

# vital

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Volume 3 : Issue 4 : March / April 2010

SERVICE DESK & IT  
SUPPORT SHOW ISSUE



## High-flying service

Supplying IT know-how  
to the global airline industry

### Problem management

How important is the Service Desk?

### The fine art of negotiation

It's time to get organised



# Team management and motivation

**One of the key themes at this year's Service Desk and IT Support show is 'Team Management and Motivation'. Colin Shewry, Birkman Method consultant at Dennis Adams Associates explores the benefit of a personality profiling tool in understanding motivation and developing teams.**

**M**OST IT managers accept that managing IT is as much about managing people as it is about the technology. Unfortunately, they are often given little opportunity to develop skills for managing and motivating people, other than that learnt through the hard knocks of doing the job, the sink or swim approach to development. Increasingly though, some managers are looking for help in accelerating their management development.

We all have our own perceptual filters through which we see the world. Even as you start to read the following example, you will find it hard not to make assumptions about the characters coloured by your perceptual filters.

## The ops manager and his system admin

Ops manager Bill had a row with his Sys-Admin team leader John. Bill had asked John for a deployment to be done by the end of play today and he refused.

John is always delaying things, it's not that John is slow and Bill does recognise that sometimes John has some really creative ideas, but when Bill asks him to take action, John always delays. Bill is finding this intolerable and is considering disciplinary action.

Then a friend introduced him to a coach who used a personality profiling tool. The results begin to explain why the conflicts occurred.

Bill's profile shows his natural position is to focus on the task and to make it happen now. Making things happen is how he goes about

his work, he is an action orientated manager. More than that, his external and internal motivators are also centred on getting the task done. It is therefore not surprising that when others appear to delay action, he gets frustrated. Bill knows he has to sort out today's critical issue, even if it means having a bigger problem next week, after all, there might not be a next week if we don't act today.

John's profile shows his natural position is focused more on the impact of actions on people as well as how the task fits strategically. John is naturally creative and will think through the options before taking action. John knows that the future is just as important as today and will always choose to delay if he believes that his team will have a bigger mess to clear up next week as a result of hasty action today.

## Do it right or do it now?

These two profiles have considerable creative tension between them and account for much of the 'do it now' versus the 'do it right' battles. Both views are valid and actually complement each other, but without understanding why and how they can work together, Bill will eventually decide that John is always being difficult and will need John to move on.

In turn, John will see Bill as short-termist and not caring about the impact of his decisions on the team, which is translated to, 'does not care about his team'. It is the team that always has to sort out the mess of Bill's thoughtless insistence on immediate action.

With help from the coach, the fires between Bill and John were put out and they learnt to



understand and value the differences between them. Bill now uses John's creativity to get ahead of problems, bringing action forward and changing the order of actions. This reduced the number of times actions became critical. John now knows that sometimes Bill needs action now, but can explain to the team why it's now and how they can sort the quick fix out later.

It's perhaps not surprising then that the use of established tools such as personality profiles is beginning to take a foot-hold, as forward-thinking managers realise the benefits of really understanding their team and are provided with strategies for capitalising on the diversity within that team.

### Can personality profiling really help?

While it is true to say that some people remain sceptical and hesitant to engage with what some see as psycho-babble, increasingly managers are looking for anything that will equip them to do their job more easily. Certainly there are many big and small companies that use profiling tools and see them as invaluable.

When personality profiling tools are introduced, people go through a process starting with anxiety about what it will show, through scorn at the questions; astonishment at the results; desire to compare; anxiety that my insecurities might show and finally genuine enthusiasm in the tool.

However, it is not a fire and forget solution, it needs to be carefully introduced and a minimum knowledge base needs to be established with a strong support package to provide value over time and real changes.

Coaching is a series of private conversations, which enables an individual or team to improve their performance faster and further, than an individual or team could achieve on their own. It is a powerful supporting framework that will keep the profile tool alive until a sufficient knowledgebase is established to make it self-sustaining.

### Motivation and behaviour

There are many aspects to motivation and its influence on behaviour. Pay, promotion, success, self esteem, credibility, our moral framework and even our dreams and desires, all impact on our behaviour. "Tell me how you will measure my performance and I will tell you how I will behave"

Profiling tools are a tangible way of seeing the relationship between internal and external motivators and usual productive behaviour. The external motivators (Birkman calls them 'Interests') give a good understanding of the type of things that will energise and motivate us. However, they are secondary to the internal motivators (Birkman calls these 'Needs'). This is important because if peoples' internal needs are met over time, they will behave in their usual productive way.

Conversely, if those internal needs are not met over time, then people are likely to exhibit counter-productive stress behaviour and long-term motivators disappear over the horizon. The Birkman Method is the only tool that reveals these motivators and the relationship between them. (See Fig1).

### Understanding what is going on

Taking just one aspect as an example, the Birkman profile analyses the way we relate to people in a group. We know statistically that 80 percent of people will be seen by others as usually very sociable, outgoing and friendly. It is part of our nature to treat people in the same way as we see them behave, and so we are generally sociable and friendly back. At the same time, we also know that most people's internal motivators require them to have time alone with a few close friends and minimal group meetings.

So when a member of the team suddenly withdraws, becomes a bit unfriendly and avoids meetings, they may be simply expressing their internal need for time alone. This insight gives you a practical way of exploring why they are withdrawing and by addressing this you will see them return to their usual productive self.

### Developing people

The IT industry in general has a reputation for investing in technical training (database administration courses etc), but typically it tends not to invest in the 'people skills' needed for managing teams

Managing and motivating teams is incredibly complex. Although we all know some basics that can encourage or deflate a colleague, a personality profile tool, with coaching and support, does give a much clearer understanding. Data on a whole team gives a real insight in to the team dynamics, the contrasting motivations and behaviours and how to capitalise on them. **VITAL**

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