

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL ISSUE

ACTUAL CASE of client finding & developing "new" technical talent from within using CDR ASSESSMENTS.



Providing a New Lens for Leadership Development

Assessment Advisor™

OUT OF OZ

HOW TO FIND, DEVELOP & RETAIN TOP NOTCH HIDDEN TALENT

Perhaps the greatest dilemma facing businesses as we begin the new century is the inability to attract, hire, develop, and retain essential IS staff. In fact, according to Howard Ruben, consultant and Chairman of Computer Science at Hunter College in Pound Ridge, NY, the gap will cost U.S. businesses \$500 billion in lost revenue and \$10 billion per year in lost income. If you do the math, Ruben's assertion suggests that a company could lose \$2.4 million per year just for each IS pro it can't hire. (*Garner, Rochelle and Weldon, David, "The Numbers Game", Computerworld, Jan 1998*) The bottom line is that the demand explosion in the marketplace has led to a continually growing shortage of IS professionals.

The solution to this dilemma is not over the rainbow and won't be found by relentless or even lucrative headhunting efforts. Remarkably, when it comes to recruiting IS talent -- there is no place like home. Most organizations already have the IS staff they need, they just don't know it. Within businesses today, there is a wealth of unrecognized and undeveloped talent hidden by a wide array of job titles. These future IS professionals are simply undiscovered and untrained. They are often hidden in jobs such as: accounting associates, secretaries, agents, supervisors, customer service representatives, and perhaps even janitorial staff to name a few. They are among and around you.

Amazingly, it is not difficult to identify or to develop this talent. However, it does take commitment, quality tools, and leadership resolve. There are two critical keys to identifying, unleashing and developing this talent which must be conducted strictly in this order:

- 1) assessment of existing staff using quality personality and motivational measurement tools that are scientifically validated, EEO neutral; and,
- 2) conducting a retooling or IS "boot camp" training program such as that utilized by Tom May, Ph.D. of Stonebridge Technologies of Dallas, Texas (formerly a Technical Training Manager with Texas Instruments.)

The Williams' Pilot and Commitment

Spearheaded by CEO Keith Bailey of Williams, a Fortune 500 Energy & Communications firm accomplished the above IS talent discovery and development initiative during a 1997 pilot.

Assessments available through CDR Assessment Group, Inc. were selected to screen internal candidates for a major redeployment initiative. This redeploy project was brought on by the reduction of 400 jobs in one operating unit of the corporation. At the same time, Williams' had job vacancies in other parts of the business. Clearly, however, the IS positions were the most difficult to fill.

As a demonstration of Williams' commitment to its people, Keith Bailey announced that all employees (14,000) were eligible to apply for the vacancies and that successful candidates would be provided:

- a career development opportunity, and in most cases, a promotion
- re-tooling training (boot camp) for eight to twelve weeks funded by the Company
- full pay while being trained and travel expenses, if applicable
- an acceptance bonus of \$5,000 once training was successfully completed; and,
- full relocation benefits at company expense (if necessary).

This was indeed a hefty investment in people and one which demonstrated Williams' commitment to developing from within.

The "Assessment" Process

The front-end screening process was led by industrial organizational psychologist, Kimberly Brinkmeyer, a partner of CDR Assessment Group.

The testing or initial screening process using the assessment measures was as follows:

1. First, a validation study was completed for the position which included personality, key motivators, job analysis, and performance measures for IS position(s). Brinkmeyer tested incumbents, sorted performance data, compared assessment results with normative data, performed statistical analyses and developed candidate (talent) screening cut-off scores.
2. The testing process involved administering three instruments used by CDR Assessment Group, Inc. to all of the redeploy applicants – taking about 45 minutes to an hour to complete.
3. Brinkmeyer’s team performed initial cuts based upon applicants’ test scores. Candidates who applied for these Williams’ IS opportunities were screened in (*or out*) solely based upon test scores. Less than 20% of applicants made it past these test score hurdles.
4. Next, Williams management teams, coordinated by Ted Smith, the Corporate Staffing & Employee Relations Manager, interviewed and considered further only those candidates who had passed the assessment criteria.
5. All candidates who applied, whether accepted or rejected, were offered individual career coaching feedback sessions and interpretive reports. Brinkmeyer’s team used reports generated from the same assessment data that was used to screen candidates in or out. Williams’ offered this feedback to demonstrate the value of employee development and to be “up-front” with employees about how selection decisions were objectively being made.
6. Successful candidates, previously undiscovered IS talent, began boot camp.

