



How to Clone Your Best People

Moderately successful business owners and managers know who their top performers are. Highly

successful owners and managers have learned how to clone those top performers.

Whether it's sales people, office staff or service technicians, did you ever say, "If only I had more people like Bob, the entire department would operate in the black." And, chances are that's correct. The question is, exactly how can you clone your best people? How can you add more black ink to your bottom line by hiring better people?

You have two basic choices:

1. high-tech and expensive
2. low-tech and affordable

You most likely want low-tech and affordable. This means you'll take more of a hands-on approach.

First, identify your top performers (in a specific job). Take sales as an example.

Second, recognize how your top sales performers do what they do. In particular, you look for the common qualities and competencies among your star sales people.

Third, build a profile of those qualities and competencies. You can use a few conversational questions to get key information from top performers. Say you discover that your top sales people possess five common qualities and competencies:

Proactive – tends toward direct action rather than thinking about things.

Persuasive – good at building rapport, leading, influencing.

Competitive – invigorated by competition, likes to win.

Positive – always on the lookout for the positive in any situation.

Social – invigorated by social interaction.

Now that you have this information, you have a head start on what to look for when you begin to interview new sales people. You simply look for people with those specific qualities.

The challenging part.

How do you identify the common traits? That's the challenging part, and it requires a tool. Again, the choice is yours. You can spend literally millions and get a highly effective, high-tech tool. Or, you can spend mere thousands and get a highly effective, low-tech tool. What makes this so challenging is that there are a lot of choices. You probably already know about the many variations of personality tests and behavioral assessments. Chances are, you've also discovered lots of variation in the quality and validity of those personality tools.

To make matters worse, most assessment processes tend to employ tunnel-vision – they focus on assessing the applicant within a vacuum. They don't take time to understand the job and the success criteria. It is common sense to know what you're looking for before you start looking. Unless your tool can help you address the job and success within your culture, you could easily end up with an excellent performer who hates showing up for work.

In addition, if you're not careful, you could easily end up assessing all the wrong things, and not even know it. You could chew up a lot of time and expense and get very little return on your investment. Be cautious when selecting the tool. Unless you employ 30,000 people, keep it simple and low-tech.

A perfectly logical solution.

One tool that contains everything you probably want (low-tech, affordable, highly effective) is the language and behavior (LAB) profile. LAB profiling is based on the scientifically valid concept that people's language gives you a direct link to their behavior. If you listen carefully to the words someone uses, you can understand how his/her mind works. Here's how it would work for you. If you teach your sales people to follow a specific sales process, you absolutely

need to hire people who naturally and automatically embrace procedures. You need to hire people who will not vary from that procedure. But, if you know what to listen for, you'll recognize it in the language when your applicant talks.

Here's how to use the LAB profile to create a profile. Interview the top performers in a specific job, asking eight to ten conversational questions that enable you to determine their values and how their minds work. What you actually identify is called a 'mental filter configuration'. That configuration becomes a template or map to identify your next superstars. Then, use those same eight to ten questions to interview job candidates. You can immediately see how closely a candidate's mental filter configuration matches those of your top performers. The closer they are to the template, the better they will perform. The farther they are from the template, the more money they will cost you.

It's a low-tech, practical and amazingly effective approach. The important thing is not so much what tool you use just that you look at the characteristics of star performers and use those as your guide for hiring.

Use the right language to attract exactly the people you want.

Once you identify the specific characteristics you're looking for in a candidate, you can then use the appropriate language in your recruiting ads to attract more of the people who fit the profile. For example, if you know that your best sales people are competitive, you might include language like "Do you want to be the top sales person in your region?" or "Are you driven to win?" If you want to attract a person who is proactive, you would use proactive language, in other words, short, active sentences. For example: "Want to take control?" "Want to get the job done?" "Like to Win?"

Pam Holloway is the Co-founder and CEO of AboutPeople Training and Consulting Firm. She can be contacted by email at pam@aboutpeople.com.