

### Open-Minded Hiring

#### **Use Psychology and Science To Make Better Placements**

*By Mark Hersberger*

Go with your gut. Is it the best way to make hiring decisions, or is there a more refined, methodical approach? How will the candidate meld with new co-workers? Does his or her work history really translate into the characteristics necessary to excel in the future? Uncovering the complete disposition requires opening the candidate's mind and delving deep into his or her innate capabilities and overall approach to work.

Enter RembrandtAdvantage, an ASA Savings & Solutions Partner that specializes in psychological profiles and assessments for hiring and career development purposes. Rembrandt's goal for all clients is to help insert the right candidate into the right position each and every time—an incalculable necessity in the staffing industry.

Two products, the Rembrandt Portrait personality profile and the Profile Assessment Selection System help reduce the guesswork, thus resulting in more successful matches, lower turnover, and increased productivity.

### Understanding the Full Picture

The Rembrandt Portrait, designed to reveal 14 inherent personality characteristics, "breaks down an individual's basic personality into strengths and potential limitations, and provides a snapshot of the individual's overall personality makeup," says Rembrandt president Michael Santo, Ph.D.

Candidates complete the online profile—a multiple choice questionnaire with no right or wrong responses—and then Rembrandt offers both an oral and written report assessing the candidate's strengths and potential limitations for a given role. Although there are more than 50 competencies, only a handful are necessary for each position. Some examples are ability to focus, interpersonal effectiveness, service motivation, and willingness to follow rules and processes.

Profile results also predict how a candidate can be expected to interact with co-workers and superiors—a vital factor in overall job performance. During his presentation on strategic hiring at Staffing World 2004, Santo cited one study showing the employee–manager relationship as the leading reason for employee turnover.

In the case of staffing companies, which administer dozens of profiles a week, Rembrandt trains and certifies core staff members in interpreting the results.

John Rupcich, president of Life Style Staffing in Madison, WI, uses the Portrait regularly. It intrigues prospects, Rupcich explains, and he features it in his marketing plan. Use of the Portrait has helped him effectively "lock out the competition" because Life Style has been so

successful in placing competent, qualified candidates.

Regina Partain, president of Innovative Staffing Solutions LLC in Perryton, TX, says, "I wouldn't consider anyone for a position without understanding who they are. The Portrait tells us a great deal about who that person is, culturally and functionally."

Partain and Rupcich agree that when they make a decision despite caution from the Portrait report, the predicted limitation invariably "rears its head." Rupcich explains, however, that such outcomes "tend to validate" the system. Furthermore, using the Portrait unearths certain latent qualities and allows Rupcich to find "diamonds in the rough"—those who may not have wide practical experience in a position, but possess the right psychological makeup to excel.

Kurt Mishler, owner of the Pridestaff Louisville franchise, explains how this serves the candidate and customer equally. "The worst thing you can do is place someone who isn't a good fit," he says. Even if a candidate isn't ideal for one position, the Portrait indicates to Mishler where and how else he or she might excel.

"If [the job] is not fulfilling, we know it won't last," says Partain, simply.

### Back to the Future

"Past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior," Santo says of his basic selection philosophy. The concept sounds intuitive; almost simplistic. But what process most effectively determines how past performance actually translates to the new position?

Rembrandt offers the Profile Assessment Selection System, which is built on structured interview formats, behavioral event interview questions, and the Portrait.

PASS begins with an introspective examination of the core and desired competencies necessary to excel in a certain role. For core staffing positions, Rembrandt has already identified the relevant competencies. Otherwise, Rembrandt can conduct a psychometric modeling study—a comparison of top and bottom performers geared toward customizing the needed competencies for a particular position and determining exactly what qualities lead to success in the position.

Rembrandt then develops interview models using standardized interview forms with behavioral event questions and rating guides. A behavioral event question elicits the candidate's proven experience in a given competency by compelling candidates to draw on actual past events in their answers.

Consider the difference between a question that begins "What would you do if..." and one that begins "Describe a time when...."

The former essentially allows candidates to fabricate answers based on what they suspect the interviewer wants to hear. The latter requires them to specifically relate the actions they took and whether or not they achieved their stated objective.

"You don't want the woulda, coulda, or shoulda," said Santo at Staffing World. "You want the reality."

Gauging the response drives the process. "A lot of people can ask a behavioral-event question," points out Mishler. "But can they interpret the answer? PASS allows you to identify what's important in an answer. It's a very systematic approach to the interview process."

Santo uses the acronym SOAR to describe what an interviewer should look for in a response: the situation, objective, actions taken, and result.

"I'm much more prepared when I use a system like this," says Mishler. "It gives me the ability to go into the interview and not use just a shotgun approach. It's more like a rifle that lets me focus in on key areas."

"It's how we know we're consistent in hiring and not being discriminatory," says Partain. "That also makes it legally defensible."

Consistency is vital, according to Santo. Five candidates vying for a position undergo a nearly identical interview experience using PASS, regardless of the interviewer. Rembrandt provides training as well as manuals to ensure all clients can properly ask and evaluate behavioral event questions. Santo says that using such a structured process moves the selection of new employees away from instinctive hiring to a more scientific format.

The result? "It eliminates the 90-day honeymoon for new hires," explains Partain, meaning that she or her customer already sufficiently understand the candidate's psychological makeup to anticipate points of conflict and work to build a more productive employee from day one.

### **Profiling for Success**

"If all you do is your traditional approach of asking your stakeholders and looking at the job description, what you're doing is creating a competency model by looking in the rearview mirror," Santo said at Staffing World. "But if you can survey clients in terms of what they need for that job, then you in turn apply a psychometric study...now you're looking at a methodology that will enable you to project success into the future."

"Staffing services can do this on their own," says Santo. "Just slow down a little, and collectively pull your team together. Instead of just looking at the job description, it would be better to have a meeting and find out what affects success. What do people who find success look and act like? That will be a much better guide than just the job description."

