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DOWNLOADING SUCCESS: MERGING PRIORITIES: SYNCING YOUR BUSINESS AND TALENT STRATEGIES

Many leadership experts say it's time to knock down the silos in our organizations. While this is true, let's first understand why that is the case. If we are to innovate and disrupt our industries and our organizations, our executives must learn to become more than subject-matter experts, but savvy visionaries whose overarching concern is the health and strength of the entire enterprise, not just their department.

This is precisely where business strategy and talent strategy need to intersect and graft into each other. Today's healthcare leaders need:

- an enterprise mindset – think beyond your silo on what is best for the entire organization.
 - Are the leaders capable of looking over the entire landscape of your organization?
 - Do your leaders have a view from the bridge and not just the deck?
- a clear alignment on strategy and an obsession with getting the right leaders in the right seats on the bus.
- a rigorous commitment to developing others and ensuring this effort cascades throughout the organization.



As a CEO or other organizational leader, you should want your team to clearly understand what makes them tick, and how they can advance in the organization and their careers. In *Plato's Apology*, the ancient Greek quotes Socrates during his trial that "the unexamined life is not worth living." Having a talent strategy for your leaders is essential to develop and retain them, and assessments give a clear-eyed view of a leader's strengths, as well as the areas he or she needs to grow. Assessments add order to the creation of a powerful development plan for individuals. They also help increase team cohesion.

Results in Action

In one of our recent engagements with a leading academic medical center, we observed the power of assessment-guided development with one of the physician leaders we were coaching. We'll call him Dr. Pennington. He was a department chair and the attending physician. Most of the staff were used to Pennington constantly interrupting them, sometimes with an insulting comment. They were also used to him just ignoring them as well.

During morning rounds with a small cadre of attending physicians, surgeons, nurses, and physician assistants, one of Pennington's medical students began to give her report outside the room of the patient she had just examined. The young woman had barely gotten three sentences into her discourse of the patient's condition when Pennington cut in.

Inwardly, she sighed and froze. She had seen him making a face and looking at his mobile phone while she tried to gather her thoughts, and it flustered her. What was he going to say now? She and the other nine people on the rounds barely had time to surmise what was coming next when Pennington spoke.

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“Um, I need to apologize,” he said, looking straight at her. “First of all, I shouldn’t have been checking my phone when you were doing your best to convey what you found in your examination of the patient. And, second, I wasn’t frowning at what you said. I read an email on my phone, and I didn’t like its message.”

“But in doing so, I distracted you. That was rude on my part. I’m sorry. Are you willing to start over, please?”

The young woman and the rest of the team were flabbergasted. Pennington wasn’t one to apologize. Ever. What had happened to him?

Here’s what happened: Pennington had recently completed a personality assessment, a very accurate piece of evidence-based social science. Pennington didn’t necessarily agree with the findings but, given his intellectually curious nature and desire to lead more effectively, he had been working to “catch” himself and modify his behavior. It wasn’t easy, and the results weren’t instant. But the episode outlined above showed real, forward progress.

Levers for Success: Measuring What’s Inside

Personality assessments are a significant lever to help healthcare organizations link their talent strategy to their business strategy. People are the most significant asset a company has, and it is simply smart business to recruit, develop, and retain the best performers, especially in a volatile industry like healthcare where turnover is high.

In healthcare, physicians have become much more accepting of assessments. These diagnostic tools measure a person’s strengths in areas such as:

- cognition/intellect
- communication styles
- leadership tendencies
- character traits
- core motivations and drivers

Each new iteration of these assessments builds more scientific rigor into the equation, and certain assessments have been shown to be quite accurate as a predictor of human behavior. And with much at stake – patients’ lives, the health and future of the organization – we very much need to know how our leaders will react or respond in stressful situations.

There are literally hundreds of assessments with many purposes on the market, but it’s important to match the assessment to your needs and goals. Some, like the DiSC or the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, have been around for many years. Hogan Assessments, Watson-Glaser, 16PF, StrengthsFinder 2.0, Wonderlich and SHL are others that have also been gaining prominence.

While assessments can be quite valuable, bear in mind they are not infallible. They are input, and it’s important not to become enamored of the technology. Some organizations occasionally even use clinical assessments, but the legal ground for this is dangerous, and the results may have no actual value for talent selection and development in the organization.

In a team situation, assessments can aid alignment. In selection, they may sharpen areas to examine in a job interview. In executive development, they invite an individual on a positive journey to improve his or her performance. And, really, development should be the goal of all assessments. We all have challenges as well as strengths. Assessment shines a light on a path upward.

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After we had assessed and begun leadership development with one CEO (we'll call him Jim), his wife pulled our consultant aside. "Thank you so much for working with Jim," she said. "This has not only helped the company, but also has improved our marriage."

While that was a gratifying moment, it also demonstrated that assessments are only as good as the work the individual is willing to put into self-development after truly owning the results of the assessment.

Aligning talent strategies to achieve business goals

Increasingly, assessments are designed and delivered for entire leadership teams to help executives align themselves to achieve the goals of the organization. They can:

- determine gaps in the team's skill set as it relates to a particular strategic goal.
- highlight areas for talent development and acquisition.
- strengthen teams as they embark on a new initiative or challenge.
- set markers for development needed for longer term goals.



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Some of these activities would be categorized under the heading of "executive team performance," and that is a key differentiator between the assessments of yesterday and today.

In the past, assessments and executive coaching might be utilized on a more individual basis. An executive with poor people skills and a blistering temper might find himself or herself taking an assessment and getting some one-on-one time with a consultant to help them learn to play well with others. These days, companies have much less patience with such antics, even from highly productive executives.

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Today's talent advisors are more concerned with how the pieces fit together:

- Are the right team members in place to achieve business goals?
- How do the members of the team best communicate with each other?
- Do they all understand the mission and vision of the team and the organization?
- Are they each receiving the talent development they need to hone their leadership skills. and help them contribute to the overall success of the organization?

Business is a team sport.

The analogy we often use for team performance is that of a bowling team. If your team loses but you break 200 for the first time, you may leave the bowling alley in a pretty good mood. The team goal doesn't matter as much. But in today's business world, the stakes are higher than ever, and CEOs need teammates who are wholly invested in the success of the team and enterprise, and not just their lane.

What's critical to understand in today's marketplace is that leadership development isn't just the priority of the human resources department anymore; it's everyone's priority.

As you set high-level business goals, be sure to link them to your talent strategy. If you are trying to manage costs or further refine the integration of your organization, it's vital to also identify whether you have the internal talent resources needed to deploy that strategy and achieve the desired outcomes.

For a more detailed look at assessments, [click here](#).

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