

Helping Companies Hire for Attitude

Over the last decade, E·A·S·I·Consult[®] has assisted organizations small and large in taking a scientific approach to employee selection.

Our focus has been on screening candidates for the [right work attitude](#) - attitude that fits the job *and* the culture of the organization. We often combine this with some measure of technical or problem-solving skills. However, our emphasis is on taking an objective look at work attitude.

It began when CPI Corporation (formerly Sears Portrait Studios) approached us with the challenge to help them hire better employees who would excel in customer service, teamwork and sales.

At that time, each studio was managed by a lead photographer and supported by sales associates. The associates were typically part-time employees working their way through college. They quickly learned the technical side of the job but too many failed to exhibit strong work habits. There were complaints of a lack of attention to customers and even failure to regularly show up for work.

What We Did

E·A·S·I·Consult psychologists studied the job and learned the culture of Sears Portrait Studios. We asked studio managers to participate as subject matter experts (SMEs) in a job study. Using a well-established technique - content validity - we identified critical work tasks and the *work attitudes* necessary for portrait studio associates to be successful.

We then developed and validated a questionnaire - the [Work Styles Predictor[®] \(WSP[®]\)](#) - to be used in screening applicants for the job. The *WSP* consisted of questions that described common job situations, including interacting with customers, participating in sales, working with a team, and facing challenges to arrive at work on time.

Applicants were asked to choose what they would do from a list of alternative behaviors. Correct answers were previously identified by a second group of Sear Portrait Studio SMEs and E·A·S·I·Consult psychologists, using a structured rating approach.

The Results

Hiring employees for attitude in addition to skills had a positive impact in the studios. Shortly after implementing the *WSP* at Sears Portrait Studios, studio and district managers responded.

Reactions included statements such as, “We’ve needed this for a long time” and “I can really see the difference in high scoring candidates.” But we went a step further to evaluate the value of hiring for attitude. We collected Personnel Ranking Forms used internally by CPI to evaluate employee performance.

High-scoring applicants demonstrated stronger sales skills, followed supervisor instructions more often, and provided better customer service!



Work Attitude Assessment Expands

We soon began receiving requests from companies across different industries, beginning with retail and expanding to manufacturing, healthcare, financial services, public services, food processing and veterinarian science.

Here are just a few of the work attitude measures to have positive impacts on work performance across industries: Quality Orientation; Safety Initiative; Productivity Drive; Dependability; Adaptability; Team Orientation; Achievement; Customer Centric; and Patient Focus.

In Summary

It seems that organizations turn to the assessment of work attitude as an afterthought. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year on employee engagement, job satisfaction and work commitment surveys with the hope of increasing job productivity and product or service quality (*Jacob, Morgan, 2017*).

In many cases, the assumption has been that attitude toward work is determined by management practices or work environment factors alone.

At E·A·S·I·Consult, we believe that employees bring their work attitude with them and are further influenced by working conditions (e.g., level of pay, hours of work, and physical working conditions). Empirical evidence that job satisfaction alone is related to *affect* as much as to objective job conditions is provided by over two decades of research by psychologists (*Muchinsky and Howes, 2018, p.319*).

In my article last month, I noted four antecedents that contribute to work attitude: personality, motivation, values and interests. They're all very stable human attributes (constructs) and each are important to the establishment of attitude toward work situations.

So, doesn't it make sense that "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure?"

This is not to say that attitude toward work is unchangeable. The workplace environment certainly influences all of us in one way or another. But starting with the wrong work attitude and trying to turn that around is a steep hill to climb and perhaps one that is completely unclimbable.

I had the pleasure of working with a director of training, development and employee selection at a Fortune 100 company who often stated that if he had \$100 to spend, he would spend \$99 on selection and \$1 on training.

Hiring employees for attitude should be your "99-dollar" investment!

About the Author

David Smith, PhD, is the president and CEO at E·A·S·I·Consult®. E·A·S·I·Consult works with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and mid-sized corporations to provide customized Talent Management solutions. E·A·S·I·Consult specialties include individual assessment, online employment testing, survey research, competency modeling, leadership development, executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, online structured interviews, and EEO hiring compliance. The company is a leader in the field of providing accurate information about people through professional assessment. To learn more about E·A·S·I·Consult, visit <https://easiconsult.com> or email ContactUs@easiconsult.com or call 800.922.EASI.