



Predicting employee behavior

By Heather Wood

The determination of what makes a good employee comes from more than just the words on a resume. Experience only goes so far before personality steps in. If employers pay more attention to the whole package, they can use the resources that are available more appropriately, resulting in a more successful operation.

The process starts by performing an analysis on each employee to get a good read on his or her behavioral patterns. This, more than the employee's past training, indicates where the employee best fits in at the company, says Mike Stewart, West Coast consultant for Predictive Index.

"Usually you pick the right people, but they have the wrong behavior for the jobs," Stewart says. "Sometimes the behaviors don't fit the jobs, but the applicant wants the job, and the employer needs someone in it."

The Predictive Index is a personality indicator that helps companies determine the best fit within the organization for an employee based on his or her behavioral traits. With this type of analysis, a golf course can use the work force it has and make the most of it.

The test, developed in 1955 by Wellesley, Mass.-based PI Worldwide, is best taken before a prospective employee is hired. Applicants don't need to worry about failing the test – there's no pass or fail determination, Stewart says. It only helps the employer get a better grasp of the employee's personality.

More than just the resume

While the ability to swing a club seems to be a key component of being a golf professional, it's not the end all be all for a standout pro.

"Not all great golfers make great golf professionals at a clubhouse," Stewart says. "If they can retail well and merchandise well, the members love them. They don't have to be extraordinarily social, but they have to be good retailers, not necessarily great golfers."

The personality indicator test helps pick out which golf pros fit this description

There is a range of behavioral patterns that can be detected with the Predictive Index, but they generally are categorized into four main personality types:

- Dominant (independent, self-starter).
- Extrovert (socially poised, empathetic, easily delegates).
- Patient (More deliberate, more consistent).
- Formal (More attentive to details, conservative and precise).

Based on the different responsibilities each position at a golf course brings, Stewart provides examples of which personality type would best be suited to each job. For instance, someone who's flexible and diligent to a point would likely make a good general manager, he says.

"They have to balance the needs of the members – the people side of things – with the bottom-line side of things," he says. "They have to be proactive, resourceful and flexible."

A superintendent's traits are likely close to those of a general manager, Stewart says, adding this position usually involves someone who's more of a cautious risk-taker.

"Superintendents innovate – they try a new agronomic approach or use something to save water," he says. "They're going to trade shows and trying to stay topical. They can be flexible, but they also want to do it right."

From character assessment to commission

Ron Jackson, president and c.e.o. of the golf course management, maintenance and supply company Meadowbrook Golf, realizes the industry isn't what it used to be. After 9/11, the corporate business courses enjoyed started drying up, Jackson says. In addition, there seemed to be a renewed interest in family values.

"A guy who went golfing every Friday, Saturday and Sunday before would only go one of the three days then take his children somewhere the other days," he says. "We deal with discretionary time and spending."

The decline of business affects golf courses' spending. Salespeople with the company's supply division, Golf Ventures West, make calls at these courses, where rounds are declining. Jackson decided the company needed to beef up its sales effort to get whatever business it could from courses with limited budgets. He turned to Stewart, who had a new tool for him.

PI Worldwide bought the Selling Skills Assessment Tool last year, expanding its services to include sales assessment and training. Meadowbrook used the sales program and discovered 80 percent of its sales force didn't know how to sell. The program offers training that's tailored to each employee's skill set.

The company attributes several breakthrough sales to the program. For example, one salesperson closed a \$40,000 sale with a customer who previously had been loyal to a competitor.

"A couple salespeople who were just average have become very good at what they do," Jackson says.

The sales staff follows a system with a specific method of selling that includes accountability at each level. Based on the program's success, Jackson made it mandatory the sales team receive training on an annual basis. The training is in addition the Predictive Index, which is the first indicator the company receives of an employee's skills.

"It enables us to have an understanding of not just the training people have, but also their leadership capabilities," Jackson says. "If there's one thing golf needs, it's more leaders than doers."

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