



Putting Purpose *to Work*



The modern single-minded focus on employee engagement is wrong. Engagement alone is not – and will never be – enough.

Over the past twenty years, I have studied, analyzed, and advised a variety of emerging and expert leaders. Each time, when my team analyzes the data regarding factors that hinder or promote top performance and long-term employee success at their organizations, one fact has been shockingly consistent: when it comes to job performance, matching personality with tasks matters most.

And it's not just in my data. Gallup, for example, has been studying employee engagement for 15 years. In all that time, the needle on engagement rates in the U.S. has barely moved (see sidebar on the next page). As their 2017 State of the American Workplace Report says, "Most workers

want to have meaning and purpose. They want to use their talents and strengths to do what they do best every day." In other words, their conclusion is that personality is at the core of engagement.

Let's take, for example, Adam. Adam had such potential for your organization. Skills testing showed him to be technically excellent for the role, yet he ended up quitting after generating only lackluster performance. Meanwhile, Eve – who tested just as well on her skills – has managed to thrive.

Why did only one of them find success, while the other floundered?

Engagement alone does not work, and most employers use the wrong tools and methods to drive greater productivity.

It turns out that the answer is quite straight-forward, and the reasons why Adam left while Eve excelled were entirely predictable, through a simple measure we call the *Workitude Snapshot*®.

How's your Workitude?

This Snapshot is based on the simple but elegant premise that our purpose is encoded within our personality. If we can measure how your personality and purpose is being applied at work, we can determine your "Workitude" and, in turn, effectively increase engagement. It is about leading with your purpose, not just your strengths.

Jim Harter, and others, from Gallup have documented high performance when personality traits are aligned with the activities required in a role: "When managers help employees grow and develop through their strengths, they are more than twice as likely to engage their team members. The most powerful thing a manager can do for employees is to place them in jobs that allow them to use the best of their *natural talents, adding skills and knowledge* to develop and apply their strengths."ⁱ

“The reasons why Adam left and Eve excelled were entirely predictable through a simple measure.”

The Employee Engagement Crisis

Consistently high engagement scores are clearly closely correlated to important performance and productivity measures. High engagement is associated with:

- 21% greater profitability;
- 41% less absenteeism;
- 17% greater productivity;
- 10% higher customer ratings;
- 20% increase in sales; *and*
- 18% higher customer retention.

Meanwhile, companies with engaged employees outperform those without by 202% while disengaged employees cost organizations between \$450 and \$550 billion annually. Despite a clear relationship, however, something is missing, and the relationship between these factors may not be what we think. In fact, we may even have the relationship completely backwards: some studies indicate that engagement increases because of individual and organizational performance. That is potentially huge. It means, in other words, that by trying to affect employee engagement directly, employers may have been applying pressure to the wrong lever all along.

Sources: The Conference Board, Dale Carnegie Training, Colloquy, Gallup

This is the reason behind the **Workitude Snapshot®**, a six-question, three-minute survey that provides a point-in-time measure of whether a person's personality is **Activated**, **Partially Activated** or **De-Activated** by their required tasks.



Workitude?
Snapshot®

The Workitude Snapshot® (see figure) reveals how well an individual's personality matches the tasks related to their job at a particular point in time. We can use this measure to understand the degree of alignment between their work and their *sense of purpose*.

To that end, the Snapshot is intended to be re-administered at regular intervals. It tells employers and individuals with exacting precision:

- How their six key personality dimensions are impacting or would impact their work at *present*
- How to use personality to increase productivity and outcomes
- How to use personality to plan career and personal development

We can answer these questions precisely only if we can measure the degree to which the person's *purpose*, which is encoded with their personality, is being nourished by the role.

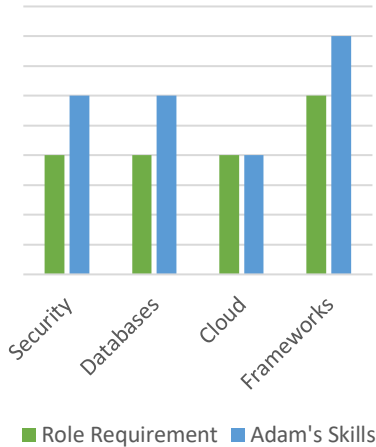
Purpose is encoded within our personality? Yes. In other words, our personality contains all the dimensions we need to fulfill our purpose. Our personality causes us to gravitate toward – and work hard at – roles that offer us a sense of purpose, and away from roles that do not. Our work, and its associated tasks, will reveal us to be unique and talented or expose us to be unremarkable and incompetent in the role. Work will liberate what we are passionate about or torture us repeatedly with what bores us to tears. Work demonstrates our skillfulness or our ineptitude. It uncovers what we value and what we discount. Workers will always gravitate toward the former and end up fleeing from the latter.

