

News to Use

Holiday stress is a hot topic this time of year, but it's a year-round issue. Left untreated, stress can lead to increased absenteeism, office conflict and employee mistakes, as well as drop-offs in client service.

Over 85% of U.S. workers say they experience job stress. Half say the stress manifests itself as "extreme fatigue" or "feeling out of control."

The causes of workplace stress?

- 54% say "job demands."
- 20% say "co-workers."
- 10% say "the boss."
- 8% say "layoff concerns."

Source: The Perfect Labor Storm, by Ira Wolfe

Product Spotlight

• *Managing for Success*

All 16 *Managing for Success* reports use the DISC model to offer employers user-friendly explanations of how the various behavioral styles impact an individual's interaction in a given situation.

Reports focus on topics like sales, customer service, general behavior, relationships — even study habits! The reports, which range from 7 to 22 pages, are proven over 85% accurate.

(The reports are not recommended as a stand-alone benchmark for success.)

Hire smarter, not harder, in 2005

Tips and tools to take the guesswork out of interviewing

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With 2005 fast approaching, it's never too soon to start planning a viable growth strategy for the new year. And while we often focus on marketing strate-

gies and sales goals, we too often neglect our procedures for hiring new staff and promoting existing employees. If we're not prepared to deal proactively with those issues, though, it's all too easy to become sandbagged on the path to success.

Ever hired someone who wowed you during the interview . . . and then either underperformed or stirred up conflict with other employees? Ever promoted someone from within . . . only to find they weren't as good at the new job as they were at the old one? Ever promoted a hard worker . . . and discovered they were a terrible supervisor? Ever taken a short cut in hiring because



you either needed someone ASAP, or because you felt you couldn't afford to spend all that time interviewing prospects?

If any of those problems sound familiar, rest assured that you're not alone. Companies of all sizes frequently hire in haste and repent at leisure — over reduced efficiency, lost opportunities, increased workplace conflict and lower revenues. The fact is, your employees are your most important assets. Take care who you let in the door.

If you're planning on adding staff in

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DISC system has long, distinguished history

Humans have been trying to figure each other out pretty much from the beginning. Nearly 2500 years ago, the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles theorized the existence of certain personality archetypes, or "temperaments." The physician Hippocrates identified four such temperaments, each tied to the dominance of one of the body's four observed fluids: blood, phlegm, and black and yellow bile.

A couple of millennia later, Carl Jung oriented personality around four basic behaviors: thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. Jung believed that what we perceive as a person's personality is really a

combination of these traits. He further divided people into two broad categories, extroverts and introverts.

Across the Atlantic, meanwhile, Harvard-educated American psychologist William Moulton Marston was formulating his DISC model in his 1928 book, *The Emotions of Ordinary People*. Marston theorized that all people can be understood in terms of four observable "elementary behavior units": dominance, inducement, steadiness and compliance.

(Besides pioneering the DISC model, Marston was also a key player in the devel-

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DISC system rooted in history, psychology

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opment of the modern lie detector, as well as the creator of Wonder Woman.)

In the early 50s, Walter Clarke developed the Activity Vector Analysis, the first instrument modeled on DISC. Clarke refined Marston's theory: dominance became drive, which measured how a person responds to challenges, and inducement became influence, which is how a person responds to other people. The other two categories remained basically the same. Steadiness measures response to change, and compliance (or constraints) measures a person's response to rules and authority.

In the last half century, the DISC model has spun off more than 50 variants. Some use varying methods to measure behavioral styles, such as color preference or social interaction. Some have expanded the number of styles, or given them different names, or opted for some other distinguishing feature. But all have their roots in DISC, which has consistently proven itself a reliable indicator of a person's temperament and motivation.

Avoid rushing into bad hires in 2005

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2005, here are some tips for hiring the best fit for the job:

- List all the duties of the position, and make sure both you and the candidates understand them.
- Write ads designed to attract as many applicants as possible. While that may lengthen the hiring process, it also gives you a wider pool to choose from.
- During interviews, ask both general and specific behavioral ("tell me about a time when . . .") questions drawn directly from the position's duties.
- When considering internal candidates for promotion, clearly identify the skills needed. What in an employee's history gives you reason to believe they would succeed in the new position? What skills have they demonstrated?

To maximize hiring success while minimizing hassle, use a third party to help write the interview questions and job description and set up an effective annual review process. Best of all, use a variety

of assessments (some of which can be conducted over the internet for efficient filtering) to really gain insights into candidates' motivations, interaction style and behavioral tendencies. It comes down to avoiding hiring a fantastic people person for a sales position — only to find out that they tend to give away your profit in their eagerness to get a sale.

Assessments also help identify weaker areas that need improvement. If people have the right motivation and the right behavioral style for a position, they can certainly be trained. But if they're a bad fit from the start — something that may not be apparent during an interview — they're never going to excel.

Even if you're only looking to fill an entry-level position, there are a number of low-cost assessments to gauge risk factors for absenteeism, sexual harassment, workplace aggression, dishonesty and tendency for drug, alcohol or computer abuse. Wouldn't you rather know that up front?