

Seeing Potential Across the Talent Pool

Potential is like art. We think we know it when we see it.

Sometimes we do. But if we're looking in the wrong direction, or potential doesn't look the way we expect it to—for example if it's younger, older, shorter, or behind a beard or a head scarf—would we see it? Would we even look?

Heuristics—the rules of thumb people use to make judgments quickly and efficiently—serve us well in some situations, for example, in judging art. Likewise our biases for one style instead of another are useful in some areas. But when it comes to recognizing potential, there are strong arguments for doing more.

With increased demand draining away an already shrinking talent pool, and poor talent decisions costing millions of dollars, organizations need to improve decision making. Until recently, there were few resources available to strengthen the odds of making more informed talent decisions. In fact, a study by the Corporate Leadership Council found that fully 50 percent of boss nominations end up being incorrect.

Over the years, managers have latched on to whatever tools were available—intelligence tests, personality profiles, performance assessments. The problem is that none of these measure *potential*. Just as the evil Valdemort in the Harry Potter series is referred to as “*He who must not be named*,” potential is often that which cannot be seen.

Recent research by PDI bears this out. In a new study, mid-level leaders (MML) who had been identified by their organizations as high potential were compared with leaders who were not identified as high potential. They were virtually identical on cognitive ability, personality traits, and experience measures, and they performed similarly during assessment centers designed to measure leadership capability. Clearly, potential is difficult to identify.

As the battle for talent continues to intensify, a comprehensive system for identifying high potentials has become critical. PDI is addressing this need with TalentView® of Potential™ a systematic, data-based approach used to identify high-potential talent. Using multiple tools and processes, it goes beyond past performance and results.

TalentView of Potential measures how results are achieved, the capacity for taking on broader roles, exposure to key developmental experiences, and compatibility of career goals and aspirations. It provides a common set of criteria to evaluate leadership potential.

Most important, TalentView of Potential broadens our vision of what potential is. In a world where talent is the most valuable resource, ensuring quality and depth in the talent pool is truly mission critical.