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Make Your Teams Better Using Science

Leading and developing exceptional teams is as much a science as an art.

In today's fast-paced and competitive business world, executives don't just expect to see results from all teams; they want those results on time and on budget. Sales teams, functional or cross-functional teams, in-person or remote teams: all must deliver for your business to succeed.

Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen. Some teams just don't perform up to their potential. Diagnosing the root cause of poor team performance isn't always easy, even for experienced managers and leaders. To truly understand their performance, you must understand the team members, the team leader, and their connections.

A scientifically-proven process that discovers the natural talent, values and the behaviors of all team members can indicate the right action plan to improve team performance, thus improving team member engagement and overall team performance.

Consequences of Poor Team Performance

A company with high-performing teams will be more agile and more profitable than one with teams that aren't working at their best. Leaders who spend less time and energy trying to manage poorly performing teams have more attention for growing business performance. Consider the following points:

- One national survey found that 95% of people who have ever worked on a team agree that teams serve an important function in the workplace, but only 24% prefer to work within teams. And 36% of workers (ages 18-24) who say that they recognize a team's importance in the workplace would prefer to work alone all of the time anyway.¹
- Leaders who remove obstacles to employee productivity and inspire people to perform at higher levels can double company profitability.²
- Leaders in organizations that eliminate barriers, provide feedback, inspire confidence, share information and welcome new ideas outperform those that don't. This can result in 60% to 130% higher growth rates.³

¹ University of Phoenix, January 16, 2013

² Zenger, Folkman & Edinger, 2009, How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profits, Chief Learning Officer

³ Bassi & McMurrer, 2007, Maximizing Your Return on People, HBR

- The Gallup organization, well known for its research on employee engagement, has determined that top quartile teams are 21% more profitable than bottom quartile teams.⁴

These points don't consider the additional costs associated with high employee turnover in poor performing teams, or the costs of not hiring the right person in the first place.

Poorly performing teams add other, less obvious costs. While these costs are hard to measure, the impact of mediocre team performance is easy to see.

- **Poisoning the well** Lack of trust leads to obvious team dysfunction. A discontented team member can spread negativity throughout the team, causing conflict, distrust and disengagement. The team fails to deliver; your projects are delayed or product quality suffers.
- **Additional mistakes** Teams that don't function properly make avoidable mistakes. In teams where safety is an issue, these mistakes can lead to workplace accidents, lost time and avoidable medical costs. In other teams, mistakes can lead to errors in work or product quality, poor customer service or missed deadlines.
- **Lower productivity** When even a single team member underperforms, they slow workflows and create bottlenecks, leading to missed opportunities in the market. This is especially true of cross-functional teams.
- **Wasted time** When team members don't trust one another, managers and leaders waste time trying to resolve the conflicts. This time could have been better spent developing and coaching successful team members.

Better Teams Start with More Awareness

Two fundamental skills predict a person's success at work, no matter their position in a company. These skills are **self-awareness** and **authenticity**: know yourself and be true to who you are. Jay Niblick summarizes the concept elegantly in his book, "*What's Your Genius?*"

The same is true of successful teams. Not only will team members function better as individuals if they know and stay true to themselves; when members know and stay true to their teammates and the team as a whole, that team is much more likely to perform at a high level.

This chance for a team to perform at a high level is driven by **trust**. In his classic 2002 book, "*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*," Patrick Lencioni states, "Trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team. Without it, teamwork is all but impossible."

⁴ Jim Harter, 2016, Moneyball for Business: Employee Engagement Meta-Analysis. Gallup

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He explains that one of the most durable methods to build trust on a team is through sharing profiles of team members' behavioral preferences and personality styles. This creates what he calls "team-awareness," the team-based equivalent of self-awareness. Lencioni explores other team dysfunctions, like fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability and inattention to results, but the foundation on which team function rests is trust.

Creating lasting improvements in trust within a team is neither easy nor quick. To begin improving "team-awareness," we must first understand what is hard to change.

Seeing Talents, Not Skills

Each of us has a certain set of innate natural talents. These are patterns of thinking and decision-making that we were born with or developed very early in life. They are hard wired within us, and do not change much over the course of our lives. Our natural talents are, in effect, part of our behavioral DNA.

