



## Chief Executive Notes

In this issue of *Talents*, we discuss the effectiveness and worth of personality assessment and how to find the right tool that suits your unique needs for HR decisions, from selection to promotion.

Additionally, we are glad to share our thoughts on how to project an immediate professional image mastering the key factors upon which people judge you.

Enjoy, and let us know your thoughts.



## Feature Report

### Personality Assessment: Myth, Truth and Bottom Line (Part 1/2)

#### *The Secrets on Selecting the Right System that Suits Your Needs*

Personality assessment has increasingly been recognized for its value in people-job matching, in predicting behavioral styles and success potential, and in accurately identifying needs for training, coaching, and counseling.

But how exactly does one go about choosing the best tool, make it work for the organization, and get the most out of it? Before answering that question, we need to be clear on what personality assessment is and is not, so as to avoid the myths and traps that cause confusion and inaction.

[Learn more](#)



## In Action

### Projecting an Immediate Professional Image

Without even saying a single word, people quickly judge the type of person they think you are based on your appearance. On the phone, a prospective client may take just a few seconds to do determine if they want to do business with you, and most decisions about whether you are trustworthy are made within a few minutes of meeting. Thus, it seems rather accurate that "you don't get a second chance to make a first impression."

[Learn more](#)



## On The Record


### Dr. James Song ITV-Asia Interview on Measuring & Developing Success Potential

The host of "Doing Business in China", Edward Gwinn has invited James Song, CEO of Waterville International, to discuss how personal & professional potential success can be measured and developed.

[Click here to watch the interview](#)



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# Personality Assessment: Myth, Truth and the Bottom line (Part 1/2)

*The Secrets on Selecting the Right System that Meets Your Talent Management Needs*

**By Dr. James Song, CEO of Waterville International Inc.**

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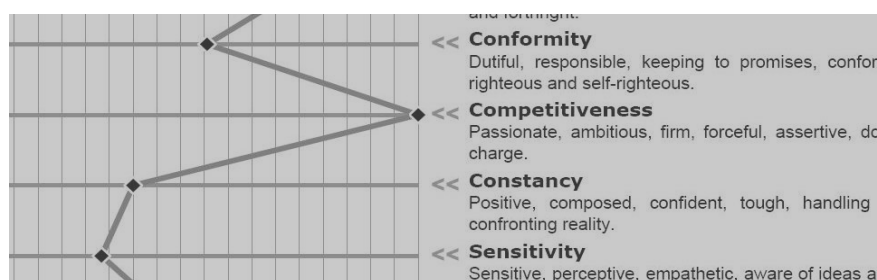
Personality assessment has increasingly been recognized for its value in job matching, in predicting behavioral styles and success potential, and in accurately identifying needs for training, coaching, and counseling. It provides a vantage point for optimizing individual performance, identifying and developing talents with high potential, retaining key associates, rationalizing strategic workforce planning, and thereby enhancing corporate efficiency.

Yet personality assessment is not equally appreciated by all. Opinions differ as to its effectiveness and worth. Enthusiasts find it a time saver. Those who are doubtful claim that experience is far more assuring. And a few have been somehow disappointed after an unsuccessful initial trial. Most remain at a loss.

I often hear executives, particularly HR friends, complain how hard it is to find the right tool that suits their unique needs for candidate selection. Though variety should be a good thing, the number of choices can be so overwhelming that choosing a right system can become a project in its own right. Caught between crisis level talent turnover and the lack of suitable evaluation systems, managers often make uninformed and delayed decision on an assessment tool, which is unlikely to achieve the expected results.

Here is the good news: personality assessment remains a most cost-effective tool for talent evaluation. Candidates selected through personality assessments tend to be better performers than those selected solely based on resumes and interviews. But how exactly does one go about choosing the best tool, make it work for the organization, and get the most out of it?

Before answering that question, we need to be clear on what personality assessment is and is not, so as to avoid the myths and traps that cause confusion and inaction. Below we will examine 12 common myths and then discuss the 10 criteria for selecting a superior assessment tool.



## **Myth 1: Personality assessment is not all that powerful**

*Truth: Personality is a far more effective predictor of behavioral competencies, level of productivity and engagement, and job-career success.*

Perfect candidates are hard to come by. Naturally hiring managers want to pursue those with managerial and technical experiences, which nowadays are in extremely low supply. But experience alone does not lead to excellent performance and long term engagement. Seasoned executives all know that most people are brought on board because of their experiences, but few leave their jobs because of lack of experience or technical skills. Actually, it is the opposite that torments employers the most: new hires start job hopping once they have gained experience and training on the job.

