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**THE PSYCHOLOGY
OF BUSINESS
PROFILING**

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW
WITH FAMED
DRUMMER
HAL BLAINE**

GUITAR
virtuoso **Nils**
Lofgren

**SHINING SILENTLY, YET
EVER SO BRIGHTLY**

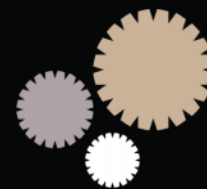
**CRACKING THE
MOSQUITO
GENOME**

**THE STORY
BEHIND
THE EV
PROJECT**

DISPLAY UNTIL APR 15 \$4.50



winter 2011



on the cover

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Guitar genius and longtime E Street Band member Nils Lofgren shares his extraordinary life experiences and much more—from working with such legends as Bruce Springsteen, Ringo Starr and Neil Young, to his successful solo career.



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| THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BUSINESS PROFILING |

Joseph Skursky gets frustrated when he hears CEOs complaining about new hires and underperforming employees. “Companies, for the most part, don’t understand that you’ve got hire for strength—you’ve got to hire from strength and build on those [new hires].”

Skursky is president of Market Leader Solutions, a business that specializes in providing guidance, growth and leadership solutions to companies worldwide.

“Unfortunately, most executives can’t truly define those strengths in others, or even themselves. Nor do they continuously coach to get the best results from their employees by rolling to those strengths. To do so, you have to take feelings out of the equation. When hiring, you have to look much deeper than the self-serving resume and highly overrated industry tenure. There’s a sophisticated science to the process.”

According to Skursky, a major part of that process is the use of refined, multilevel psychological, “psychometric” assessments. “It’s vital for employers to be able to adequately assess an individual’s work ethic, motivation and mindset when applying for the job to combat high rates of employee turnover or disgruntled employees that are unhappy in their career. Productivity, teamwork and workplace harmony result from having employees who are not only appropriately trained and skilled, but also fit the company’s culture and climate.”

In the 1970s and 1980s, companies often used assessment centers as a means of evaluating potential candidates. But assessment centers were expensive, unproven and hard to find. As a result, many institutions are now using psychological assessments to help them economically evaluate how well prospective employees will fit into their organizations.

Using psychometric assessments to eliminate hiring mistakes by ensuring that a candidate is qualified and will fit into the organization is sound resource management, yet the use of psychological assessments in the business world has a long and varied history. It has proven successful in many contexts, yet when not applied properly, the results have been disappointing.

Annie Murphy Paul, author of *The Cult of Personality Testing*, cautions: “Users of personality tests who are not psychologists—employers, teachers, guidance counselors, workshop leaders—also have an obligation to educate themselves about the potential for personality tests to limit and stereotype. A careful examination of a test’s psychometric properties and a healthy skepticism toward its claims might lead them to choose better instruments—or to forgo testing altogether in favor of some old-fashioned conversation.” Evolving technology has made these assessments easy and inexpensive to administer. Employers are using them in a variety of ways—from abbreviated versions that applicants can take in a kiosk when applying for a retail job, to websites where potential employees can log in and answer a battery of questions.

Peter Drucker, a well-known management consultant and self-described “social ecologist,” said, “Most Americans do not know what their strengths are. When you ask them, they look at

you with a blank stare, or they respond in terms of subject knowledge, which is the wrong answer.”

Which raises the question—If you don’t know your own strengths and weaknesses, how can you judge someone else’s?

Skursky says that is impossible. “Many business consultants or test interpreters lack the very leadership experience that they’re attempting to assess. When that’s the case, the scope of their interpretation is far more clinical, far narrower than when those assessment results are practically applied to a particular business situation where they have expertise.”

According to Skursky, having leadership experience is even more critical when coaching or assessing higher levels of management. “Most individuals may have had experience managing within one and possibly two levels of management. When you get to three to five levels deep, where real leadership needs to be exerted, very few can effectively operate in this space.”

Skursky and Market Leader Solutions take a unique, multilevel approach.

“Using assessments as the base point, the demonstration tells me more than enough about that person. Once we have that assessment, we have a very deep understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. From that point, we simply validate those strengths and weaknesses using both behavior-based questions and demonstrative techniques. The demonstrative questions are particularly

useful because sometimes you’ll ask a direct question and not receive a completely truthful answer. If a picture is worth 1,000 words, then a demonstration is worth 1,000 pictures into the mind. I apply my knowledge of the innate value of the assessments, along with real-world leadership experience. In the end, this produces a significantly more pragmatic solution in virtually all business settings.”

While Skursky says it’s still possible for a skilled candidate to fake the results of psychometric assessments, using the best assessments significantly reduces the ability for falsification and provides warning signals when someone is either unclear or “gaming” the system.

Skursky has used the same assessments for almost 10 years to evaluate more than 4,000 people. He uses three assessments, as opposed to one or two, in order to understand the full scope of each individual.

These three assessments, when triangulated, give him insight into: How a person behaves, communicates and emotes; why an individual behaves in a certain way—an indicator of corporate culture and long-term fit; and what an individual thinks about, which is a key factor in determining emotional intelligence.

“Increasing sales may seem difficult,” Skursky said, “but that’s a secondary process. To address that in a vacuum without first positioning a company for sustained growth is putting the cart before the horse. Real growth happens with eyes wide open, between the ears of leadership and their people. Real growth happens by fully exploring what defines quality management.” □



“When hiring, you have to look much deeper than the self-serving resume and highly overrated industry tenure. There’s a sophisticated science to the process,” says Joseph Skursky.