HUMAN RESOURCE
CONSULTING, INC.
1000 RIDC Plaza • Gamma Drive • Suite 204 • Pittsburgh, PA 15238 • (412) 967-1130 • Fax (412) 967-9199

PCI INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

Overview of Philosophy and Approach

This whitepaper describes the PCI Individual Assessment approach and processes regarding individual assessment reporting and developmental planning and feedback. This document will outline the processes and steps involved in successfully setting up and conducting an individual assessment and development process, as well as differentiate it from other assessment providers.

Job and Organizational Analysis

During this phase, PCI's senior assessors gain an in-depth understanding of the client organization's mission, values, critical success factors, and its core competencies. The goal of this process is to delineate the competencies that are essential for success within the client organization. The competency models that are created, confirmed, and/or refined are essential for determining the measurement targets for the assessment process. The assessment process itself has many uses, and as such, it is essential that the job and organizational analysis sets a strong foundation for the process. Individual assessment is a key component for the following organizational processes:

- Recruitment and Selection
- High-Potential Evaluation
- Individual Development
- Promotion
- Succession Planning
- Team Development
- On-Boarding/Performance Management

Communication Process

Following a determination of the key competencies measured and the purposes for the assessment, it is essential that the organization, with support from PCI, communicate the purpose and importance of the process to the participants. As multiple raters may be involved, it is important to communicate to everyone why the data is being gathered, who will have access to the data, and both the short- and long-term uses of the information. The appropriate maintenance of confidentiality and strong assurances that the information will not be used to sever anyone from the organization are key components of the communication process. In addition, logistical issues around the location of the assessment, technical issues, timing, and scheduling of feedback, as well as a process summary, are all key components of this phase. By setting up the assessment for success within an effective communication process, it is much more likely that the results will be accurate and that those providing input will share openly and candidly.

Traditional Behavioral Assessment Centers

The traditional assessment process typically requires participants to travel to a specific location to participate in the assessment center. While at the assessment center, professionals are asked to interact with various role players and handle situations that are designed to be representative of those that they would face in their role as current or future executives. In addition, significant preparation work in terms of completing in-baskets, presentations, and other materials is often required prior to traveling to the assessment center. The basic premise of this approach is that, by measuring behaviors in realistic situations, statements can be made about executives' abilities to handle various circumstances. It also gives, based on behaviors exhibited in the assessment, an indication of individual development needs.

This is a very process-oriented approach that has much less to do with the assessor than the process itself. In fact, assessors typically do not have a doctorate degree and/or are less experienced than may be appropriate for interacting with executives. The data analysis and reporting is also very process-oriented and somewhat mechanical versus interpretative. Reports are typically lengthy and focus on specific behaviors observed, as well as those not exhibited. The reports may take weeks or possibly longer to complete. However, all of the competencies assessed typically tie into specific training programs offered by the delivering consulting organization that are designed to develop these areas.

Feedback is delivered to the individuals either individually or in groups, and data may be aggregated to help with various organizational initiatives. In addition, most approaches now include some level of testing, though this is not extensive. The processes are typically set for certain organizational levels and/or industries. There is typically little flexibility in terms of pricing, process, outputs, and data gathering.

PCI's In-Depth (Whole Person) Assessment

PCI's Individual Assessment is an evolution of a well-researched process that can trace its roots back to the early 1940s. The approach is based on having an in-depth understanding of an individual based on standardized testing, in-depth interviews, and a trained and experienced assessor's interpretation of that information in relation to organizational needs, climate, and culture. There is a tremendous amount of research that goes into selecting the tests. It is also a very flexible process, as the test battery and interview protocols can be adjusted based on organization, industry level, and position within the company.

Historically, while this process was widely used by smaller and regional firms of assessors, it had not been available to a broad array of organizations, geographies, and languages through a single provider. PCI has taken this in-depth process and brought it to scale through the use of Internet technology and basic telephony. PCI assessors, prior to being considered for hire, must have obtained a relevant doctorate degree and go through an extensive training and certification process that ensures each have the "gift" of assessment interpretation, the executive impact, and the ability to deliver meaningful results in a collaborative fashion to client organizations and individuals.

PCI's approach is much more focused on the assessor and his or her ability to interpret information within the context of organizational needs and culture. While the process itself is very robust, it is the reporting and decision making that comes as the result of the assessment, which is key to the success of the implementations.

The assessment process has two distinct phases:

1. **In-Depth Testing**

   PCI's Senior Assessors select an in-depth test battery, typically lasting four to six hours, that has multiple measures of:

   - Cognitive skills and behavioral styles
   - Motivations
   - Career derailers
   - Decision-making style and ability
   - Strategic analysis capabilities
   - Sales, negotiating, and other job-specific skills

   The testing can be administered in person at our office or remotely and the testing is based on his/her schedule without interruption. The testing itself is presented in several easy-to-follow steps and, over thousands of assessments, is being very well received by participants in a variety of contexts geographies.

2. **In-Depth Interview**

   Following the testing, an experienced, trained doctorate-level assessor conducts an in-depth background interview verifying the participant's:

   - Motivations and goals
   - Self-perceptions
   - Key events and formative experiences
   - Key accomplishments/disappointments
   - Short- and long-term career goals
   - Leadership style and experiences
   - Other relevant factors

   This interview, though in depth, is very conversational and is not a threatening or challenging experience for the participant. It is targeted and focused as the assessor has access to a great deal of data beforehand, which will allow him or her to focus in on key areas that are most relevant to the organizational goals for the assessment. This interview can be conducted via the telephone, and assessors are available outside normal business hours to accommodate those in other times zones and countries, as well as individuals who can only participate on a weekend. Feedback is given to candidates during the interview.

