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Break the Performance Barrier

Breakthroughs in human performance are rare. Yet a new type of evaluation can help you boost employee productivity to new levels.

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Rarely do we see a real breakthrough. However, on May 6, 1954, an English runner, Roger Bannister, made a significant breakthrough—the first man to break the four minute mile barrier.

Breaking that barrier had been a goal for runners for centuries. Back in Greece, coaches tried some pretty strange tactics to speed up their runners. One was to release wild animals to chase the runners, forcing them to run faster or be attacked. Another was to feed them real tiger's milk. None of these tactics worked, so experts decided that man's body was simply not designed to run that fast. But on that day in May, Roger Bannister proved the doctors, trainers and experts wrong. Interestingly enough, 37 runners broke the four minute mile in the following year. And in 1956, 300 runners accomplished the same feat. It took just one man to do it, and the rest believed.

Kathy Kolbe, CEO of Kolbe Corp. in Phoenix, Arizona has also achieved a breakthrough in the field of human performance. Kolbe has originated and developed a system which she calls Performance Forecasting. At the heart of Performance Forecasting is the Kolbe Conative Index®, a proven and reliable tool to assess what people will do, what they won't do and what they are willing to do. During two decades of research, Kolbe theorized and developed this simple question-and-answer test that captures and isolates the conative part of the mind. Conative or conation, pronounced cone-a-tion is our

purposeful intention to act. It is how each of us strives toward a goal. "Conation is our knack for getting things done. It is separate from a person's intelligence or personality type. Without conation there is no product, only potential. Conation is the achievement aspect of ability, the process

Kolbe's performance test captures and isolates the conative part of the mind—in other words, the applicant's knack for getting things done

through which we fulfill our goals", writes Kathy Kolbe in *The Conative Connection* published in 1990. The index takes only minutes to complete by hand or on a windows-based software program. The results include eight pages of text and graphics, like the bar chart shown below. Each of the four columns define striving instincts that we all share universally. Those are the instincts to probe, pattern, innovate and demonstrate. The results are simple. Each person has levels to which they will use each of those four instincts. At the 1-3 level, we will literally put effort into preventing the actions that result from that instinct. At the 4-6 level, we will respond by assisting and helping further those actions that result from that instinct. And, at the 7-10 level, we will initiate actions that result from that instinct.

The probing instinct leads to actions where we will research,

analyze, review, justify, study, debate, assess, prove, detail, and document. (First column)

The patterning instinct leads to actions where we will create a sense of order, develop structure, organize, plan, coordinate, arrange, and complete. (Second column)

The innovating instinct leads to actions where we will experiment, deviate, change, invent, risk, shortcut, originate, brainstorm, challenge, and intuit. (Third column)

The demonstrating instinct leads to actions where we will fix, repair, transport, display, show, build, construct, practice, put together, and use physical effort. (Fourth column)

Why is this a breakthrough? Our organizations are going through dramatic changes, and the jobs that people do are constantly changing. In fact, more and more people find they move from project to project and are working with a variety of teams. Because customers are demanding more innovation, higher quality and shorter cycle times at lower cost, those teams must form and meet their project goals in a compressed timeline. As players come on and off assignments, shifting the person who will initiate the required actions to lead this project phase is the right thing to do. Identifying who is willing to support certain project requirements during particular phases insures a positive and timely outcome. Finally, it is valuable to know who will have difficulty with a specific task or piece of the project because they literally won't do it or will struggle with

it. Knowing each person's "conative pattern" will allow us to place the right person in the right role at the right time. This system helps both employees and managers understand themselves and the work that needs to be done so well, that ideally everyone will find their way into the right job. Imagine how productivity

In his human resource department there are as few rules, policies, and consistencies as possible.

