

Personality vs. Behavior Testing

GEOFF RODGERS

There are many perceptions out there regarding personality and behaviorally based testing. While it may be very important to know what type of personality an individual can bring to an organization, it will not lead towards any consistency in performance. For example, if you take a group of top-performing people in any job; editors, doctors, lawyers, teachers or 9-1-1 dispatchers the common denominator amongst them is not a personality.

For example, one of the key elements for success in the dispatcher position is the ability to own responsibility for one's decisions and/or actions. I believe you will agree that this behavior can be found in any number of personality styles. If you think about your best dispatchers, you will probably see this behavioral thread in their day-to-day decisions as well, despite what personality trait they have.

Another key difference between personality testing and behaviorally based testing is that personality testing is one dimensional whereas behavioral testing can be multidimensional. Every job has what seems to be contradictory behaviors. For instance, a policeman must be aggressive and yet still hold themselves in check. A personality test cannot measure both of these behaviors at the same time. A good behaviorally based assessment will not only measure both traits but to the degree that they are required to complement each other.

What do they have in common? Consider your best employees; do they have the same personalities? Of course not. Think back to your school days, why do some teachers stand out in your mind over others? They were all trained and certified and met all of the minimal qualifications (and skill sets for that matter) but what a difference they had on your ability to learn. More specifically, a behaviorally based assessment will identify the common threads which make these top performers successful.

Another key difference between personality testing and behaviorally based testing is that personality testing is one dimensional whereas behavioral testing can be multidimensional. Every job has what seems to be contradictory behaviors. For instance, a policeman must be aggressive and yet still hold themselves in check. A personality test cannot measure both of these behaviors at the same time. A good behaviorally based assessment will not only measure both traits but to the degree that they are required to complement each other.