Reporting

PCI views the depth of reporting and the flexibility of format as a major differentiator between itself and other assessment firms. The interpretative assessment data is completed and compiled by experienced doctorate-level assessor. This certified assessor integrates the testing and interview data and makes clearly stated information about the participant in terms of strengths and areas for development, as well as short- and long-term potential within the organization. The interpretive aspect of the report is not selected from a menu, computer generated, or done with any other automated process. Each report is an original document that combines the assessor's understanding of the individual relative to the organizational needs and goals. This is a well-researched, documented, and valid process and one that should be selected when an organization cannot afford to make a mistake in terms of hiring, promotion, or developmental focus.

Reporting and Feedback to Management about Participants

Individual Management Report

This report is written about the individual assessed and is provided to management. The report highlights strengths and weaknesses, key areas for development, the person's short- and long-term potential, and the derailers that may limit his or her effectiveness. Key areas of focus are interpersonal skills, leadership skills, cognitive abilities and thinking style, and personal effectiveness/work style. The data is interpretative and integrated. Rather than dealing with specific competencies in a sequential fashion, the assessor integrates the data to make statements about how the person will exhibit behaviors in various key situations. In addition, ratings are provided on a five-point scale for each of the key competencies that were identified in early stages of the process. The report format can be tailored to measure/rate the organizational competencies or any other style or format that is most impactful for the organization. In addition, for internal candidates, specific suggestions for more effectively managing and coaching the participant are provided. In the case of external candidates, specific interview probes and reference checking questions are provided based on the assessment results.

Group Management Reporting and Succession Planning Sessions

When assessing a group of managers or executives, PCI can put together summary data that allows managers to view their organizational talent from a top-down perspective. A facilitated session discussing the overall group, its developmental needs, as well as specific individuals and their potential for advancement within the organization can be quite valuable. During this discussion, a picture of an organizational "talent inventory" will appear. It is likely that there will be those within the group that are overachievers, underachievers, and those that are struggling significantly. Appropriate decisions can be made as to the future and degree of focus appropriate for each participant falling within these categories. This discussion then becomes a tool for succession planning, as well as one for forcing discussions around hard decisions where developable talent does not exist within the organization. It is seen as a key component into making data-driven decisions, as well as in avoiding the "Peter Principle." Finally, this assessment data allows managers to focus their developmental efforts with those who have the highest potential for success. It also helps to target training and development activities, as well as to leverage the organization's training investment to specific developmental needs as identified by the assessment. This is analogous to a physician making a diagnosis prior to prescribing a treatment. The results can then be tied into performance management to focus individuals on a development plan.

Developmental Report and Feedback Session (Optional)

Depending on your needs, participants can be furnished with an in-depth report that is written to them. This report is written in a developmental context and, though providing the same type of information as the management report, does so in a way that is not threatening or detrimental to an individual's motivation. This report covers the same major headings, including leadership, interpersonal, thinking style, and personal effectiveness. In addition to the interpretive data, perceptual data can be provided to the participant to help with his or her development. A developmental planning guide, targeted developmental suggestions based on the assessment results, and a development planning worksheet are also given to the participant.

While the developmental report is a stand-alone document that can be of great value to the individual, it is strongly suggested that individuals are given the opportunity to discuss the results with the assessor. This process is described in the next section.

Individual Developmental Feedback Session (Optional)

Individuals are typically sent their developmental report in advance of their developmental feedback session. This allows them a chance to react to the information provided and to gain some perspective into their strengths and developmental areas, as well as begin their thought processes around development. During the feedback session, the assessor who conducted the interview will, in person or on the telephone, discuss the feedback and its implications, as well as help the individual begin the developmental planning process. During this step, the individual is asked to make some commitments around development and to begin drafting an outline of a development plan. Discussions linked to training, performance management, and coaching, if available, are also conducted during this phase. This discussion typically lasts one hour and follow-up sessions are available upon client request.

Group Feedback Sessions (Optional)

As an alternative to the individual feedback session, feedback can be delivered in groups of up to six. During this session, a senior assessor will review the reports and discuss developmental planning, the developmental suggestions, and other available resources. Individuals are typically given a copy of *The Successful Manager's Handbook* and are asked to share, if comfortable, their reactions and plans regarding the data. Time is allowed to begin drafting developmental plans and links are made to available training programs, performance management processes, and coaching programs and resources.

Summary and Conclusions

PCI is a growing practice that combines in-depth assessment by experienced assessors along with extremely meaningful, competency-based narrative feedback to provide individuals and teams with targeted feedback to aid them as individuals. In addition, the data collected is very helpful to organizations in terms of making better hiring, promotion, and succession planning decisions. There are key links to performance management and training that maximize the organization's significant investment in these programs and processes. In contrast to its competitors, PCI's Executive Assessment is a flexible, client-focused, and cost-effective process that combines proven scientific processes with modern technology to get organizations and individuals the data they need when they need it. While this document serves as a good summary of our overall assessment philosophy and various applications and approaches, it is far from exhaustive. In fact, PCI will be happy to speak with any client organization to discuss how we might tailor and customize our approach to your specific needs in order to help support your business objectives.