



“Understanding People People” The Harvard Business Review Feature Article June 2004
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Summary:

We often think that “people” people are born that way or certainly have a natural inclination to be “people” people. This study breaks “people” people down into four dimensions or competencies. It contends that “people” people rarely possess all four competencies. It suggests that the competencies track with or should track with jobs and assignments. And it also suggests that the competencies are developable.

To help you see the whole picture, I have created the following table which summarizes the four dimensions or competencies, and lists characteristics, potential jobs and assignments, and development ideas for each dimension.

Dimension / Competency	Characteristics / Behavioral Indicators Job / Assignment Fit	Development Ideas to Enhance this	Competency
Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Like to persuade and negotiate with others · Find power in holding valuable information/ideas · Live to sell · Network well/build alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sales · Deal negotiator · Labor Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Participate in Sales Associations/Networks · Read classics in selling · Identify people who are notably strong in this dimension, and study the way they operate. What works for them won't necessarily work for you, but it will help stimulate your thinking. · Practice your influence skills in low-risk situations. You may feel more comfortable trying out new ways of interacting in social settings before changing your behavior in your office.
Interpersonal Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tuned in to interpersonal aspects of work · Use intuition behind the scenes to keep colleagues committed · Analyze interpersonal problems, arrive at solutions and implement changes · Find hidden agendas · Create synergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unofficial Department or “Company Psychologist” · Career Counselor/Coach/Advisor/Mentor · Therapist · People problem solver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Don't assume that other people are wired the way you are. Work to get inside their heads and hearts. · As with influence skills, practice and build your interpersonal-facilitation skills in low-risk arenas like social settings. · Talk with coworkers about topics that aren't work related: Ask about a child's big soccer game or violin concert. Don't be afraid to engage in personal conversations. · Read Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence.
Relational Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Forge connections with groups of people through visual and verbal imagery · Use ad campaigns, brand strategies, motivational themes/speeches to get others to act · Persuade others to buy/invest through words and pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Magazine Editor · Marketing · Advertising · Speech Writing · Creating compelling presentations · Public Relations/Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Look at ads, consider the markets they're selling to, and get inside the minds of the creators. Then think about what you might do differently. · Practice brainstorming to loosen up your creative thinking-as you might stretch your hamstrings for a run. · Pay attention to how vendors try to hook you into buying their services or products, whether you're interested in using them or not. Notice which tactics are successful and which are not. For the ploys that don't work well on you, consider why they might on others. · Read Adweek and Advertising Age.
Team Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Need to see and interact with people frequently · Enjoy working with the team and with customers · Strong customer focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Managing high-energy teams in busy environments · Player-Coach · Sales Manager · Customer Service Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Decide who in your organization is a master team leader and watch him or her in action - even though his or her style may not be a perfect fit for you. By observing, you can pick up an array of strategies from which to choose. · Ask the person you're observing for direct advice. · Take a class or two. National Training Laboratories has been training managers and leaders since the late 1940's, and it offers a variety of courses to bolster skills in team leadership. BVC offers Team Leadership, too!

BVC Opinion:

Very well written and very much on target for some of us, the article presents a very unique and interesting look at people people. It suggests that you hire wisely to bring people people into your organization, that you make the right assignments to match people people with what they can do well and that you develop people people competencies in those people that need to develop them. (Say that three times fast !!!)

Applications:

Effective organizations need people people as much as they need technical, managerial and other kinds of people
Effective teams need people people with a mix of all 4 competencies, just like effective teams need a mix of personality (MBTI) types
Choose or trade for people with people competencies (as well as the technical/functional competencies you are looking for) to make your team a winning team
Build these (or at least some of these) dimensions or competencies into your selection and hiring process. You can do this by adding them to your list of “things you are looking for” in a candidate, by asking behavioral questions, noting their responses and observing their actual behavior to assess whether they are really people people.

And Finally:

If little or none of this makes sense, and you have read all the way to the end, ask a people person to help you!!!

For more information regarding this topic, please e-mail Rich Steel at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610-388-3680 or on my cell at 610-324-8466.