

CRITICAL THINKING ENEMY OF THE STATUS QUO



As the school year begins, our fall 2007 issue draws upon the universal scholastic experience of teachers encouraging us to “think.” As we get older, most of us hope to gain the perspective needed to become a creative “out-of-the box thinker,” or problem solver. After all, none of us really wants to be tagged as a maintainer of the status quo.

How we think – and finding the time to do so – is a key determinant in our success, both personally and professionally. Henry Ford once said, “Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it.” And, critical thinking is the single most important factor driving your success.

What is critical thinking?

“Critical thinkers can gather information from verbal or written expression, reflection, observation, experience and reasoning. Critical thinking has its basis in intellectual criteria that go beyond subject-matter divisions and which include: clarity, credibility, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness. As described by Richard Paul and Linda Elder in 2006, “... a well cultivated critical thinker:

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively;
- comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
- thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.”

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_Thinking

We believe that there are three keys to exceptional leadership and the biggest one is the ability to incorporate critical thinking. Individuals who are able to determine well-reasoned conclusions, tested against relevant criteria that yield truly insightful solutions, provide the ultimate leadership and change advantage for organizations.

“The only difference between a problem and a solution is that people understand the solution.”
Charles F. Kettering

IN THIS ISSUE:

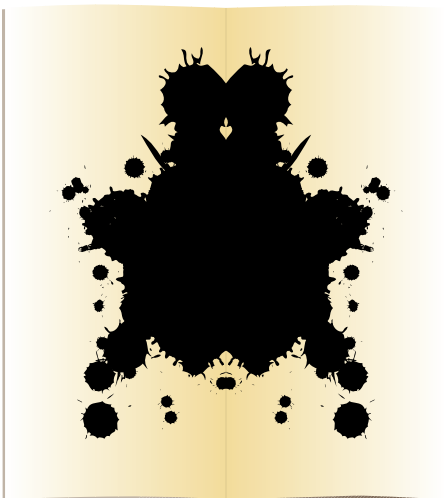
- 1 CRITICAL THINKING**
Enemy of the status quo
- 2 SCIENCE APPLIED**
Determining a corporate DNA map of success based on thriving team members
- 3 THE TREMENDOUS 10 AND YOUR COMMON DNAnominator**
Focusing on your top employees to yield the highest rate of return
- 4 KNOWLEDGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED WARM**
Search Strategies’ theory of relativity when it comes to psychological testing

©2007 Search Strategies Inc.

All content written by David Nirenberg.
Design by New Mediatrix.

e-StrataGEMs is published and emailed 4 times annually. If you would like to subscribe or if you have received this issue in error or would like to unsubscribe, please send an email to subscribe@searchstrategies.ca.

SCIENCE APPLIED START MAKING SENSE OF WHAT REALLY WORKS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION



Advances in the study of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) research over the past 20 years are staggering. **Search Strategies** has also made some important advances in the study of organization's unique compositions by modeling an important new assessment tool on DNA insight.

The science behind DNA is that each living cell is a blueprint, holding a distinct code for all the genetic information that makes up an individual. The same principle holds true for organizations; a collection of individual cells (i.e., employees) who together constitute a unique whole.

Many companies apply terms like "entrepreneurial," "creative," or "results-driven" to their culture.

These terms are used to capture the essence of an organization. This approach tends to be less scientific and more subjective in nature. Can a bank truly be entrepreneurial in the same way that Google once was? Is Google, by sheer virtue of its current size, still entrepreneurial today?

The term "entrepreneurial," for example, means very different things to different organizations. It's tempting to say, "I know entrepreneurial when I see it." But if you can't accurately assess and measure a quality, how can you determine relative rank, or if that label even applies?

Search Strategies is proud to introduce a metrics-based methodology that accurately determines and labels each organization's distinctive DNA roadmap. Our proprietary "Common DNAnominator" program focuses on the measurable and the meaningful; the combination of skills and attributes found in the top 10% of your employees. We call these individuals the "Tremendous 10."

THE TREMENDOUS 10 AND YOUR COMMON DNAnominator

Organizations gain the most when their recruiting, retention and development activities are focused on the top 10% of employees who bring the "right stuff." The "Tremendous 10" approach focuses only on your top employees; those individuals you should retain, train, and grow. The bottom line: investing and learning from your Tremendous 10 yields the highest rate of return. If people are what drive your business, knowing the composition of traits that form your Tremendous 10 brings immeasurable gains to your overall business. Applying Common DNAnominator and Tremendous 10 methodologies provides meaningful improvement to succession plan-

ning, recruiting and organizational development strategies.

Search Strategies' Common DNAnominator methodology unearths your organization's Tremendous 10 DNA roadmap, allowing you to consistently identify the profiles that drive success within your organizational setting. To do so, we focus on an in-depth analysis of those individuals who currently and consistently deliver the very best results. We can help your organization find the employees – both within and from outside – who have the right markers to fit in well and be your true leaders, driving exceptional results.



