

The Real Value of Assessments to Professional & Business Growth

We are often asked: “*What is the real value of a [fill in the blank] assessment?*” This is an excellent question; but, all too often, as the conversation unfolds, it becomes apparent this is not the *real* question being asked. Listening closely, we commonly find the underlying question the person is really seeking to answer is: “*Can I rely on a [fill in the blank] assessment as a reliable predictor of individual or organizational success?*” To which the unsettling answer is, in a word, “*No*”.

Properly employed, assessments deliver insights that can help you maximize the probability of success when making hiring, strategic planning, management and professional development decisions. But assessments on their own do not serve as fool-proof *predictors* of success.

There is an old Sioux Indian proverb that is oft-quoted by practitioners in the organizational and professional development field to extoll the virtues of having a clearly defined plan for success:

“If you don’t know where you’re going, any path will take you there.”

Building on this sage wisdom, Sales University® would amend this thought with a second, of equal — *if not greater* — importance:

Selecting the right path forward begins by knowing where you are.

This is the real value of a well-chosen assessment tool. When properly selected, and consistently applied, personal and organizational assessments can help you:

- 🏠 Establish baseline profiles of common characteristics displayed by the individuals who have proven to be most successful in your organization, as well as those who have struggled.
- 🏠 Establish baseline profiles of shared motivators, values, attitudes & aptitudes of the individuals who have enjoyed the greatest success within specific roles within your organization.
- 🏠 Assess how well a candidate matches previously defined success profiles within your business, and identify potential obstacles to the individual’s success.
- 🏠 Assess an individual’s *potential* for success in your business based upon historical norms.
- 🏠 Gain insights into the characteristics of individual members of your team that can help teammates and mentors communicate and work most effectively with each team member.
- 🏠 Gain insights into how well your organizational structure, processes, tools and corporate culture are aligned with your business goals, and your people.
- 🏠 Gain insights into how well your compensation plan(s) are incenting and rewarding the behaviors most consistent with achieving your business goals.

Why can’t I use an assessment as a predictor of future success? Because there are too many other variables for which we have no reliable measure, that hold the keys to how successful any individual will be in any chosen role. How driven is the individual to excel in the position? How will the individual respond in the face of adversity? How will the person respond when confronted with a crisis in their business or personal life? How will the person respond to the inevitable changes in business conditions? These are but a few of the variables for which we have no accurate measuring tools.

You can *guess* at how someone will respond to challenges and changing circumstances, but you cannot *assess* how they will respond. And, as long as you are guessing, you cannot reliably make the jump from viewing an assessment tool as a measure of *potentiality*, to a measure of *predictability*.

How do I pick the right assessment tools? Picking the right assessment tools begins with knowing what you are seeking to learn, and the business goals you are striving to achieve:

- 🏠 If you wish to learn how well your sales organization is currently aligned with your market(s) and your business goals, you may choose to take a *Sales Effectiveness Survey*.
- 🏠 If you wish to learn how well your sales compensation plan(s) are aligned with your business goals; how well they incent & reward optimum sales performance; and how well they map to your budgeting goals; you may choose to take a *Sales Compensation Survey*.
- 🏠 If you are attempting to discern how effective your CRM application and other sales & marketing automation tools really are at helping you drive greater sales performance and results, you may choose to take a *Technology-Enabled Sales Assessment*.
- 🏠 If you are seeking to gain greater insight into an individual's personal characteristics, motivators, values, attitudes, or core aptitudes, you may choose to have them complete a series of *Personal Assessments*.
- 🏠 If you are aspiring to establish ideal hiring profiles for positions within your organization, with the goal of using them to help identify candidates who share common characteristics with proven peak performers, then you may choose to have everyone in your organization complete a series of *Personal Assessments*, and maintain a historical record on the performance of team members with different characteristics.

So, where do I begin in picking the right assessment tools? An assessment is a diagnostic tool, just as an EKG, or an MRI, are diagnostic tools. Just as in picking the right medical diagnostic tools, picking the right business diagnostic tools begins with:

- 🏠 *Selecting the best professional help.* If you are having chest pains, you can visit your General Practitioner, who may read a dozen EKG's in a month; or you may choose to see a top Cardiologist who may read a dozen or more EKG's each day. Pick the expert who can deliver the greatest context and insight when helping you assess your organization and your people?
- 🏠 *Choosing between Organizational and Personal assessments.* How your people perform in your business will be dictated by their abilities, individual characteristics, *and* your corporate culture. If your people are underperforming, it may be that there is an incompatibility between their individual strengths and the best practices for your business; *or* it may be that your business processes and systems are impeding performance; *or* your compensation plan is incenting them to pursue other activities; *or* some combination of these is at play. You may get the greatest benefit from assessing both your people and your processes.
- 🏠 *Understand the limits of the tool.* An assessment tool is no more of a solution to a broken aspect of your business than an MRI is a solution to an injured knee. An assessment can point out potential problem areas in your business and hiring profiles, but what you do with this information will determine the ultimate value you realize from employing an assessment tool.

“Know thyself.” These words of wisdom are as important in today's world of tablet computing as they were when Plato first etched them into a clay tablet. The day you take an independent assessment of your business and your people, is the day you truly begin to gain an understanding of *where you are*, and identify some of the *key performance indicators* that can help take you forward towards your goals.

Do you have to employ assessment tools to lead a successful business? *No*. Do you have to have an annual physical in order to live a long and healthy life? *No*. Are both advisable if you wish to keep your body and your business tuned for peak health and performance? *Yes*. So, after you see your Doctor, give Sales University® a call and we can discuss the ways you can assess the health of your sales organization.