Boot Camp

Stonebridge Technologies was hired to design and conduct the IS Boot Camp for Williams. This endeavor was lead by Tom May. This was not his first camp experience. Tom’s first transitional or re-tooling training boot camp expertise was gained with a large high tech business based in Texas. Tom explained that:

“This is not any easy program by any measure. Participants need to have the ability to learn, understand concepts, and to process and organize information so that they can mentally transform into practical, applied skill set to use when tackling IS projects or problems.”

The major difference between Tom’s first boot camp and his experience with Williams was the application of quality measurement tools (the assessment process) to screen in candidates. Additionally, the first boot camp for the Texas-based firm was designed for a more specialized, narrower IS role than the Williams’ position. When asked how the classes stacked up Tom explained,

“At the first boot camp my grading scale for the graduates ranged from an A+ to a C-. In fact, we could not turn a few of the individuals loose to assume the full duties of the new job as originally anticipated. All were able to perform within the IS function, but some landed in more supportive or limited roles.

My experience with the Williams’ Boot Camp was quite different. The graduate grade range for this broader-in-scope IS position for graduates was a remarkable A+ to A-. Further, though both groups formed cohesive bonds as teams, the Williams’ class seemed less stressed and not as confrontational with instructors.

Ironically, there was one exception to this. We had an individual in the Williams class who struggled from the outset. During the first week this individual could not grasp the basic concepts. After some in-depth management discussions on how to resolve this participant’s training dilemma (which was beginning to affect the class), we eventually learned that this individual had been added to the class as a political favor and had some how by-passed the assessment screening. Once the Company understood the predicament created, this employee was placed back in their former position with full pay and the class sped forward to outstanding completion.”

Stonebridge Technologies communicated to Williams that this class was best transitional training class ever. Another noteworthy comment offered by Tom was that he found that a number of the assessed participants were at a better skill level and showed more potential and promise than

Michael Feliciano, a Williams Boot Camp graduate who is now with the Williams Communication division says

“I couldn’t be happier with my career. The program was extremely positive – actually it was fabulous. I have already been promoted from a systems analyst position to a project manager. The transformational program mutually benefited both the Company and me personally. Previous to this training, I was a computer operator and had experience with the hardware side of the business. Now that I have the application side by virtue of the Boot Camp, I am able to add much more value for the business. We (graduates) all feel the same way and just a couple of weeks ago had a first anniversary lunch celebration.”

many of the IS college grads he has worked with.

This was personally the best thing I have ever done. Ever since that day I entered the program my life has changed for the better. Formerly, I was an administrative assistant in Salt Lake City and felt stymied in that role. I was relocated to Tulsa for this new opportunity as a Systems Analyst after completing Boot Camp training. From a professional standpoint, it has been really exciting because I am now working on a large companywide project, developing systems from the ground up. Also, the most impressive part of the redeploy selection process itself was the coaching feedback I received with my assessment results. It is something I recommend to everyone. I feel extremely fortunate that I was part of this initial group.

Becky Warberg, Systems Analyst, Williams Communications Services

To go full circle, more than a year has passed since the Williams' redeploy and IS boot camp, all of the graduates continue to perform and advance well within their new career paths as systems analysts. The only bad news is that two of the first fourteen have been recruited away to other firms.

The Magic of Assessment

This success story may sound like magic or wizardry. Like most of our best universal strides for business and mankind, science and common sense were the keys to success.

The common sense take on this is simple. When people are placed in jobs that they are well suited to perform because of a good fit with personality characteristics and motivational needs, they perform best. When jobs are a poor match for one's personality and motivational disposition, these roles tend to be highly stressful, disappointing, and performance success suffers. This is commonly known as the square-peg-in-the-round-hole syndrome or can be looked at as the price of nonconformance to quality standards. It makes little sense to struggle within an upstream performance battle when statistically sound assessment tools are available.

