

CASE STUDY:



Hiring senior leaders can feel more art than science. Concerns around the risks of making a bad decision can drive bias to select someone who mirrors the existing culture. Past performance is an important predictor, but so to are the motivational patterns a leader brings. Insight to these can greatly improve hiring success.

HIRING FOR SUCCESS – TAKING THE GUESS-WORK OUT OF SELECTION

This major healthcare organisation has been growing rapidly and transforming its business and capabilities in response to statutory changes and breakthroughs in medical science and technology. At the same time it is committed to providing employees with a positive and purposeful work experience. With a significant amount of hiring taking place, the organisation was looking to bring in leaders who could be adaptable, innovative but also great at managing people.

Predicting performance

Hiring senior leaders is high-risk and expensive and the decision to hire is just the first step in creating a successful leadership appointment.

This organisation, like most large, sophisticated businesses, adopted a multi-layered approach to selection. They were aware of the unreliability of interviews but even with the use of personality tests, presentations and multiple interviews they were finding too many hiring decisions were mistakes. They were looking for a means of bringing additional information to support the prediction of how a potential new leader will perform; not just in terms of results but also in terms of the impact they would have on

others. They were also looking for ways to support and develop new hires such that they were effective sooner.

How we helped

The Exercise of Imagination is a unique form of psychological measurement that identifies stable patterns of thought that drive a substantial part of every-day behaviour. Over 40 years of research and many 1000s of studies prove that these patterns can predict how people behave and the outcomes they will create.

Using this instrument, together with an in-depth interview it is possible to identify the dominant patterns driving a leader's behavioural choices (see next page for deeper explanation of these concepts).

Burnham Rosen Group was able to draw on many years of empirical research into leadership. These studies identify the thought pattern profile that drives greatest success in specific roles. This research-set is compared with the candidate's profile. This is then analysed in the context of the specific demands of the role and the broader expectations of the organisation. Together, this enables a reliable prediction to be made of the impact of a candidate.

Results

Working closely with the hiring managers and the recruitment and human resources specialists this analysis enabled the organisation to significantly improve its hiring success.

In a tight labour market it is often necessary to weigh off leadership capability with technical expertise. It can be hard to find the ideal candidate in scarce-skill areas. The Exercise of Imagination-based analysis provided detailed information on how candidates are likely to respond in different situations. This information allowed the organisation to put in place arrangements that helped candidates succeed.

The performance of candidates who have joined has been tracked by the organisation.

To date, the actual level of performance of candidates has matched the predicted level in over 90% of cases.

IMPLICIT MOTIVATION AND LEADERSHIP

Implicit Motives are stable patterns of thought about specific goal-states. People have low knowledge of these implicit thoughts but it is possible to accurately measure them.

Approximately 70% of our behavioral choices have their origin in implicit motivation.

Power Motivation is a *non-conscious*, or *implicit*, concern with impact and influence-based relationships. Dominance in this motive is associated with interest in roles such as teaching, acting, management and leadership.

Most leaders in large organizations are dominant in this motive. But the expression of this motive in thought and action is subtly influenced by the particular way a leader thinks about Power. There are four distinct patterns. These are known as the Stages of Power.

Dependent Power – This orientation to Power seeks to attract the positive interest and support of powerful others. No leaders are dominant in this orientation, superior or average.

Independent Power – This orientation to Power concerned with self-sufficiency and self-determination.

Imperial Power – This orientation to Power is concerned with acquisition of power and, in its most constructive form, the use of the leader's own authority to accomplish organizational goals.

InterActive Power – This orientation to Power is concerned with purpose and meaning. Research consistently demonstrates this orientation drives superior outcomes for leaders in large, complex organizations.



Illustration

John Anstall (name changed) was being considered for a senior role in a major operational function. He would be leading a very large number of people and managing across multiple sites. He was currently working in a similar role for a competitor.

The hiring manager was keen to bring John on board. He fit the bill in terms of experience, seniority and industry knowledge. He also knew John as he had worked with him in the past. John was considered a strong performer in his current role.

The challenge was that the analysis carried out by Burnham Rosen Group suggested John was a poor match to the profile of superior-performing leaders in roles of this type. He was predicted to be too relationship focused and to struggle with forming sufficiently influential peer-level relationships with senior leaders in other parts of the business.

John's profile was typical of a leader who has been able to maintain adequate performance by building close, personal friendships over decades within the same company. Whether helped or protected by these relationships, John had continued to be well regarded in his current firm.

But the move to a new organisation would strip John of these support mechanisms and there would not be time for him to rebuild such a close network in this new role.

In the end the appointment proceeded but a detailed coaching plan was prepared ready to help John on-board.

The hiring manager knew what to look out for and was able to provide counsel at an early stage, rather than wait to see if early warning signs were repeated over time.

“It was powerful to see how much John's behaviour matched your prediction. I thought I knew the guy well enough to have anticipated his impact.”

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