Talents should not be confused with skills. Skills are a form of acquired talent; they are the knowledge and experience that we learn and acquire over the course of our lives, both personally and professionally. Skills can be improved with conscious effort and training. The self-awareness and authenticity so important for success are both acquired skills.

For example, consider a salesperson at your company. This sales professional can learn all the technical details that will help them "sell" the features and benefits of their product or service. But behavioral science has shown that a few natural talents, like persistence and empathy, can predict sales success much more effectively than encyclopedic product knowledge. Despite the acquired skills gained by thorough product knowledge and sales training, a sales person without these natural talents will never be a top performer.



The Invisible 88 Percent

You might think that a person's talents would be obvious. In fact, innate talents are hard to see. According to John Pyke, founder of the Talent Genius company, managers see only 12% of the information needed to make an informed decision concerning talents and strengths. You will pick up on aspects of someone's personality, but you will miss important hidden talents. In fact, you will miss as much as 88% of the information that you really need.

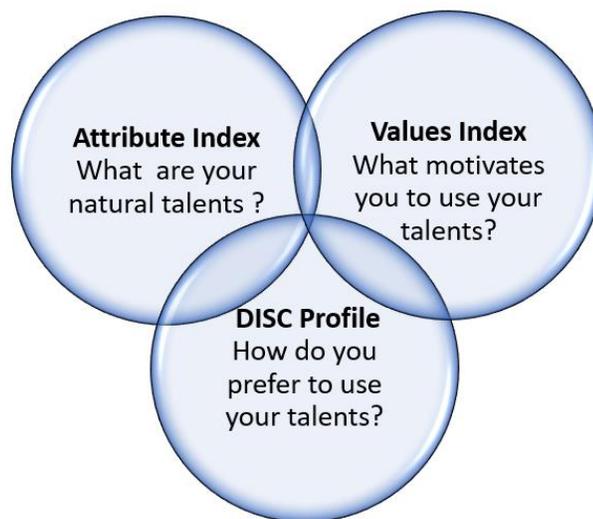
Like an iceberg, what you can't see matters the most.

We've seen that innate talents are like behavioral DNA; they can't be taught or learned. Yet selecting people, then managing and developing them based on their innate talents and strengths is absolutely essential. Thanks to brilliant researchers and thorough study, the ADVanced Insights Profile can show you these hard-to-see talents.

Spotting Talents and More...The ADVanced Insights Profile

At Brakke Consulting we have extensive experience in leading and managing people around the world in successful animal health and nutrition companies. We combine that expertise with the ADVanced Insights Profile to objectively understand each person's talents.

The Profile combines three separate and interdependent assessments into a comprehensive whole.



The **Attribute Index** measures answers to the question, “**What are your natural talents?**” This revolutionary profile measures a person’s cognitive style and determines how they think.

There are three distinct styles of decision making: the **personal**, the **practical** and the **analytical**. Each of us develops a preference for one more than the other two, based on our innate talents and subconscious strengths. The preference becomes an unseen force which affects our decisions and how we see ourselves and the world around us.

The Attribute Index is based on the groundbreaking work of Dr. Robert S. Hartman and has been validated by more than 300,000 people in 18 countries. The Attribute Index measures a person's ability in over 80 business related areas that are impossible for even the most skilled manager to detect in an interview. It can be used to find, develop and keep your best employees.

The **Values Index** measures answers to the question, "**What motivates you to use your talents?**" Combining the work of Drs. Eduard Spranger and Gordon Allport to assess seven dimensions of motivation, this is one of the most powerful assessments of individual motivation available. A person's values influence their behavior and action, but they often remain hidden unless you have known or worked with that person for a long time. Your values drive your passion, your energy, and inspiration; they explain why you prefer to do what you do. Understanding your team members' motivations is key to increasing their engagement with their work

We measure answers to the question, "**How do you prefer to use your talents?**" with the **DISC Index**, the widely used and validated interpretation of Dr. William Marston's groundbreaking work into understanding a person's natural behavioral style. Understanding a person's behavioral style – their habits – is critical when working in teams. Each team member's habits affect the entire team, for better or for worse. Fortunately these behaviors and habits are acquired, and thus relatively easy to see and relatively easy to change if necessary.