The problems with experience are that it can be made-believe or even made up, and it may not be associated with the types of strengths needed for the assignment. Innate strength has to do with personal drive, and drive largely lies in the personality, which is stable, unique, and hardly possible to make over if assessed using a robust system. Experience can be gained, capabilities can be developed, and track records can be built, but the right personality can not be easily altered or pretended.

Relying solely on stated experience and capabilities risks rejecting candidates with excellent personal qualities. Imagine how an individual with superior persuasive power can quickly get up to speed with selling, training, and presenting. What a pity it would be to reject that candidate just because she or he is considered a rookie!

The bottom line: It is not sufficient for a candidate to present an impressive list of titles on the resume and say all the right things during interviews. Motivation and potential are the real key.

## **Myth 2: Personality assessment should determine everything.**

*Truth: Though personality is critical, it needs to be placed in the right context.*

Though personality assessment helps rationalize the evaluation process, it is naïve to place all the bets on one single indicator. In the selection process, personality assessment is used to identify motivation, evaluate competencies, and predict success potential. Powerful as it may be, personality assessment alone is not enough without a clear understanding of the responsibilities to be carried out, the competencies sought after, and the work life environment involved. Furthermore, the right background and preparedness are also very important. The key only works if matched to the right lock.

The bottom line: Personality assessment tells what kind of person you are considering, and helps assure a strong candidacy. It must be considered alongside with background, suitability and professional preparedness.

### **Myth 3: All assessment tools are the same.**

*Truth: The assessment tool world has its fair shares of the good, the bad, and the ugly.*

There is a large array of assessment systems on the market, including personality typing or categorization, behavioral measurement, attitude assessment, and aptitude evaluation. These systems emphasize different areas of a candidate's quality. They all share two things in common. First, such assessment systems can suffer from the "social desirability" problem. Consequently, test takers tend to give conforming answers to cater to apparent evaluative objectives instead of truthful responses. The resultant "surface validity" has caused some user companies to give up on assessment altogether.

Second, those tools may not be true personality profiling systems. Personality profiling is the only valid method for precisely identifying psychometric characteristics. In contrast, personality typing offers limited resolution and explaining power, even though it can be easy to follow and highly entertaining. Unsophisticated shoppers tend to select a superficially impressive system, only to be disappointed later.

Bottom line: Decision makers should develop adequate knowledge on personality assessment and be clear what is really needed, so as to avoid investing in the wrong tools. When the scope is narrowed to personality profiling, there are not so many good tools to choose from.

### **Myth 4: The more/fewer test questions, the better.**

*Truth: There are rational reasons for the number of questions in a questionnaire.*

Some HR professionals feel that since budget is spent, longer tests would be of better value. This is in fact untrue. Having too many questions can negatively impact a candidate, causing impatience, unwillingness to comply, and the tendency to respond erratically. An extra large number of questions on the same scales may become plain repetitive wordplay of basically the same items, giving misleading, albeit pleasurable, results showing spurious validity.

On the other hand, having too few questions can reduce amplitude, resolution, and robustness, as any small change in response would throw off the real outcome of the entire test, thus defeating the purpose. To be manageable and effectual, the appropriate length of a questionnaire tends to range from 70 to 130. Equally important is the length of time needed to complete a questionnaire through one sitting. Needless to say, in today's global business, time is a real premium. To be valid, each test should take under one hour in one sitting.

The bottom line: The number of questions should serve the evaluative purpose and objectives. The time length should be appropriate to ensure compliance and validity.

### **Myth 5: It is best to use an established popular Western system**

*Truth: An inadequately localized Western system may cause more problems than solve them.*

Surprisingly many HR professionals believe that only systems that have long been established in the West, particular the US, deserve to be taken seriously. Ironically, most of them also firmly believe that cultural differences cause serious issues. Cultural gaps can simply be too large to be patched up through translation. Assumptions, concepts, notions, issues, realities, priorities and values could be too far apart to translate accurately.

Many old systems are outdated and cannot reflect the latest progress in psychometric research, and in the contemporary work life in a global economy. Furthermore, selecting a Western tool risks measuring Chinese minds using Western cultural norms, and thus falling victim to group thinking.

The bottom line: A better strategy is to look at each localized (not just translated) tool carefully to determine whether it suits your needs. And the selection is very limited.

