



Personality Assessments as a Workforce Diversity Tool

By Sandra K. Collins, MBA, Brandy Sord, Caleigh Griffin, and Lora Borges

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E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y

- Employee recruitment, retention, and workforce diversity are essential ingredients in a successful radiology department. Since potential new hires and existing employees do not come with labels which accurately describe their innate characteristics, radiology managers need to use objective tools such as personality assessments in order to properly evaluate prospective employment candidates.
- These tools have traditionally been under utilized in the healthcare industry, but when used as part of a complete employee selection program they have the potential of ensuring a cohesive radiology department filled with diverse and skilled professionals.
- Legal concerns and time constraints notwithstanding, use of personality assessments as a workforce diversity tool will aid in building an integrated department culture which values the varying skills and attributes of every employee. The result is a radiology department with high levels of employee retention and satisfaction.

There are numerous factors that contribute to making a radiology department function properly. Among these factors are effective and efficient employee recruitment and retention efforts. However, workforce diversity is an essential ingredient, as well, and not merely in the traditional form of culture, race, religion, or gender. In this regard, diversity is used in terms of varying employee personalities, strengths, and weaknesses found within the organization and within each internal department. Unfortunately, potential employees do not come with labels which accurately describe their innate characteristics. Therefore, objective tools such as personality assessments are needed in order to properly evaluate prospective candidates.

Using Personality Assessments

Much of the success of a radiology department depends on effective interactions among coworkers and patients. The way employees interact with each other, as well as with the patient is a key determinant to overall organizational success. Therefore, radiology managers must evaluate the characteristics and personality attributes of potential hires carefully. The process of hiring new employees should be no less intense than purchasing a new piece of equipment.¹ Some organizations take this philosophy to heart and spend as much as 150 hours interviewing potential candidates before extending a job offer. At first blush, this may seem excessive, but research shows the time not dedicated to finding the right person the first time will be spent ten-fold in trying to make the wrong person effective and efficient, recompensing for lost productivity, correcting learning curve errors,

Personality testing is a \$400 million industry and numerous corporations are reported to spend significant organizational funds on uncovering the personality characteristics of current employees hoping to duplicate the attitudes and characteristics of those employees which are their best performers.

disciplining and termination efforts, and eventually being forced to start all over again with another new employee.²

Hiring a candidate that adds strategic diversity to the radiology department requires a structured employee selection program.² Careful attention should be placed on not placing too much emphasis on the traditional forms of candidate evaluation such as the employment application or the face-to-face interview.³ These methods do not produce good results in terms of predicting the future performance of a prospective employee.¹ However, objective measurement tools in the form of personality tests are useful and necessary to effectively recruit employees with diverse personalities. Nevertheless, personality assessments are not used in the healthcare field nearly as much as in the regular business sector. Approximately 65% of organizations in the regular business industry use personality assessments as part of their employee selection processes.⁴ They are used by Fortune 100 companies to test applicants ranging from entry level personnel to chief executive officers. Personality testing is a \$400 million industry and numerous corporations are reported to spend significant organizational funds on uncovering the personality characteristics of current employees hoping to duplicate the attitudes and characteristics of those employees which are their best performers.⁵ The general industry consensus is that a greater investment needs to be made in the initial hiring phase so the larger long term investment of training will be prudently saved.²

In terms of diversity, merely evaluating the personality of potential new hires alone is probably not sufficient. The results of potential new hires should be correlated with the personality assessments of existing employees to assure there is adequate diversity within the group. Personality conflicts among the group can expand to larger problems which can often times negatively impact patient care. Since every employee has their own unique personality with varying background experiences, they can interpret situations differently. These, along with the demands of their individual life situations, varying developmental stages in life, and each

individual's inborn dispositions create behavior influencing factors which radiology managers should be aware of before extending employment offers to new candidates.⁶ Common personalities may make employees get along better, but may not create the appropriate mix of personalities needed to receive the benefits of true creativity and innovation. This is the foundation for workforce diversity efforts. Most managers have a tendency to hire people who are similar to themselves and studies show that over 60% of all managers register as Thinkers-Judgers on personality assessments. If this statistic is accurate, hiring only those who are similar to the manager would result in a group largely comprised of individuals with a high propensity to be "take charge," which could lead to a variety of conflicts and interpersonal problems.⁷

