

## Are you On the Right Path?

### PA Labs identifies employee behavioral assets using Predictive Index.

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By Amanda Koehler

Muncie, IN-based PA Labs was facing common but challenging employee problems. The independent hospital laboratory, which has three other testing sites in Indiana, approximately 600 employees and performs more than five million tests annually for more than 900 clients in 37 counties, was experiencing turnover issues in the specimen processing and phlebotomy areas.

The administrators were also finding, with the ever-changing world of the laboratory, they needed to hire more people who were more detail oriented and could adapt to change.

#### Predictive Index

Then one of their lab managers attended a Predictive Index (PI) presentation at a laboratory association meeting at Bloomington (IN) Hospital. The manager completed a Predictive Index survey, heard how the information was used in the Bloomington laboratory and suggested it to her colleagues at PA Labs.

This 52-year-old assessment, created by PI Worldwide, a privately held international management consulting company located in Wellesley, MA, helps clients identify the behaviors and drives of their employees and potential hires.

When John Ranalletta, a consultant with 21-year PI licensee, Bob Wilson & Associates, Carmel, IN (whose clients include PA Labs), first meets with a potential client, the goal is to identify the specific challenges the company is experiencing. These commonly include employee turnover, inability to identify the right people for the right jobs, low morale, inadequate communication, the impact of rapid change, conflict resolution, succession planning and other difficulties. A discussion ensues about the group's Predictive Index survey results. Ranalletta said virtually every time, the PI information explains the actions of employees and the reasons for these actions. Ranalletta also stated it provides clear directions to supervisors and employees about how to improve in each area.

#### PREDICTIVE INDEX APPLICATIONS

##### The Predictive Index helps:

- build strong teams;
- define job requirements;
- attract the best candidates;
- select and hire the right people;
- plan for future growth;
- develop people;
- deal effectively with conflict;
- motivate people; and
- retain valuable employees.

Organizations adopting PI send their managers to a 2-day workshop where they learn how to interpret the survey results and apply that knowledge to hiring, interviewing, team building, conflict resolution and more (see Box for more applications).

Subsequently, PI consultants provide ongoing support to the company.

To assist clients to become more comfortable with and adept at using PI and its applications, Ranalletta provides continuing consulting each quarter.

## **The Survey**

The actual PI survey, which can be completed online, is a two-part checklist with 86 descriptive adjectives per part, such as "earnest," "understanding," "demanding" and "cynical." In part one, survey takers check off the words describing the way they are expected to act by others. Part two asks the respondents to select the words they believe describe themselves.

Stressing the Predictive Index survey is not a test, Ranalletta stated there are no "right" or "wrong" responses. The words a person chooses are used to assess characteristics of that person's personality, and the information can lead to better-informed decisions as to how they would fit into their jobs, and how to help them excel at them.

The words chosen are used to measure the strength of four behavioral drives all people have: A drive (drive to dominate); B drive (extroversion); C drive (patience); and D drive (formality). Every person possesses some of each of the four drives, but the amount (amplitude) of each drive, and the relationship of each drive to the others differs from person to person.

For example, a person whose C drive is stronger than their A, B and D drives, might be described as methodical, thorough and patient, and would prosper in a stable work environment. High A employees are likely to want to lead while higher B drive employees are likely to enjoy working with people. Higher D people can be counted upon to do their work in a meticulous, careful manner.

How strong or weak these factors are is only part of the picture, though. The interrelationships between these drives will vary considerably from person to person. PI consultants train their clients to analyze these interrelationships and how they influence each person's behavior on the job.

Ranalletta pointed out employees' job satisfaction increases when assigned to jobs satisfying their strongest drives. While it's possible for employees to succeed at jobs and tasks not correlating with their highest drives, job satisfaction, morale and productivity generally suffer.

## **The Solution**

Soon after PA Labs' management staff received more information about the PI assessment and began to implement Predictive Index in January 2003, the laboratory started to see results.

"They saw that the information PI provided was a pathway to help them solve their issues in the workplace. They were getting reactions they could now predict," Ranalletta said.

Ranalletta mentioned the lab had many employees with strong C and D drives, which makes sense since "the company is engaged in a business where perfection counts." Accordingly, management became aware of the need to provide training in procedures and protocols and create a stable work environment to satisfy these employees.

Using the Predictive Index information, the company reduced turnover by 40 percent, according to Janice Craig, human resources manager. Additionally, the company could recruit and identify candidates with the best characteristics for specific jobs. Their assiduous effort coupled with better information about employees' work needs has helped them better motivate their employees and has led to changes and improvements in the work environment. Predictive Index was used to gain a deeper understanding of CEO candidates as well. Former CEO and Medical Director George E. Branam, MD, was choosing his successor and wanted a new CEO who possessed the appropriate professional competencies—i.e., a person who was an expert pathologist and also understood laboratory operations.

Dr. Branam, realizing the value of good chemistry isn't limited to the lab, described the characteristics he believed would help lead to success in a new CEO. He wanted a successor who could drive change and represent the business tactfully and diplomatically to its stakeholders, including PA Labs' physician—clients, employees, hospital boards and other pathologists.

"It was this combination of professional and intrinsic talents they really wanted—someone who could take them to the next level," Ranalletta said.

Current CEO and President Charles C. Miraglia, MD, along with other candidates, took the PI to see if there was compatibility between the applicants and the job description.

Dr. Miraglia admitted he was wary about the PI when he first came into contact with it during the interview process for the CEO position.

"To be honest, I was skeptical of how checking some words on a page could be valuable. But as I learned more about it, the lightbulb started really going on to prove to me how powerful the PI could be. I am no longer skeptical, and we use it on a daily basis," Dr. Miraglia told *ADVANCE* .

It turned out Dr. Branam and Dr. Miraglia had completely different PIs. "So there needed to be some changes in the way we dealt with the day-to-day activities of the company. Based on my PI, George helped me understand what I had to do differently when dealing with employees. It made for a smoother transition," Dr. Miraglia said.

Dr. Miraglia added PA Labs employees were also skeptical about the PI at first, but now have "universally positive responses" toward the assessment.

"They all thought, like I did, to understand people you have to do long formulas that take hours and maybe even days to even get a hint at people's drives. But this is a very simple and elegant way to figure that out. It really helps you understand why you are the way you are, and it really is insightful into what those simple drives mean," he said.

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