

# Information: The Under-Used Resource in HR Management

Match new-hire behavior with company style.

By Markku Kauppinen

**H**R professionals know a lot about measuring and predicting employee behavior. The bigger HR Challenge, however, is to match employee behavior with the company culture or style. This requires more robust information – knowing what drives the company, what the behavioral expectations are and how decisions are made. HR departments can make a key contribution to management in this area by providing the executive team with more in-depth analysis. One way to accomplish this is through the use of good scientific assessments that match worker behavior with company style.

## Four Corporate Styles

It is now possible to identify the following four styles of company behavior and use that information as a recruiting and training tool.

**1.** Established companies. These are the “brick-and-mortar” companies that have been around for decades. They value stability and high production. Employees are attuned to well-established, slow, predictable and consistent patterns of very high output. Such organizations include

GM, Ford, 3M and large governmental agencies.

3M was the first wholly owned foreign venture on Chinese soil. Marketing consultants Michael Czinkota and Ilkka Ronkainen explain,

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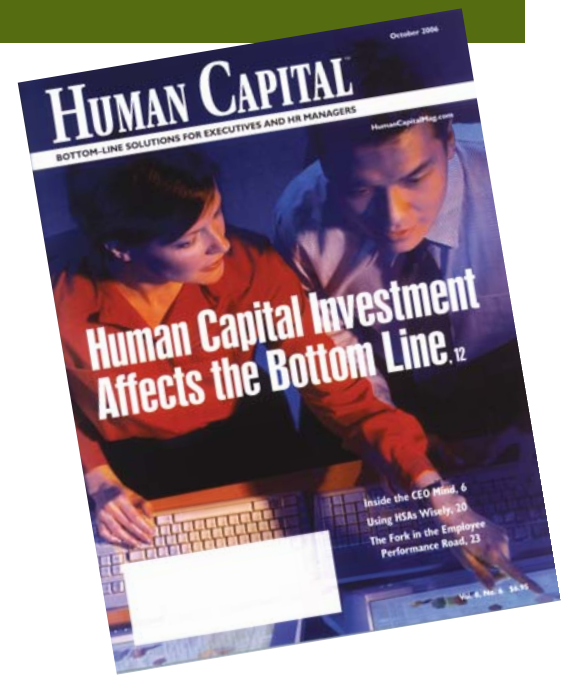
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“For 10 years, company officials visited Beijing and invited Chinese leaders to 3M headquarters in St. Paul, building contacts and trust along the way.” 3M values employees who can think long term, who can plod on creatively while complex transactions are under way.

**2.** Opportunistic companies. These companies are the dia-

metric opposite of the big business monoliths. These firms live by their drive, their wits and their cell phones. Think of real estate companies, wholesalers and rapidly expanding outlets. In the words of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, their success depends on “getting there firstest with the mostest.” These companies value high levels of sociability and gregariousness from their employees. If this is the company style, then HR needs to be scouting for people who, unlike Dilbert in his cubicle, can change quickly and often “on the fly.”

Assessment data should measure high levels of



flexibility, the ability to think on the spot, and the zest to thrive on organizational change. Assessments that probe these areas deeply offer HR managers a winning edge.

**3. Customer loyalists.** In these companies, people-oriented workers are in demand, similar to opportunistic companies, but without that “driven” quality. Customer service and customer stabilization are highly valued skill. Dependability and professionalism are prerequisites. Think of financial services companies or Wal-Mart. Ecolab Inc., the world’s leading supplier of detergents and sanitizing products, also falls in to this category. Typically, the company recruits among college graduates with majors in hospitality, marketing, education or liberal arts. But, adds Judy Siguaw of Cornell’s Department of Marketing, “Once hired, Ecolab’s new sales reps can spend as much as a year in training.” Companies with a customer loyalist culture need to know: Will candidates be willing to tough it out? How strong is their level of motivation, their sheer tenacity? Holistic assessment services that measure these behaviors in advance provide this valuable information.

**4. “Carpe diem” companies.** These are often young companies and offspring of the Information Age. IT is their mantra, though more traditional advertising agencies also fit the bill. The workforce likes to travel and interact with other enterprises. Connectivity is a given. These companies can present the hardest challenges for the HR staff. The March 16, 1998, issue of Fortune, for example, features a 29-year-

old computer worker in an open-neck shirt with a parrot perched on his head. The caption? “I want a fat salary, a signing bonus, and a cappuccino machine – oh, and I’m bringing my bird to work.” There are increasing numbers of these types of individuals in the 21st century’s workforce, and HR professionals need to know their idiosyncrasies. Says business writer Nina Munk, “Impatience and self-confidence define today’s young worker, and everywhere employers are having to adapt.” In this business culture, HR’s ability to get it right the first time minimizes the need for “damage control” down the pike.

### **Avoid Square Pegs in Round Holes**

It’s an old adage: Don’t put square pegs in round corporate holes. In a world of diverse and diverging corporate entities, scientific assessments that match individual traits with company style represent a strategic edge in the talent wars. Employee behavior and company culture can be measured and matched before trouble strikes. When HR professionals provide such information to C-level management, the benefits in manpower risk reduction speak for themselves.

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