### **Myth 6: It is best to use a system developed in and for China**

*Truth: An effectively system should be based on universal constructs of human psychology and should be professionally localized.*

Common factors shared by mankind exist as basic building blocks of human psychology. These basic traits transcend cultural differences and remain constant, but in the meantime are proliferated through culture, as shared psychometric attributes are decoded under the influence of cultural differences and expressed uniquely as distinctive attitudinal and behavioral styles.

The purpose of personality profiling is not only to define behavioral responses in different cultures, but also to discover the basic inherent motivational elements driving the behavior. Shared human biology and socioeconomic parameters result in consistent and distinct psychometric constructs, which serve as the basis for personality analysis.

Bottom line: All premium personality profiling tools is designed to predict and explain basic human behavior, using the universal constructs as the common denominator.



*(Feature Report to be continued in next Talents issue)*

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# Projecting an Immediate Professional Image

By Michael J. Rosenthal, Managing Director of Waterville International Inc.

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Without even saying a single word, people quickly judge the type of person they think you are based on your appearance. In fact a recent Princeton University study indicates that we form a lasting impression of other people within one tenth of a second. On the phone, a prospective client may take just a few seconds to do determine if they want to do business with you, and most decisions about whether you are trustworthy are made within a few minutes of meeting. Thus, it seems rather accurate that “you don’t get a second chance to make a first impression.”

Whether we like it or not, these snap judgments about image affect businesses every day, from hiring to sourcing related decisions. Even when people take more time to make an assessment, the image you present is critical in conveying your qualifications and abilities. In fact, people generally judge us more on our exterior than what we actually say, and studies show that people who have a nice-looking appearance earn more than those who do not care as much about their image. This means that people who may not be as qualified as you may get a job or business simply because they know how to market themselves.

Your image is a combination of appearance, attitude, accessories and various other factors which people judge all the time, and includes small details, like if your tie is straight or hair is out of place. Before you go running to a professional image consultant, consider the following eight suggestions to effectively improve your image.



1. **Be Prepared:** Before you walk into any business meeting, job interview or make a phone call, put in writing what you plan to say and do. The greater the preparation you have the more you will be relaxed and confident. Keep in mind that people make judgments as soon as you step through the door, so be ready! Unlike sports, in business we usually do not get a chance to warm up.

2. **Your Message:** Take time to create your unique selling proposition which you can clearly and concisely convey. Since people have limited memories and time, a properly organized message can make you memorable and look prepared. Why would a client want to do business with someone who does not even know what they have to offer?
  
3. **Be Positive:** Everything you say can be phrased in a negative or a positive way. For instance, someone asks about your business. Who wants to do business with the guy who responds with: “During the holidays, business is really slow.” You can just as easily say: “The holidays are a great opportunity to review our existing clients and focus on providing them better service.” Show a positive passion about your business and it will generate excitement in others.
  
4. **Smile:** One of the most important business tools that you have is your smile. Simply smiling at others can influence their attitude and make them want to spend more time with you. When was the last time you looked forward to a meeting with someone who has a scowl on their face?
  
5. **Appearance:** Conservative appearance in business is always acceptable. As a general rule, a dark colored jacket with subtle patterns, a white shirt/blouse, with a colorful accessory fits most every occasion. Clothing should be well fitting – not too loose or tight – without any wrinkles or unpleasant smells. Ensure you are well groomed, with your hair out of your eyes. Sticking out of the crowd with a strange patterned jacket may be great if you want to be invited to lots of parties, but don’t expect this will translate into job opportunities.
  
6. **Accessories:** Keep accessories to a minimum. As a general rule, carry one professional regular size leather bag/briefcase and no more than five total accessories, including watch, scarf, earrings, etc. Too many accessories are distracting and unprofessional.
  
7. **Practice and Peer Review:** While you may think you look good in front of a mirror, or have written the perfect speech, people all have different perspectives and it is difficult to be objective when it comes to yourself. Ask colleagues, friends and family to give you honest

feedback, and be prepared to incorporate suggestions which are helpful. There simply is no substitute for practicing and having others review.

8. **Be Organized:** There is nothing worse than someone spending five minutes looking for their business card, only to tell you they must have run out. It makes one wonder: “if I were your client, would you forget my file, or my phone number?”
  
9. **Show Confidence:** It is important to give other people the impression that you have confidence in yourself and your product. Stand up straight, speak with a clear voice, have a good command of your subject, use positive language and appropriate body language.

It is the combination of these factors upon which people will judge you, so make sure to master each. You might look great, but if you seem disorganized and can not find your business card, that is what people will remember. Take the time to consider and improve your professional image, and there will be a noticeable difference in how people treat you.

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