

GARD EXECUTIVE CONSULTING, LLC

applying
behavioral science
to enhance
executive and organizational
performance

Why Personality Matters At Work

Personality is the key that unlocks the door to career success. Don't believe it? Check out these statistics:

- A US Census Bureau study of three thousand employers revealed that attitude is the most important factor in a hiring decision.
- On a scale of 1-5 with 5 ranking very important, attitude scored 4.6, followed by communication skills at 4.2, work experience 4.0, and references at 3.4
- A 2002 survey of Fortune 1000 company executives showed that leadership and management skills are the most sought after, with technology skills a distant third.
- Additionally, survey participants said that 31 percent of their employees were not able to collaborate effectively across team and organizational boundaries.
- A survey of 150 CEOs revealed that the most common reason for a senior executive to be terminated was a lack of insight into their behavior.

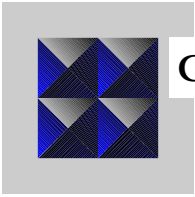
Choose Wisely

Corporations spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year on pre-employment selection tests because they know the money spent is nominal compared to the cost of hiring and training someone who doesn't work out.

Personality flaws are often subtle and difficult to detect during interviews. Obvious poor fits are screened out, but marginal candidates slip through. These folks end up floundering.

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Derailment vs. High Performance

Derailment is the term used to describe how high-potential, fast tracked employees are skipped over for promotion or are terminated because of personality flaws. Some typical derailment traits:

- Micromanagement
- Interpersonal insensitivity
- Lack of team skills
- Arrogance
- Relying too much on natural talents (e.g. intelligence might put you on a fast track to success, but at some point interpersonal skills will probably become more essential. You can't rest on your existing strengths).

On the flip side, high performers share a set of characteristics that set them apart: they are optimistic, self-confident, extraverted, conscientious, broad-minded and flexible. They work well both independently and on teams. Only about 15% of people have all the success traits unaccompanied by any prominent counterproductive traits.

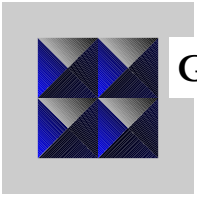
Personality modulates the other resources that people bring to the workplace. The success traits don't automatically make people successful; they help people use their intelligence, education, experience, and technical skills more effectively. Keep in mind that more of a good thing isn't necessarily better. Even our strengths taken to excess can become weaknesses:

Strength

Bias for action
Careful
Hardworking
Warm
Assertive

To Excess

Impulsive
Risk-averse
Driven
Conflict-averse
Intimidating



Traits don't operate in a vacuum; they interact and are influenced by the presence of other prominent characteristics. You might have 2 managers who are equally insensitive, but if one of them is also open-minded that person can probably *learn* how to be more thoughtful.

It also depends on the job; competitiveness is a strength in some areas (e.g. sales) and it can be a liability in others (e.g. managers).

Personality is Pivotal

If you still believe that technical skills are more important than personality, let's look at some common workplace mistakes that can clearly be linked with personality. All these mistakes happen every day in business:

- Preoccupation with minor mechanical failures
- Inadequate leadership
- Failure to delegate tasks and to assign responsibilities
- Failure to set priorities
- Inadequate monitoring
- Failure to use available data
- Failure to communicate intent and plan

Recognize any of them? Are they endemic in your organization or among your key people? Be thankful you don't run an airline. In commercial aviation the consequences can be catastrophic. These mistakes were identified by the FAA as the 7 most common flight crew errors.

Bottom line: Personality affects behavior, and it has an enormous impact on the success of your people and your business. Gard Executive Consulting can help you leverage that fact.