

HRD

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

HCAMAG.COM
ISSUE 13.5



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PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

SMOOTHING THE WATERS

We've all read the stats; we may have even been there ourselves. More often than not, M&As fail to reach their desired objectives. Can psychometric assessment be used to smooth the process – even during the most tumultuous of times?

WHILE THE specifics may vary, there is one recurring theme around why M&A initiatives fail to reach desired objectives: the people element has been neglected.

If every organisation is ultimately the sum of its parts – and those parts are human beings – it stands to reason that extra care should be paid to all people engaged in an organisation during M&A activity. And what is the best way to obtain these insights?

It's the recruiter's most valuable tool: psychometric assessment.

Psychometric assessment can be very powerful in helping to smooth the M&A process across three levels of organisational structure (see box below).

Putting it to use

There are specific benefits of using psychometric assessment during times of corporate upheaval.

WHY M&A CHANGE INITIATIVES FAIL

Organisational level, in terms of integrating cultures

Team level, in terms of fast-tracking the effectiveness of new teams

Individual level, in terms of helping people manage their own personal experience in responding to the change, which can include stress.

HOW PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT CAN HELP

By providing those driving the change with broad insights to shape the planning and communication processes.

By providing employees with greater levels of awareness of their needs and preferences during change as well as insights into their triggers and responses under stress.

Where new teams emerge as a result of a merger, success and effectiveness can be fast-tracked by engaging in a team development program, so that team members may better understand their own preferences, as well as to appreciate and leverage the differences in others – ultimately improving communication and the quality of decision-making while reducing conflict.



1. Assessing personality type

It's a shame that 'fatigue' is the word that often follows the word 'change'. If change is the new norm in business, then why do we get so worn out by constant change?

Simply put, it comes down to personality type and that somewhat hazy characteristic known as resilience. There are models of personality, such as those offered through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which provide insights into the different needs and preferences that people have during organisational change, and also provide insights into the typical triggers of stress and the reactions people have to increasing levels of stress. However, at what point stress is triggered, or the extent of stress that someone experiences, will often be determined by characteristics such as resilience.



executives, and indeed employees at all levels, to be responsive to change – which is no surprise given the evolving nature of business.

“Psychometric assessments can provide a number of insights into qualities such as resilience, flexibility, independence, impulse control, empathy, and mental agility as well as many others, which together will help us understand an individual’s capacity to embrace change,” says Nott. “However, psychometric assessments are just one piece of the puzzle. When assessing candidates for a role it is important to combine the insights from psychometric assessments with their real world experiences.”

3. Identifying change agents

Change agents can be identified through psychometric assessment. These people are well versed in the technical requirements and the psychology of change.

These change agents will likely:

- approach change as a process rather than an event
- pursue important changes with a sense of urgency
- be unequivocal about guarding the most important change priorities
- protect the integrity of intent – they ensure

- communicates directly

“While employee responses to change can be very individual, certain personality models will provide ‘change agents’ with broad insights which can be used to support employees and the change process,” says Nott.

4. Fitting new roles to existing staff

Where an employee has been displaced as a result of a restructure, personality, mental agility and career interest assessments can be very useful in helping them to better understand their underlying motivations, capabilities, as well as the work activities that are important to them – ultimately allowing them to seek out roles that could be a good fit.

“As a practitioner, it can be incredibly rewarding to see an employee who has lost their job, turn the experience around to be empowered, and pursue a career that they find much more rewarding,” says Nott.

Bucking the trend

Corporate change is both an institutional journey and a very personal one. Individuals (or teams of individuals) need to know how their work will change, what is expected of them during and after the change program, how they will be measured, and what success or failure will mean to them and those around them.

Change needs to be understood and managed in a way that people can cope effectively with it – and managers play a critical settling influence on employees.

Gallup research indicates that only 2.5% of projects are successfully implemented. Even more disturbing, companies spend more than US\$2trillion on acquisitions every year. Yet study after study puts the failure rate of M&As somewhere between 70 and 90%.

It’s time to buck the trend – learn more about what motivates, demotivates and drives your employees and reap the rewards. **HRD**

CPP, the Myers-Briggs company, is a world leader in psychometric instruments, training and consultancy services



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Cameron Nott

2. Assessing for change agility

When Cameron Nott, managing director and psychologist, CPP Asia Pacific, is asked to advise organisations on new hire decisions, a common theme is the ability (or otherwise) of

people understand and remain aligned to the true purpose behind the intent of the changes

- demonstrate a willingness to make and carry out unpopular decisions