Astute radiology managers will avoid the temptation to hire individuals similar to themselves by attempting to hire those that have complimentary but different characteristics or personalities. By using personality testing as part of the employee selection process, radiology managers can form work teams that have varying educational levels, gender, races, ages, and innate personality characteristics which strengthen each other and aid in better department communication.⁸ Assuring different types of radiology professionals are within the department creates an environment filled with varying personalities and offers a wide variety of experience and knowledge. These differences allow for a synergistic exchange of ideas in the creation of problem solutions and continuous quality improvement. Furthermore, having a diverse array of personalities in the workplace can foster creativity which assures the radiology department will maintain a competitive advantage in the ever increasingly complicated healthcare marketplace.⁷

Assessing Personality Traits

Hiring decisions are made based on 3 particular areas: personality traits, personal experience, and potential team chemistry. The best candidate should be a good match with

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the department in all 3 areas. Most experts agree that if there is one area that can be sacrificed it is the personal experience area. This is largely because if a good match in personality traits and team chemistry exists, training the potential candidate will be fairly easy. Conversely, if a candidate has a low team chemistry or personality trait match, all the experience in the world is typically not going to make them a successful member of the radiology department. Teaching a willing employee new technical skills is merely a training issue, but it is potentially impossible to train individual attitude problems out of an employee.⁹ Research shows that 95% of hiring decisions are made based on personality. Only 5% are based on the qualifications of the candidates.² To the degree that personality assessments can appropriately measure an employee's personality traits, radiology managers can potentially lower the possibility of extending employment offers to candidates with negative and counterproductive behaviors when using these objective employee selection tools.⁹

Types of Personality Assessments

In a market of approximately 8000 different personality assessments, the potentially most common personality test available is the Meyers Briggs Typology Instrument (MBTI).¹⁰ This particular instrument has been used over 2 million times and has been reported to be accurate in terms of identifying an individual's personality approximately 80% of the time. The MBTI has been changed and modified numerous times since its 1942 inception. The questions have been slightly modernized and changed to account for social changes and gender equality, thereby increasing the reliability and accuracy of the instrument. Therefore, there are many versions of the MBTI that are accessible. The key attributes this particular test measures are energy, perception, judgment, and orientation. The results of this test can allow radiology managers to determine how well the prospective employee will fit within the department and the position.

It is also useful as an aid to help all employees understand each other better. This factor alone could result in a diminishment of conflict within the department.¹¹

Another prestigious personality test is the Big Five Model, otherwise known as, the Five Factor Model (FFM). This particular test is known for describing individual dispositions or traits which are assumed to underlie personality and to be able to predict a broad range of behavior. This test originated back in the 1930s and seeks to identify certain points including extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. This test compares those 5 personality characteristics to 3 job performance characteristics including job proficiency, training proficiency, and personnel data. The results of this test show if there is a suitable match between the natural characteristics of the candidate and those which are needed for the position.¹²

The Benefits of Using Personality Assessments

Although the time required to conduct personality tests and the associative costs might be prohibitive at first glance, the potential decrease in employee turnover is worth the effort. Rather than going through numerous candidates before finding one that is suitable for the position within the radiology department, managers will more likely be able to hire the right person the first time saving time and money in the long run. There is also the possibility that learning curve errors caused by new employees would be reduced, thereby increasing the quality of patient care.¹³ This takes a considerable weight off radiology managers who are often burdened by the daunting employee selection process.² It also helps assure prospective employees possess the necessary characteristics required for the position. For example, if a radiology manager is seeking candidates with high levels of organizational citizenship or those that are highly motivated, personality tests can help

