

Assessments are just tools and the right one can leverage your Leadership Development Applications.

All good assessments on the market today have several qualities that you should be asking for when doing due diligence. Today behavioral and style assessment tools are being widely used by Human Resource professionals; managers and coaches to help individuals and teams function at peak performance. There are a number of well-designed instruments and the magic of computers make the mathematical calculations far superior. Unfortunately poorly designed "quizzes" abound and often remain popular despite their potentially limited use.

So ask yourself these questions before picking an assessment:

1. What is the purpose of doing this assessment?
2. What does it purport to measure and what is the model on which it is based?
3. Is this the right timing within our organization?
4. Will the results take over the agenda and take the focus away from what you want to achieve?
5. What are the attitudes toward assessments?
6. How many have the targeted population completed in the past and what has been their experience?

I believe that the model (and theory upon which it is based) are far more important to understand than merely giving out an assessment. Remember, a model is a representation of a theory which in itself isn't reality. No matter how "validated" the MBTI might or might not be, if you don't accept Jungian Theory, you won't "buy into" the output. How accessible is the model and how much does it resonate with others?

Simplify. Simplify.

Due to time restrictions in training sessions, and even with individual clients, I began to use four fold models –like a basic DiSC. I have had over a couple of thousand people take the DiSC assessment and it has struck a chord with most. Sure, some just came to be entertained, but I have had many participants experience a small "Ah-Ha". Even a couple of years later, people have told me that they still apply what they discovered BECAUSE it helped improve relationships with teenagers, spouses, colleagues and direct reports.

Here is the funny thing. I have discovered that the simpler the model and tool the LESS likely people are to stereotype. For some reason we will box people into 16 categories but we realize that the world is far more complex than just four. Go figure. The simpler the model and tool, the less likely to be misused, abused or misunderstood. People get it right away and can use what they learned immediately.

So here is my observations on this whole issue – There is elegance in simplicity. A simple model can assist in opening up dialogue using neutral language very quickly. Simple does not mean easy. Sophistication does not ensure learning just as simplicity doesn't ensure comprehension. I have worked personally with the Enneagram, MBTI, and many other assessments and I sometimes feel I am just beginning to "get it". Just because I love one assessment, it doesn't mean others will even like it at all.

Give people choices. Let's continue to use assessments (or not) as tools and not crutches. Let's use them properly within the broader context and let others make up their own minds like the adults we hold them to be.

Prepared by: Anne Rarich

Past President, International Coaching Federation of New England

Her website is: www.leadershipcoachanne.com

Phone: 978-369-9071