Assessing Teams to Improve Performance

All too often, companies try to address the problem of poor performance with some type of training. At other times, they do nothing and hope it will just get better. Perhaps a team member or the team leader is placed on a performance improvement plan; managers feel better because they are now measuring the problem. These are all temporary Band-Aids and like most quick fixes, they don't last.

Wouldn't it be better to properly diagnose and address the core problem?

Doing so is relatively easy. Everyone on the team, including the leader, takes the ADVanced Insights Profile. It takes less than 30 minutes to complete the profile and the results are available almost immediately. Brakke experts summarize the results, including opportunities and options to improve team performance. We then help the team leader develop an action

plan that allows each team member, and the team as a whole, to magnify their strengths and work better together.

Perhaps the core issue is behavioral, as evidenced by the DISC results. Perhaps team members' motivations and values conflict. Or perhaps a team relies on one member for strategic direction, but that person does not have a talent for planning ahead or seeing the big picture.

The ADVanced Insights Profile and the Brakke Consulting team's insights will show you what is wrong and how to fix it.

More Applications of Profile Assessments

Beyond managing teams more effectively, the ADVanced Insights Profiles are powerful tools for encouraging better individual performance, better sales performance and greater engagement regardless of the size of the team or the industry involved.

Using these tools, Brakke Consulting can help you with:

- 1) **Talent Development Plans** When you know an employee's strengths, motivations and behavioral tendencies you can create development plans that build on natural strengths and enhance self-awareness and authenticity. Managers and employees stop wasting time on ineffective development plans focused on talents that the employee just doesn't have.
- 2) **Change Management** Successful change initiatives need the right leaders and champions. Before embarking on a change management plan, you need to know which employees are comfortable with change and taking risks, and how to explain the change. Understanding team members' innate talents and values makes change initiatives much more successful.
- 3) **Evaluating your existing salespeople** The ADVantage Insights Profile is particularly useful for sales teams. We create a one-page Strength Plan highlighting each person's innate talents and blind spots. The Strength Plan explains how to best communicate with them (their personality style) and how to create the ideal work environment (their motivators). The motivational aspect is critical; studies show that the most significant component for employee longevity and loyalty is the strength of their relationship with their immediate manager.
- 4) **Creating and implementing an ideal hiring benchmark** We evaluate your entire sales force and create a customized template for comparing potential new hires against the average scores of your current top performers. Expanding your team? Using the ADVanced Insights Profile and our years of experience, Brakke will find, assess, and present to you the top 10% of salespeople who will excel in your specific environment. All you have to do is interview them and make your selection!

- 5) **Sales training based on the DISC personality assessment** Every salesperson should be able to recognize a buyer's personality style of the buyer and to match and mirror their communication style. It helps the sales person faster, overcome objections more easily and build product loyalty among their customers.

Getting Started

Brakke Consulting can show you how to manage and motivate each person in your team based on their real talents, values and motivations. We can free up your time and improve your team's, and your company's performance.

If this sounds too good to be true, test us. Let us send a link to the assessment tool to two people in your team: one consistently high performer and one consistently low performer. Don't tell us which is which. After they take the 30-minute assessment, we not only tell you which person is the high performer and which the low performer; we'll tell you why they perform that way.

See for yourself how our science can show you what is keeping your team from high performance, and how powerful the ADVanced Insights Profile is when applied to employee performance.

Let us know how we can help by contacting Bob Jones at bob@itsallaboutpeople.com or by calling 336-456-0583.

References

1. University of Phoenix, January 16, 2013
2. Zenger, Folkman & Edinger, 2009, How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profits, Chief Learning Officer
3. Bassi & McMurrer, 2007, Maximizing Your Return on People, HBR
4. Jay Niblick, "What's Your Genius", St. James Publishing, 2009
5. Jim Harter, 2016, Moneyball for Business: Employee Engagement Meta-Analysis. Gallup

