

Social Skill's Impact on Organizational Management

By Tab W. Cooper

It has been shown that intelligence can predict success in job performance across job types in general, but not for specific job task under different conditions. Since that time, research has looked at a wide range of personality traits to predict success for specific task. Over the last two decades, personality scholars have generally concluded that there are five major personality characteristics. However, research has shown that conscientiousness is the most likely of all personality traits to predict job performance.

Conscientious employees are generally successful because they are willing to put forth the level of effort needed to accomplish goals because they are motivated to perform well. Conscientious employees tend to be efficient, planful, thorough, responsible, organized, and reliable. Other traits of conscientious workers include perseverance, exhibit self-discipline, and are more proactive and effective in goal-setting than workers less conscientious. Highly conscientious employees seek opportunities to do the right thing, pay sufficient attention to detail to be able to identify what needs to be done, and follow rules. Although conscientiousness is the strongest of the personality characteristics to predict success for specific job descriptions, it was still insufficient.

More recently attention has been directed toward the issue of social intelligence skills as societal demands and work environments have become more complex and diverse. Social intelligence is described as the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of others, including yourself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately on that understanding. Socially skilled people are more likely to read and understand social situations and to act on that insight to influence others.

In a recent study, it was found that conscientious employees with strong social skills were perceived as more effective in performing their jobs. When conscientious people lack social skills, working with them may be particularly difficult. Conscientious individuals without social skill can be seen as unreasonably demanding, inflexible, and micromanaging. Highly conscientious people that are socially unskilled more likely pursue matters well beyond the point desired by others. They might be seen as not just fighting the wrong battles but rather as fighting almost every battle, perhaps in their minds "for the good of the department" or "to do what is right".

Although intellectual intelligence is the best predictor of job performance in general, conscientiousness and social skills are the most effective in predicting an employee's performance for specific job descriptions requiring some level of interpersonal interaction. Highly conscientious employees possessing strong social skills perform their jobs better while highly conscientious employees possessing weaker social skills are perceived as being difficult to work with.