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identify those traits in prospective employees. The use of personality assessments has also been linked with a reduction in hiring individuals with counterproductive tendencies such as a high propensity for conflict, violence, tardiness, and unethical behavior.⁵

The Management Challenge

For radiology managers, the complexity of building a diverse radiology department is in finding the exact mix of personalities which works best for their individual department. Not every radiology department is the same and the needs of each vary widely. What characteristics a particular team needs is typically correlated with the departmental needs. Determining the department needs is difficult in healthcare because it is an ever changing and somewhat ambiguous industry. If the department is in a growth phase, more extroverts may be needed to keep other employees excited and motivated. If the department has experienced a number of errors, more introverts may be needed to create policies and procedures with their detail oriented nature and keen observation skills. Department needs will vary widely from department to department, organization to organization, and situation to situation.

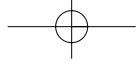
Another key consideration for managers is that although using the test to make sure employees understand each other is a positive step in having a highly functioning department, individual employees must be willing to try to understand each other's personality strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, they must be willing to share the results of their personality tests with each other. This is difficult as it can make employees feel vulnerable. Therefore, radiology managers need to show employees the benefits of understanding each other and how by doing so their organization and patients are positively impacted. It is only then that employees will come together and attempt to understand and work with each other's differences.

Legal Issues

Although assuring individuals with counterproductive personality traits are not being extended employment offers in the radiology department potentially prevents a massive amount of organizational issues, using these objective selection tests as a workforce diversity tool does not come without concern. Many employees will consider the assessments to be an invasion of privacy. Furthermore, many people scrutinize the validity and reliability of personality assessments. These are valid concerns which should be addressed by the radiology manager. As there are a multitude of personality assessments on the market, special care must be taken to select the correct one. It is highly advisable to contact a qualified industrial psychologist for guidance in selecting or creating any personality assessment instrument. It is also important radiology managers realize the personality assessment should only be used as part of the hiring decision. Experts agree that only about 20% of the hiring decision should be based on the results of personality assessments.¹⁴ Other employee selection methods should be used in concert with personality assessments such as face-to-face interviewing, background and reference checks, peer interviewing, and competency based testing. Furthermore, radiology managers should make sure any personality assessment:

- Is developed and/or approved by a professional testing organization
- Correlates directly to the skills/characteristics required for the position
- Avoids asking questions adversely impacting those in protected classes
- Is not racially or morally biased
- Refrains from inquiring about a candidate's physical attributes
- Is offered to every employee or candidate equally and without variance

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Successfully assuring there is a diverse and skilled workforce within the department is a key factor in assuring ongoing business continuity.

- Complements rather than substitutes other employee selection methods
- Is not a form of a medical examination
- Is confidential until written permission to disseminate to other employees for the purpose of increasing communication is received from each respective employee.⁴

Conclusion

Radiology managers face tremendous pressure to recruit and retain skilled professionals in today's healthcare organizations. They are expected to encourage a level of team cohesiveness and diversity by being a good steward of their human capital. Successfully assuring there is a diverse and skilled workforce within the department is a key factor in assuring ongoing business continuity. This requires a close introspection and understanding of the personality dynamics existing within the department, as well as those housed within potential new hires. Although seemingly

time consuming, the process of thoroughly matching and assuring a variety of personality types are present within the radiology department is equally as important as making sure those with counterproductive traits are not retained or extended employment offers. Legal concerns and time constraints notwithstanding, using personality assessments as a workforce diversity tool will aid in building an integrated department culture which values the varying skills and attributes of every employee. The result is a radiology department with high levels of employee retention and satisfaction. 

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Sandra Collins is an assistant professor in the healthcare management program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She has over 17 years experience in the management of healthcare facilities, has authored many articles on human resource related topics, and presented multiple times at national and international conferences.

Brandy Sord, Caleigh Griffin, and Lora Borges are students at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Each will graduate with a bachelor's degree in healthcare management in December 2008.

