

News to Use

If you're not concerned about employee retention, you should be. Consider these numbers:

- 83% of workers say they plan to look for a new job when the economy improves.
- 35% of "top performing" corporate employees are at "high risk" of leaving their jobs.
- 60% of workers feel pressured to work "too much."
- 56% say they are either "somewhat" or "completely" dissatisfied with their jobs.

Sources: SHRM, Sibson Consulting, Gallup, Monster.com

Product Spotlight

• Task Quotient

This new assessment helps identify a person's preferred task style (routine, troubleshooting, project or negotiable). It can also be used to define the kind of tasks a position typically requires, helping ensure that you match the right person with the right position.

This assessment can help reduce both workplace inefficiency and common morale problems associated with task procrastination.

For more information, please contact us at (512)278-1200.

Creating the clockwork office

Why even simple tasks don't get done . . . and how to fix it

By BARBARA METZGER
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Employee procrastination and inefficiency continually rank near the top of employers' list of workplace concerns. Why do some employees put off fairly simple, easily completed tasks? Why do some consistently miss deadlines, no matter how far in advance you set them? Why do some thrive in crisis situations while others fall apart?

Answering those questions is more than just a matter of idle curiosity. Inefficiency undermines profits, hurts workplace morale and results in higher employee turnover rates. But for all our focus on improving efficiency, how much do we really understand about what causes some people to be model

worker bees while others struggle?

One book in particular may offer some insights. *Breakthrough Performance*, by William Daniels, defines 4 types of common workplace tasks.

Routine tasks are highly predictable and have a low delay tolerance — in other words, we know these tasks are coming, and when they come they have to be ac-



complished immediately. Tasks associated
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Looking for the life of the party? Say hi to "I"

(Third article in a series about the DISC behavior assessment model.)

Since the 1950s, the DISC model has consistently proven a reliable and insightful tool for predicting workplace behavior. Although we tend to group people into one of the four dominant styles, the reality is that about 95% of us are a combination of styles.

In graphing the DISC model, the most observable behaviors show up as points either high above or far below the center line.

This month we're looking at "I": the measure of how a person interacts with others. High I's are friendly, positive, trusting

and optimistic. They usually speak loudly, use a lot of hand gestures and often wear bright colors. To them, strangers are simply friends they haven't met yet — a trait which often makes them the life of a party.

High I's have a number of strengths. Because they have a knack for making you feel like you've known them all your life, they are easy to talk to. Their warmth and outgoing nature can have a positive impact on team energy and morale, and they tend to be people and process oriented.

But high I's also have several areas that offer opportunities for improvement.

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In this issue:

- Eliminate workplace procrastination
- "I" is for Interaction
- Product spotlight: Who's best suited for a job's task types?

High "I's" help boost team morale, energy

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They aren't always good listeners, may overlook details and have a need to be liked. They may tell someone what they think the person wants to hear rather than the truth, and will respond emotionally if they feel rejected or encounter conflict.

Low I's, in contrast, are generally introverted, pessimistic, feel little need to communicate and don't care much about being liked. They value their personal space — unless you know them well, don't stand or sit closer than 3 feet.

If you encounter an angry high I customer, be sure to listen to all their issues. Don't get sidetracked by emotional displays. Reassure them that they are valued and ask what solution they think is fair.

The best way to handle a high I employee is to let them talk, reassure them that they are liked and appreciated, and empathize with their emotional responses. Create a friendly environment, and put them in positions involving client interaction. Help them use their strengths to create customer loyalty and service opportunities.

Solving workplace procrastination problems

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with monthly payroll are a good example of routine tasks.

Troubleshooting tasks also have a low delay tolerance, but they are highly unpredictable. These are generally the events that turn our workplace (and our schedules) upside down: a client shifting a deadline, computer crashes, etc.

Project tasks are both highly predictable and have a high delay tolerance (they don't have to be accomplished right away). These are the easiest to plan, but of course are subject to being interrupted by troubleshooting tasks.

Finally, Daniels defines **negotiable tasks** as those that have low predictability and a high delay tolerance. If these tasks become frequent, Daniels advises treating them as troubleshooting tasks. If they are infrequent, he says we should treat them as project tasks.

Everyone has a preferred task style. That's why some folks — the ones who love troubleshooting — thrive during a crisis and get bored with project tasks,

and why others — the ones who like routine tasks — can't adapt to anything that wasn't pre-planned and pre-scheduled.

Most jobs, unfortunately, require a mix of styles. And, people being people, we tend to gravitate towards our preferred style. Failing that, we'll even unconsciously create those tasks. That's why the natural troubleshooter may miss (or nearly miss) deadlines on routine or project tasks — doing so allows them to kick into the crisis or problem-solving mode they love.

The solution isn't so much trying to cram square pegs into round holes as much as it is matching the right people with the right positions. Don't put a natural troubleshooter in a job dominated by routine tasks — unless you want some self-generated crisis.

Another idea is shifting task responsibilities to create a more productive team. And, since most of our task avoidance happens unconsciously, just talking about it in the open can help create a higher tolerance for different tasks . . . and the people who love them.