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What is it and why bother?

Management Assessment or Career Appreciation *by Barbara M. Luedecke*

After downsizing, re-engineering work processes, or to enhance organizational growth, it often becomes necessary to consider whether the talent resident in management ranks is sufficient to do the job. Indeed, one highly successful entrepreneur has stated that, for continued growth and success of his company (now heading towards \$100 million and the fifth generation of ownership), the selection and development of the "right" managers is paramount. He has charged his new Vice President Human Resources to work with his operating Vice Presidents to find the "best people" for their company. But how exactly do you do this?

Every experienced manager knows what a God-send it is to find a really excellent employee; and how difficult it is to predict which candidates will in fact turn out to be excellent. Every experienced manager also knows, intuitively at least, how much it costs to make a poor hiring or promotion decision.

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Base Salary \$60K;
Search Fees \$20K;
Learning on Job \$30K;
Relo/Outplacement \$15K;
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These costs obviously do not include any expenses for training courses, HR and/or line management's coaching time to try to salvage the bad situation. Nor do they include the costs that would clearly be incurred in order to replace the bad hire, basically the same all over again. So what is a manager to do?

Consider an independent assessment along with your other good hiring practices, such as standardized interviewing and reference or work checks. Additionally, you should embrace special procedures for talent pool development and career planning for those already

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Barbara Luedecke, PhD, CMC

Dr. Luedecke is president of Barbara Luedecke & Associates. Prior to re-entering private practice in 1996, Barbara was Partner-in-Charge of KPMG's Toronto Change Management Practice. Before joining KPMG in 1984, she ran her own management consulting firm, which followed a number of years with Ontario Hydro in the personnel research and management identification areas. Barbara's doctorate is in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from York University. She is registered as a psychologist in the Province of Ontario and is a Certified Management Consultant. Barbara specializes in facilitation of strategic planning, executive assessment and coaching, performance management, organization design/effectiveness, and change management strategies.

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Management Assessment, from page 1

with your organization. The independent assessment process, however, can provide additional useful information to factor into the equation for selection, promotion, and/or career development. I call the assessment process I use the Career Appreciation Program. It is described below.

“I believe that everyone in the company should be assessed this way. We’d all be able to work better as individuals and together, knowing our strengths and areas for development.”

Candidate for Sales and Marketing Manager

well-matched to the requirements of the job. For the individual, a sense of well-being at work occurs when:

- what there is to do is in balance with what the person feels able to do and
- when growth in the person’s abilities is matched by growth in what there is to do.

When an individual is fully competent and growing “on the job”, both the individual and the organization win. The individual feels alert, energetic, creative, motivated, competent. For the organization, such people enjoy using their judgment and are very likely to be competent decision-makers. Therefore, pacing the paths of challenges and capabilities is to the mutual benefit of the individual and the organization.

The Career Appreciation Program is based on the fundamental concepts espoused by organizational guru Elliott Jaques:

- in any organization there are different levels of work, each adding distinct value
- the capability of individuals to make the decisions required at each of these levels grows with age and at different rates
- given the skilled knowledge and experience to do the job, valuing the work and an absence of personality dysfunction, the individual should be successful in applying independent judgment as required in the conduct of his or her role (job).

The approach used is tailored to the needs of the particular client situation but generally incorporates and explores the candidate’s likely strengths and weaknesses in at least the following areas:

- Requisite Leadership and Team working practices and preferences
- Administrative vs. Logical/Analytical vs. Creative/Entrepreneurial vs. Nurturing/Integrative role preferences
- Factors that can be expected to be motivating or de-motivating for the individual

- Relationships with people: preferred approaches, working environments
- Thinking style: concrete vs. abstract, data based, vs. intuitive
- Feelings and Emotions: optimistic, critical, resilient, competitive, etc.
- Vocational interests (e.g. purchasing, distribution, sales, technology, research and development, administration, finance, personnel, etc.)

The Career Appreciation Program consists of three stages:

1. Specially selected questionnaires, inventories and tests designed to “measure” a person’s values, style and beliefs relevant to the job and career situation. (When relevant, participant’s performance on inventories is compared with a normative reference group comprised of other managers and professionals.)
2. A specially designed interview which incorporates feedback to the person on the results and interpretation of the questionnaires and inventories completed at stage 1.
3. A written summary report outlining the findings of stage 2 and suggesting career development implications, when relevant.

The Career Appreciation Program requires the candidate to spend about seven hours completing the tests and questionnaires. The in-depth interview and feedback meeting usually takes three hours. As can be seen from the above, it is a fairly labour-intensive process. But as the old saying goes, “The more you put into it, the more you’ll get out of it.”

Yes, there are “quickie” tests on the market. They purport to predict job success for one half hour’s questionnaire completion and \$125.00 for processing. But be an informed consumer! The “quickie” test process usually contravenes two of the most basic principles of psychological testing. Firstly, never interpret test results “blind”, (i.e.

without meeting the candidate personally). Secondly, no one test can ever be expected to capture the TRUTH about a person.

Assessment is at best a delicate art; therefore, to be done correctly, the approach must be as thorough and as rigorous as possible. For, it is the mosaic of the whole person in relationship to their skilled knowledge and experience, their values and motivation related to the workplace, the role they are about to fulfill, as well as their problem-solving and decision-making styles and their capacity to handle complexity which are the critical success factors. No one test alone can cover this waterfront. Additionally, one needs to consider the particular requirements of the job/career situation. Assessment is a complex process. But when done well, it can add inestimable value to both the individual and their (prospective) organization.

“I wish my company had given me this kind of career assessment 20 years ago.”

Candidate for Vice President in an electrical supply company



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Ari Lindeman consults in strategic change and organization for the E-V Development Group, serving clients in telecommunications, banking, insurance and public administration in Finland and European countries. He brings together relationship marketing, human resource development, international networking and business development and the management of change to support strategic analysis and direction. He holds a M.Sc. in Business Administration.



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The New Management Network

We support executives to act quickly, directly and profitably, on what needs to be done for success.

The New Management Network is a distinctive peer group of independent management consultants who share common professional ideas, understand creative innovation and are dedicated to releasing the human spirit in organizations.

Members of the network serve clients on issues of corporate purpose, strategic clarity, company-wide alignment with direction, teamwork and organizational culture.

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