Why the top 10%?

The top 10% of performers was chosen for our Common DNAnominator research because this is a meaningful starting point for any organization. For small- to medium-sized organizations, a statistically sound sampling can be found by assessing the Tremendous 10 across functional boundaries. In larger organizations, the Tremendous 10 can be found within a single functional area. Ultimately, keeping the research focused on your Tremendous 10 ensures a DNA roadmap of unadulterated excellence that is already proven within your organization.

"The most important competition is between you and your imagination, because energetic, innovative and connected individuals can now act on their imaginations farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before." Thomas L. Friedman

If the basic DNA differs, success becomes elusive

A typical scenario of a poor corporate DNA experience is one where a saviour from one company is unable to fit comfortably in the organizational makeup of another, and is therefore unable to bring his or her promise of greatness to fruition.

Bob Nardelli, former CEO of Home Depot and just named CEO of Chrysler, was a GE alumnus, considered one of three potential successors to the GE CEO role. Yet Nardelli was far less successful when he stepped into the role of CEO at Home Depot. This is clearly not a case of an individual who wasn't good. A closer examination, in fact, might reveal that Nardelli fit better within the DNA roadmap of GE. Unfortunately for all, there clearly seemed to lack enough focus on the DNA of Home Depot's Tremendous 10.

Having the "best" people is not an exercise done by isolating certain variables (the "Gee, he/she seems great" syndrome) but must be directly correlated to all the variables that make or break success. Namely, the ability to ascertain the DNA combination that thrives within each organization in tandem with the characteristics of people being brought in and/or promoted.

Often times, "wonder candidates" just don't have the right combination of attributes to flourish in certain organizations. The **Search Strategies** Common DNAnominator program objectively ascertains where great leaders fit best.

For a more detailed overview of how **Search Strategies'** proprietary Common DNAnominator program can build success at your organization, please visit our website at: www.searchstrategies.ca

KNOWLEDGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED WARM

Search Strategies' theory of relativity when it comes to psychological assessments

Conventional wisdom is that psychological testing and assessments of candidates conducted by a trained industrial psychologist has great merit. After all, how can a tool providing insightful data about a candidate be anything but helpful?

Not so fast! There are some inherent issues you need to consider. The results of psychological tests need to be used in the right context. There are three simple ways to ensure your psychological assessments provide the best information:

1 The psychologist conducting your assessments should have a good knowledge of your organization's needs.

"Good knowledge" means that ideally the psychologist will have worked with your organization for a number of years, assessed many of your executives and, as a result, has first-hand knowledge of the unique characteristics of your organization. The psychologist's experience should include assessing candidates who have thrived – as well as those who have failed – within your organization.

Search Strategies has seen clients use different psychologists on a casual basis, and our experience shows this approach does not allow for testing to be truly insightful. Without comparative data about who has already succeeded or failed in your organization, assessments lack the vital context that makes them meaningful.

2 The purported science you rely on to make decisions should be appropriate.

As Mark Twain said, there are "... lies, damn lies and then statistics." Typically, the candidate's psychological test results are compiled and compared to "the norm," meaning thousands of previous test responses from similar functions or positions.

Within that normative base, however, lies one inherent problem: if 20,000 sales people have been tested, the normative base will run a broad gamut of industries and varying approaches of differing sectors. This large and broad a base effectively muddies the really important variables essential for your organization to compare against.

A typical normative database for sales, for example, includes everything from transaction-based

sales people (e.g., those who sell photocopiers) to more strategic and longer-cycle influencing relationships (e.g., individuals who sell Boeing jets), and any sales role in between. The "what counts" that drives success for these two examples (sales of photocopiers versus jets) are typically not remotely close. Unfortunately, the norm results compared to and used in most psychological tests are often not tied to any one type of role or sector, leaving the norm so broad as to effectively negate the extraction of meaningful conclusions.

3 Use the right tests!

Selection of the tests to be used is vital to delivering data that is truly meaningful. This may be one of the most overlooked criteria for getting useful results. We often hear statements like, "We tested him or her and he/she looks good." But many of the tests used have been around for decades with only minor modifications (in part to keep the normative base large so as to still be considered statistically valid), and these tests may have little bearing on today's world.

One of the most popular tests used by businesses is the Myers-Brigg assessment. Over two million people take this test every year. Yet few individuals can quantify how meaningful the results of a Myers-Brigg assessment really are.

Did You Know?

The Myers-Brigg test was developed in the 1940s by Isabel Briggs Myers (1897-1979) and her mother. Isabel had a Bachelor's degree in political science from Swarthmore College, and no academic affiliation. The implications based on the origins and the limited changes to content over time of this popular test are clear.