

## Leadership Profiling in UK Plc: The Path to Clarity or Confusion?

For many organisations, identifying the behaviour contributing to management effectiveness is vital when fighting a recession - but a study by Pario HR Solutions indicates serious shortfalls in the leadership profiling methods used in UK Plc today.

According to the study, up to 45% of statements used in 360 degree feedback competency models, designed to assess and develop managers, fail to identify the most important behaviours and frequently obscure important factors. For example, one organization emphasized team working but skipped essential steps in building commitment. Another focused on a broad description of leadership when it needed to create insight and shared purpose. This means the models are not reliable, which raises worrying questions about their validity.

Pario's latest study is particularly relevant in the current climate of economic uncertainty when organizations want to strengthen Talent Management and identify the behaviours characterizing high performing managers (and, in turn, weed out examples of low performance). This is important for team productivity and strengthening practical leadership skills training. However, the findings suggest that many organizations currently make decisions on the basis of models that are fundamentally flawed.

In most cases, clustering related behaviours - such as those linked to 'effective problem solving' - provides the basis of a 'competency model'. These have now become the main reference point for recruitment, performance management and promotion decisions, as well as shaping courses to develop staff. However, the reliability and validity of these models is rarely tested. The findings of Pario's study are striking, highlighting a number of problems.

David Sharpley, chartered occupational psychologist and director of Pario HR Solutions, explains: "The research shows that these models are poorly defined. The behaviours they identify don't relate to the specified competency, and there's too much overlap and duplication. Important, underlying factors, such as actions that help build trust, aren't identified. This reduces the value in leadership development, talent management and coaching for organizational success.

*"A significant part of the problem stems from the popularity of this approach over the last 25 years. As a result, competency models have been created with little reference to relevant theory."*

However, it is now possible to run a 'health check' - known as competency validation - to review the psychometric properties of the competency models. This can be done using an online 360° feedback questionnaire completed by different groups of work associates, and backed by in-depth analysis. These tools highlight what the relevant groups, including external stakeholders, regard as significant.

David concludes: "Competency validation is a relatively new idea but one that offers considerable benefit to organizations. It helps ensure that their talent management and leadership development processes are focused on the most important aspects of behaviour and aren't using outdated 'one size fits all' methods with little relevance to their particular area of business."

Pario emphasizes that it's possible for organizations to update their competency models to achieve levels of reliability associated with the best psychometric tests. The most significant behaviours vary across different organizations but consistent themes are linked to the emerging concept of authentic leadership and development of trust-based relationships.

Contact Pario to discuss Leadership Profiling, Competencies & Intelligent 360 Degree Feedback

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