

A Holistic Approach To Human Performance

by Emily Melious

Have you ever wondered why the individual with the great résumé fell apart after he was hired? Why two employees get along well *outside* of the office, but always conflict inside the office? Or how someone consistently excelled in one position, yet failed after a promotion into another?

Unfortunately, these scenarios are common to most organizations and aggressively thwart productivity, efficiency, and morale. But perhaps most troubling is that these situations also leave us scratching our heads. Highly talented people, whose IQ and personality look great on paper, don't seem to work out in reality. Where did we go wrong? Or, maybe the better question is:

Why are cognitive and affective traits not always solid indicators of performance?

Assessment tools have historically focused on measuring the cognitive (IQ) and the affective (personality) parts of the mind. While these tools are helpful in selecting, training, and managing people, they only offer a partial picture of a person's full potential. IQ scores are influenced by opportunities to learn, and being smart doesn't necessarily predict success. Personality traits are situational, and people who seem agreeable don't always do a job successfully or accomplish team goals.

What's missing? The third part of the mind: the conative, or instinctive, part.

Conation is not the thinking or feeling aspect of the mind, but rather the *doing*. It is your ingrained method for performing tasks...your unique operating system...your methodological fingerprint. It is the dimension of human performance that explains why two people with similar intelligence and personality can perform so differently in the same role. Or, how individual stars within the company, each possessing high IQ and EQ, suddenly fail when put into a team. Without understanding conation, there will always be a missing link (and most likely poor performance) in your workforce.

How is conation measured?

The only tool that exists to measure the conative part of the mind is the Kolbe A™ Index. Created by Kathy Kolbe of Kolbe Corp (Phoenix, AZ), this assessment and other Kolbe resources are used by major organizations around the world, including Xerox, Accenture, The Hershey Company, and American Express. The greatest benefit of utilizing the Kolbe tools is that they aid in creating a *true* match of the employee to the position, the direct supervisor(s) and the team. Crafting this ideal fit will directly impact the health of your company and the people in it.

Yet conation is not the "end all be all." Grasping the *interplay* of instincts, intelligence and personality will help you optimize the hiring, deployment, retention and effectiveness of your employees. Mastering this "trifecta" is what will ultimately help you create and maintain a less stressful work environment with employees who are more satisfied and more productive in their positions.

Is a holistic approach to human performance really best? Yes.

A two-legged stool is not much of a stool – or at least one that I would sit on! Similarly, IQ and EQ are important, but only as part of the equation. Conation is the third, completing puzzle piece, which gives wholeness to your workforce decisions.



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