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Questions

Instructions: Choose the answer that is most correct.

1. Factors that contribute to the proper functioning of a radiology department include:
 - a. Efficient employee recruitment
 - b. Effective retention efforts
 - c. Workforce diversity
 - d. All of the above
2. Major disadvantages associated with not finding the right person for the job the first time, include:
 - a. Recompensing for lost productivity
 - b. Correcting learning curve errors
 - c. Disciplining and termination efforts
 - d. All of the above
3. Hiring a candidate that adds strategic diversity to the radiology department requires a(an):
 - a. Human resource department
 - b. Structured employee selection program
 - c. Elaborate advertising campaign
 - d. None of the above
4. Research has shown that face-to-face interviews produce good results in terms of predicting the future performance of a prospective employee.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. To effectively recruit employees with diverse personalities, it is necessary to use:
 - a. Objective measurement tools in the form of personality tests
 - b. Face-to-face interviews with all qualified candidates
 - c. Traditional forms of candidate evaluation
 - d. Standardized employment application procedures
6. In the regular business industry, approximately 65% of organizations use personality assessments as part of their employee:
 - a. Promotion procedures
 - b. Background check procedures
 - c. Selection processes
 - d. None of the above
7. To ensure adequate diversity within the department:
 - a. Evaluating the personality of potential new hires is sufficient
 - b. The results of potential new hires should be correlated with the personality assessments of existing employees
 - c. Evaluating the personality of existing employees only is sufficient
 - d. None of the above



- 8. Within a department, personality conflicts among employees can expand to larger problems which can often negatively impact:**
- Patient care
 - Productivity
 - Employee retention
 - All of the above
- 9. Research has shown that over 60% of all managers tend to hire people similar to themselves who register on personality assessments as:**
- Sensing-feeling personalities
 - Controlling-responding personalities
 - Thinkers-judgers
 - Dominant-extroverts
- 10. Using personality testing enables managers to form work teams that have:**
- Personality characteristics which strengthen each other
 - Varying educational levels
 - A wide variety of experience and knowledge
 - All of the above
- 11. The best candidate for a position in the department should be a good match in which of the following three areas?**
- Personal experience, age, and level of education
 - Personality traits, personal experience, and potential team chemistry
 - Level of education, personal experience, and professional experience
 - None of the above
- 12. Most experts agree that if there is one area that can be sacrificed it is the:**
- Level of education
 - Personality traits
 - Potential team chemistry
 - Personal experience
- 13. Which of the following is true based on previous research regarding hiring decisions?**
- 95% are based on personality
 - 5% are based on qualifications
 - 100% are based on previous experience
 - Both a and b
- 14. The most common personality test available is the:**
- Meyers Briggs Typology Instrument
 - Five Factor Model
 - Miller Analogies Test
 - Stanford-Benet Intelligence Scale
- 15. Of the following tests, which is known for describing individual dispositions and predicting a broad range of behavior?**
- Miller Analogies Test
 - Meyers Briggs Typology Instrument
 - Five Factor Model
 - None of the above
- 16. At first glance, which of the following may be considered disadvantages to using personality assessments?**
- Time required to conduct the tests and the associative costs
 - Selecting the appropriate test and securing a testing site
 - Demonstrating the reliability and validity of the test
 - None of the above
- 17. The management challenge for radiology managers to build a diverse radiology department is found in finding the exact mix of personalities which work best for the individual department.**
- True
 - False
- 18. Another key consideration in establishing a diverse radiology department is that:**
- Prospective employees must be processed through the human resources department
 - Current employees must be willing to share the results of their personality tests with each other
 - Current employees must be willing to try to understand each other's personality strengths and weaknesses
 - Both b and c
- 19. Some employees might consider personality assessment to be an invasion of privacy.**
- True
 - False
- 20. According to the experts, what percent of the hiring decision should be based on the results of personality assessments?**
- 10%
 - 20%
 - 60%
 - 80%



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