The assessment measures used by Brinkmeyer differ from other personality and motivational test products currently available in the marketplace for several reasons:

- First, they are more comprehensive in scope and are validated based upon actual performance data. Modeled after the well-known and widely accepted personality Five Factor Model, the CDR Character Assessment includes seven primary scales and 42 subscales. The normative data is more than 100,000 strong consisting of working adults (not clinical patients or students) and is validated based upon specific job performance criteria for a wide range of jobs.

- Next, the CDR Drivers & Rewards Assessment is designed to identify what people aspire to and enjoy most; it also describes their aversions. This an excellent tool that explains what internal motivators and drivers one has, as well as, what types of rewards and recognition one values most (i.e., money, artistic expression, acting in humanitarian ways, just being with others, etc.). The CDR Drivers & Rewards Assessment also describes the type of work environment in which individuals will most likely thrive.
- Last, the CDR Risk Assessment measures and describes personality-based "risks" or ineffective coping strategies likely to sabotage one's performance success.

The Value of Growing Your Own

The need and cost effectiveness for growing your own pool of IS professionals, and other difficult-to-recruit talent, is indisputable. Consider the benefits that this assessment screening process can provide an organization for harvesting new, formerly unidentified talent from within its own doors. This process:

- provides the opportunity to develop staff who are already loyal to your Company, thereby minimizing the potential for turnover;
- promotes and develops those who already know your industry, your business and who have established relationships with your customers;
- provides a mechanism to send a very positive career development message to employees that can eliminate "dead-ending" for many and may prevent the "peter-principal" tract for others;
- is EEO neutral, meaning there is no adverse impact or discriminatory effects of testing as statistically documented within the validity project phase;
- can be used to screen both internal and external candidates;
- is a great source of data for developing future bench strength (succession planning);

- reduces unnecessary recruiting expenses while directing training and development investments more wisely;
- can be utilized for virtually **all** positions; unveils highly capable and talented underutilized employees (Unfortunately, underutilized talent can create increased turnover or a whole new host of problems in the workplace.);
- serves as a measurable quality improvement initiative; and,
- utilizes test data that can be re-used for a wide range of HR/OD and quality management applications over time including: team building, leadership development, retention studies, sales analysis, project team role selection, rewards program design, cultural/values assessment and more.

The Frosting on the Cake

The benefits in the Williams’ pilot appear to overwhelmingly justify the case for discovering and growing your own IS professionals. However, the frosting on the cake was the developmental benefits yielded by this project and the feedback from participants. Remember that each candidate that applied for one of the new opportunities (successful or not) was offered an individual career development coaching feedback session using the same data that screened them in or out of the prospective job.

As Brinkmeyer’s team carefully tracked and documented, of those receiving this feedback, 93% rated these sessions as being both favorable and useful; and 87% as accurate. (See Table I.) These numbers are extremely compelling because the vast majority of those who received feedback had been rejected* for the promotional positions for which they had applied. →

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Table I.

| Coaching Feedback Received on Job | Past Feedback (non-assessment related) | Redeploy Feedback* |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Accurate | 70% | 87% |
| Relevant to Performance | 67% | 72% |
| Relevant to Issues Beyond Control | 32% | 9% |
| Relevant to Goals | 52% | 70% |
| Favorable | 80% | 93% |
| Feedback Caused Distress | 25% | 10% |
| Covered Important Aspects of Job | 64% | 76% |

Back to Kansas

This Williams’ pilot describes an incredible human and business development opportunity. It tells a successful story on how quality measures applied to the human side of the business can make a huge impact on the bottom line. It shows us that there is a great deal more that organizations can do to measure and develop the hidden human potential right within their own ranks.

The time has come to depart the yellow-brick road recruiting mentality, to tap your ruby slippers (or your casual dress loafers) a few times, and to understand *there is no place like home* when it comes to finding and developing talent. ☺

*Out of Oz written by: Nancy E. Parsons, President
 CDR Assessment Group, Inc.*

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

When used for selection, CDR Assessment Group’s tools regularly produce *significant measurable* results for clients. Some examples of actual improvements reported by clients include:

- **Turnover reduction from 140% to 18%** (retail)
- **Reduction in accident rates by 75%** (truck drivers)
- **Increase in sales by 24%** (more than \$250,000 annually per sales rep)
- **Improve error-free productivity from 54% to 97%** (insurance claims processors)
- **Decrease in lost time injuries by 20% and the cost per claim by 57% and more.**