

Online Resource makes for Easy Star Search

A job applicant in Chicago fills out a personality trait and job skills profile and, with the touch of a button, an 11-page Assessment and Development Report is in the hands of a potential employer in Atlanta. Using graphs that are created automatically, the manager compares the applicant's profile to that of his overall team and company culture. Looks like a good fit. The report also compares the applicant's profile to those of the company's top performers. It matches well, with the exception of two shortcomings, but fear not! The report offers both management tips and training recommendations. Looks reasonable. An offer may be made.

Of course, no true assessment of a person can be made using hard data and graphs alone. However, the day of web-based human resources tools has arrived and the benefits include a more fine-tuned system, ease of use, greater depth of analysis and more time for managers to spend with people.

TalentQuest by Corporate Psychology Resources (CPR) offers one of the first and most complete online services for human resources manage-

ment. TalentQuest's data-based evaluation system provides companies — from small, family-owned businesses to Fortune 500 corporations — with services such as performance appraisals, 360 feedback and selection assessments. The system can stand alone or be used in tandem with consulting services from CPR's psychologists and executive coaches. Either way, the result is a process that speeds data collection, reduces paperwork, adds to employee morale with consistent and clear feedback and provides a higher return on investment in employees at all levels.

"We have already seen the use of quantifiable testing pay off in the past 15 years. Adding technology is the next phase," says Dr. Frank M. Merritt, president of CPR. "The information thus becomes more readily accessible, enabling data mining, so we have the ability to query for specific traits, issues, etc. or manipulate information for more complete analysis."

For example, a company needs to fill a sudden opening with a goal-oriented salesperson from within its ranks who is ready to take on a leadership

role. TalentQuest can both pull a list of qualified candidates flexible enough to relocate in a hurry and also make training and management recommendations to maximize their potential.

"TalentQuest reports provide more than raw data," says Larry Gardner, vice president of human resources for Cousins Properties Inc., which has used the online service for more than a year. "They take information about a person and a position and turn it into an actionable management and development plan. Also, TalentQuest's price structure lowered the cost so that we can use the best HR tools for all employment levels."

TalentQuest's online array of selection, measurement and development tools are licensed to CPR clients and priced according to the number of employees. The system begins with performance appraisals and one-time personality assessments that use scales to measure the problem-solving skills, work styles, job-related abilities and personality traits of employees or candidates. The multi-perspective 360 evaluation provides added feedback from a selection of

peers, managers, subordinates, customers, vendors and suppliers. Another benefit is that it is completely anonymous.

Data gleaned from these profiles can then be compared to a consistent company standard reflected in the Peak Performer Profile and Competency Model that CPR develops for its customers. These provide an overview of factors that contribute to successful job performance customized to company and industry norms and reflecting a business's culture and goals.

The more tools a client uses, the greater the depth

Last year's transition from a paper-and-pencil system to the web-based TalentQuest was very smooth, according to Gardner. "The benefits were felt quickly. The system is easier to use than paper and provides better information. We get back detailed reports with recommendations for development at a high level of confidentiality. In the process, our evaluation tools became more formalized, providing greater consistency in hiring, succession and development decisions."

CPR estimates a six-week period for a mid-sized corpo-

tronic storage format and the ease of reviewing content. Standardization of the system has also improved overall morale within Flag, says Evans, because expectations are clear and the reports support each employee's personal development.

Neither Evans nor Gardner were motivated by cutting costs, but the implementation of TalentQuest has provided some quantifiable benefits. Gardner estimates that TalentQuest has reduced the performance appraisal process for managers by one-third, perhaps up to forty

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and breadth of information TalentQuest provides. Other services, including Development Planning, Succession Planning, Objectives Management and Organizational Surveys, will be available online in April.

“We use TalentQuest toward the end of our selection process. It ensures that information from interviews and references is consistent with the candidate's strengths and abilities. The online performance appraisals provide rich data on individuals and groups with a high degree of ease,” says Gardner.

ration to transition to TalentQuest, a process that includes customization, training and implementation.

TalentQuest's online availability convinced Joe Evans, chairman and CEO of Flag Financial Corporation, to make the transition “because we are committed to improving our system of evaluating potential employees but are geographically spread out.”

Evans' favorite features include the tracking mechanism —persistent reminders e-mailed automatically to managers when employee Performance Evaluations are due — the efficient elec-

minutes per employee — a significant time savings for a company with a large employee base. Gardner also believes TalentQuest helps him reduce overall turnover rate.

“The TalentQuest process, used in conjunction with interviews and references, eliminates variables and assures a better quality hire and cultural fit,” he says. “At the same time, candidates get more information about what our culture is like and can make a better decision themselves. That inevitably gets them off to a faster and ultimately more successful start.” **BtoB**