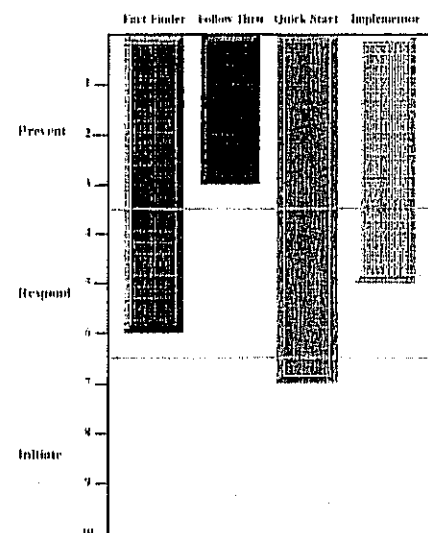
The next chart shows the results when this employee completes an adjoining index called the Kolbe-B Index. This index is used to identify the actions that are necessary to fulfill the de-

quires him to build some consistencies and structure within his organization. He must develop a policy manual. He must deal with each employee issue exactly the same. But instinctively he prevents that. So, each time he sits down to work on the policies and procedures, he is working against his grain. This is not his best ef-

and discuss the requirements of each person's role, how their role fits with the overall organizational purpose, and the personal actions that are required to achieve that overall purpose.

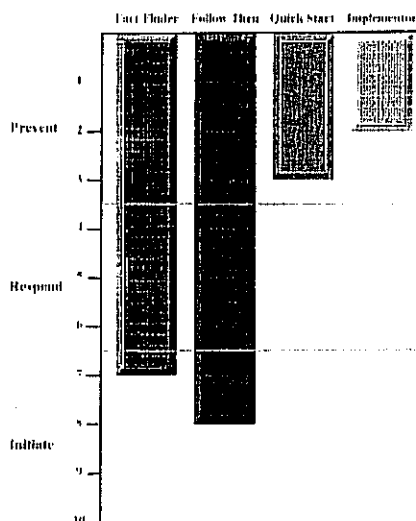
- Identify any gaps between how a person will instinctively operate and the

Kolbe Talent Analysis
KOLBE A Index® Result for:



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KOLBE B Index®: JOB - KCI for:



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would soar if people had jobs that turned them on!

Note the example illustrated in the bar charts shown above. The first one is an actual result for a human resource director. This person has a 6375 conative pattern. This means he will initiate in the innovating instinct, respond both in the probing and the demonstrating instinct, and prevent actions in the patterning instinct. This is the pattern of an "entrepreneur." This person should be in roles where he can brainstorm, initiate change, play his hunches, calculate risks, promote research, and intuit his decisions. He works best when he doesn't have to follow a routine, when his day is sporadic and varied, and he can work outside of stringent guidelines and an organized structure. This is a person who does not operate based on rules.

mands of the job. By looking at this result (7832) we can determine how this person is trying to operate. Ideally, Kolbe-A and Kolbe-B index results are similar. When two results are similar, we observe an employee who is thriving in his/her role. Attitude and performance are high. We hear statements like: I love my job; I have a great sense of accomplishment in the work I do; My day just seems to fly; I have a lot of pride in the projects I work on; I have a great sense of personal satisfaction and reward in my work.

However, with this example, 6375 is the reality, and 7832 are the job demands. A difference of four or more in any one mode indicates real stress on the job. This person is experiencing stress in two of the four instincts. He knows that right now his job re-

quires him to build some consistencies and structure within his organization. He must develop a policy manual. He must deal with each employee issue exactly the same. But instinctively he prevents that. So, each time he sits down to work on the policies and procedures, he is working against his grain. This is not his best effort, and it is taking much longer to complete than it should. Also, he has a sense that his best efforts are not required now. In this job, he needs to prevent changes, new approaches and innovative ideas, not initiate them. When I shared these results with him he looked at me, smiled and said, "Thank you. Now I know that what's wrong is the job, not me. I can move on now and hold my head up high."

Follow this simple formula to build a total workforce that is engaged, empowered and energized:

- Identify the talent on your team.
- Commit to maximizing opportunities for growth and development that expands a person's natural talents.
- Clearly communicate

demands of their role.

- Provide tools, aids, or other team members to support the individual when actions are required that go against their natural talents.
- Provide promotions and career opportunities that mirror their natural talents.

With these steps, you will observe empowered, motivated, self-managers in action.

Most companies spend their time and resources training employees to do what they won't do. There is a low rate of return on this strategy. A far better strategy is to identify what people will do and are willing to do, and then make sure they spend at least 80% of their time doing those things. Imagine what the outcome of this practical approach could be! ■