

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT THE ESSENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL

Employee development is a practice of growing importance in today's economic environment. Globalization, increasing competition, the rapid change and spread of technology, decreasing numbers of technical graduates from US colleges and universities, and decreasing tenure among employees all lead to an urgent need in every organization to recruit, develop and retain high quality, contributive people.

The traditional method for developing people in US corporations has been the competency model:

- Figure out what the competencies are to achieve excellence in each position in the organization.
- Assess the competency of individuals in each position.
- Create development plans to improve individuals' competencies.

The competency model is a necessary but insufficient tool for effective development because it is based on the assumption that everyone is in the right position. It assumes that a baker working in a butcher shop can become a better butcher; and ignores finding out whether the baker is in the right shop to begin with!

Unfortunately, job-person mismatch is very widely spread in all kinds of organizations, public and private. The reason for this mismatch is simple. Most people get into their jobs and careers by the "hitch-hiking" method. They come out of school — high school, college, or even graduate school, stick their thumbs out and take the first job that comes along that looks like it's going to get them where they think they want to go. Then, they wonder why they experience so much dissatisfaction in their worklives.

The competency model has a second difficulty. It invariably leads people to work on their weaknesses — another guarantee of dissatisfaction at work. For many people, the most enjoyable work allows them to use their strengths. They're most likely strengths because that's what the individuals enjoy doing and that's what they most naturally developed over time. It's important to develop weaknesses when they're absolutely necessary to a specific job, but they should not be the central focus of development.

Clearly, the competency model method of creating individual development plans needs to be supplemented by assessment that provides information about more than just skill levels. There are four critical areas of assessment that need to be probed:

- **Style**...*How you do what you do.*
- **Motivation**...*Why you do what you do.*
- **Skills**...*What you use to do what you do.*
- **Internal Barriers**...*What blocks you from doing what you do as well as possible.*

With this multidimensional information, an individual can make a clear choice of the kinds of work that would be best for them, the strengths that they have and enjoy using, and how they can make the greatest possible contribution to the organization. This information will lead them to writing much more powerful and effective development plans than simply knowing something about their competencies.

