of the recruitment process.

And the HiPer Profile is not limited to external recruitment. It can also be applied for internal appointments. For example, most successful sales people don't make successful sales managers. However, successful sales people are usually recruited into management roles. The result is that you have a sales manager who doesn't enjoy managing sales people, who is unable to motivate and engage the team, and you end up losing your best sales people due to a poor internal promotion. However, if you spend a bit of time analysing the characteristics and behaviours of your top sales managers using a range of psychometric assessments you can determine who would be best suited to the position. And it is unlikely to be your top sales person.

Significant benefits

The benefits of a properly researched HiPer Profile to the enterprise are three-fold.

Firstly, it highlights for the enterprise the characteristics and drivers that make the successful people successful. It sounds simple, but this kind of objective breakdown of the workforce is hard to ascertain. It provides the enterprise with an understanding of its culture, the motivators and drivers for different roles, and characteristics of the workforce. It also illuminates the challenges faced by employees in particular roles.

Secondly, and most importantly, it streamlines the recruitment process to save time and money. By assessing candidates against a HiPer profile, recruiters are not wasting time interviewing candidates who definitely do not demonstrate the attributes that are evident in the HiPer profile.

Thirdly, for those who mostly meet the HiPer profile criteria, the profile sheds light on areas that may be of concern, and gives the interviewer a number of areas to further probe or question. This makes the interview more effective and targeted, and hopefully, more consistent across the enterprise.

The HiPer profiles also further enhance the development planning for those candidates who were successful but who may have a number of gaps or blind-spots.

Case study

The most recent profiling exercise undertaken at HFL was with Coca-Cola Amatil (CCA). As discussed in the case-study, "Bringing the genie out of the GeneSys bottle"², CCA with HFL created an Ideal Profile for their Field Sales Representatives which reflected the

The Practice of Profiling

You can run a profiling exercise in your organisation using three different methods:

The most valid and reliable approach:

- Test your staff using GeneSys 15FQ+ personality inventory, values and motives inventory and cognitive reasoning assessment.
- Identify those employees who are high, average and low performers.
- From the data, an HFL consultant can statistically analyse and identify those characteristics that make high performers unique from the average and low performers.

The medium budget approach:

- Chances are you already have psychological data on your employees collected during the recruitment process.
- Identify those employees who are high, average and low performers.
- An HFL consultant can isolate the factors that are significantly unique to the high-performing group via a detailed statistical analysis of the results.

The 2009 budget-cut approach:

- Identify those employees who are high performers and test them using the GeneSys suite of assessments; personality, cognitive reasoning ability and values and motives.
 - Using GeneSys you can ensure you keep costs of psychological testing down.
- An HFL consultant can identify those characteristics that are significantly different from the average population — so what makes the high performers unique from the average Australian.
- The danger of this approach is that you may reject high-performing candidates due to their failure to meet a factor that may not be significant when compared to average or low performers.

unique characteristics that made the company's high performers the best at their job. This initiative was a response to the high turnover of field sales staff and the high percentage of underperforming staff.

Developing HiPer profiles is an HR team activity directly aligned with most enterprise goals at the moment

Staff turnover cost CCA an estimated \$2.3 million per annum in lost salary alone, not considering the impact of group dynamics and performance management time.

Jake Goodwin, Recruitment Consultant from CCA, estimates that the company's high performers "perform around 150 per cent better than average performers." In late 2008, Jake launched an initiative to assess all candidates against the ideal profile to determine whether they possess the unique characteristics and behaviours that are essential to high performance at CCA.

This profile is now used in the first stage of the recruitment process to filter through those individuals who have the personality attributes and motivators to be high performers. It has streamlined CCA's recruitment process so that it is quicker and more cost-effective, by reducing recruiter face-to-face time. Most importantly for CCA, however, it is reducing the percentage staff turnover and staff underperforming due to poor hiring decisions.

By identifying and isolating characteristics that are unique to high performers you can greatly increase the effectiveness and accuracy of your recruitment efforts.

This is particularly the case in the current workplace environment, where it is even more important to source innovative and cost-effective ways to manage the recruitment and retention of quality staff.

Enterprises are looking to do more with less, and a simple way to achieve this is by increasing the percentage of high performers within the enterprise. Developing HiPer profiles is an HR team activity directly aligned with most enterprise goals at the moment.

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

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References

1. <http://www.harbourfutureleaders.com/whatisgenesys?>
2. <http://www.harbourfutureleaders.com/resources>

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. HFL has offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Singapore.