

## Hiring: Risk-taking, Charismatic and Goal-oriented Leader – Why Understanding Personality in the Workplace is Important

While employees must have the basic skills necessary to do their jobs, skills alone don't make them great employees. Many managers have come across this before. On paper, they think they've found the perfect employee. He went to an Ivy League school, has multiple degrees, displayed poise during the interview and had shining references. Two months into the job, his abrasive personality has alienated the entire staff, and the only thing that's higher than his stress level is his demand for more money and more decision-making power. Employee personality always trumps talent and skills. If you can find candidates with the right attitude, even if their skills aren't impressive, you can polish such diamonds in the rough. Personality transforms abilities into achievements.

So which personality type should you hire? Should you favor the extrovert over the introvert? The generalist over the specialist? The self-starter over the obedient follower? The answer, of course, is that it depends. Each of the above types will offer benefits and drawbacks. The key is not to favor one type over



another, but to match a personality to a given set of responsibilities. And not only is it important to match a person's personality to his or her duties, you also have to take into account how this person will fit in the overall atmosphere of the company. For example, most managers would select a conscientious but introverted person to fill an accounting position. The person's work would likely be excellent, but if his introversion is pronounced to the point where he avoids contact with co-workers, superiors and clients, excellent work may be discounted by problems brought about by a lack of



communication. A dynamic, energetic personality may be great for a marketing or leadership position, but if not tempered by diligence and stellar work ethics, this person will probably spend more time socializing with Facebook friends than clients. The two examples above highlight why it's important to assess personality when making personnel decisions. The problem is, when faced with the task of evaluating a candidate's personality, companies frequently rely on first impressions and gut instinct. This method does have merit, particularly if the person making the evaluation is a keen judge of character. However, first impressions are just that – impressions. Nowadays, job candidates are well-trained and well-experienced when it comes to interviewing skills.

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If you had a dollar for every time you heard that a candidate's biggest weakness was “perfectionism”, you probably wouldn't be reading this – you'd be off on some private island enjoying your millions. Add to that the inevitable personal bias of the interviewer (especially when dealing with a charmer), mixed with a résumé spun like gold, and you have a recipe for a bad hire. This is where objective, standardized personality assessments are crucial.

Psychology's “Big Five” traits are the bread and butter of personality theory. Since its inception in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has become one of the most extensively researched and widely accepted theories to explain personality differences. The model is composed of the following factors:

- ❖ **Emotional Stability:** Degree to which a person is able to maintain emotional balance.
- ❖ **Agreeableness:** Degree to which a person is likeable, approachable, and cooperative.
- ❖ **Extroversion:** Assesses a person's outward orientation – whether he or she is drawn more towards the social world of people and activities or the inner world of thoughts and emotions.
- ❖ **Openness:** Extent to which a person seeks out new experiences and is receptive to different views and people.
- ❖ **Conscientiousness:** Degree to which a person is productivity-oriented – organized, reliable, striving, and rule-abiding.

Traits like conscientiousness and emotional stability translate into a willingness and desire to meet or exceed job requirements, the ability to handle pressure, to motivate oneself, and to work efficiently. Agreeableness helps foster teamwork, reduces the tendency for conflict, and makes interaction with others smoother. It's important to keep in mind, however, that the



combination of personality traits that translate to successful job performance can vary depending on the type of position.

So while extroversion and agreeableness may be the key characteristics of sales representatives or a team leader, a healthy dose of conscientiousness tends to work best for a programming position, for example.

Assessments like **Psychtests' AMPM (Advanced Multi-Dimensional Personality Matrix)**, which was constructed on the basis of the Big Five model, as well as the EAPT (Employee Attitude and Personality Test) have helped many companies understand their employees better. This has allowed HR managers to find the right people with the exact set of traits for various job positions, increasing the company's potential for success and in turn their bottom line. 🍀

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