So, when our purpose aligns with our work, our personality is activated, and at that point, we do our best work. When the Work includes tasks and relationships that nourish our sense of meaning and purpose, we work smarter, faster, and more productively.

Unfortunately, personality measures commonly fall short at this point. Organizations like Gallup are very much aware of the impact that personality has on performance, but their measure falters at the

connection between personality and purpose; it's only where personality and purpose align as a set that workers can find meaning, and it's that sense of meaning (or its lack) that will drive employees to turn into star workers (or will drive them away from the role entirely).

Adam's Skill Level vs. Role Requirements



Let's apply this approach to Adam, to help us understand how personality is presently impacting his performance.

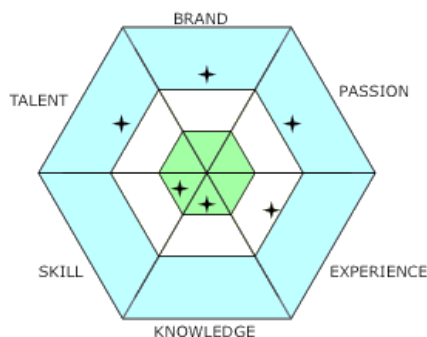
First, let's establish that he is more than technically competent for the role as a computer programmer for an unnamed Cyber Security Company in the Washington, DC area. His skills indisputably meet or outpace the requirements for the role (see chart).

His technical proficiency, however, does not mean he will automatically be successful in the role, and that's the question we want to investigate further. What meaning and degree of purpose is Adam experiencing in his work, today?

To find out, we take a Snapshot of his personality to measure the degree of alignment between his personality and tasks. Specifically, we measure six dimensions, each with practical implications for his assigned duties.

Brand	What he is known to do well.
Passion	What motivates him.
Experience	What life has taught him.
Knowledge	What he has retained.
Skill	What expertise he brings.
Talent	What innate qualities makes him stand out.

We determine for each of these dimensions whether they are activated, partially activated, or deactivated.

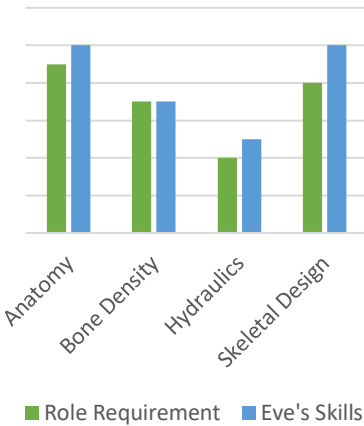


Only Adam's skill and knowledge are activated

- **Activated:** Personality matches tasks, resulting in energized, voluntary performance.
- **Partially-Activated:** A partial match between personality and tasks leads to lackluster, mandated performance.
- **De-Activated:** Little to no match of personality to tasks yields frustrated, counter-productive performance.

For Adam, although skill and knowledge are fully activated, most of these dimensions are de-activated. In other words, the tasks he is required to do align with what he has always done easily and what he

Eve's Skill Level vs. Role Requirements

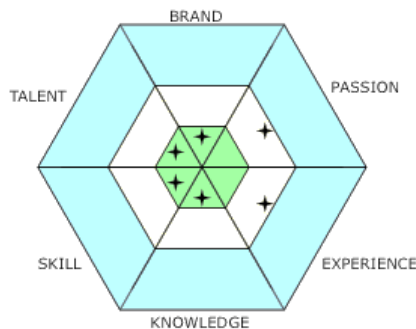


knows, but the other traits – passion, brand, and talent – only minimally align with the role. In total, he would be just partially activated in the job role, at best.

In practice, that typically translates into problems. Partially activated individuals tend not to find fulfillment in the given role; and Adam, one day after months of internal conflict, ended up leaving his job. He explained that his assigned tasks were too monotonous. His passion is to be *creating* code, not simply maintaining status quo. Adam left because the tasks of his role did not match the needs of his personality. A Snapshot of his *personality-purpose-work* alignment could have given Adam's employer earlier visibility into this problem in time to act, or even predicted this outcome beforehand with a pre-hire version of the tool.

So, Adam's personality was not well aligned with the role. Let's try again with another candidate: Eve.

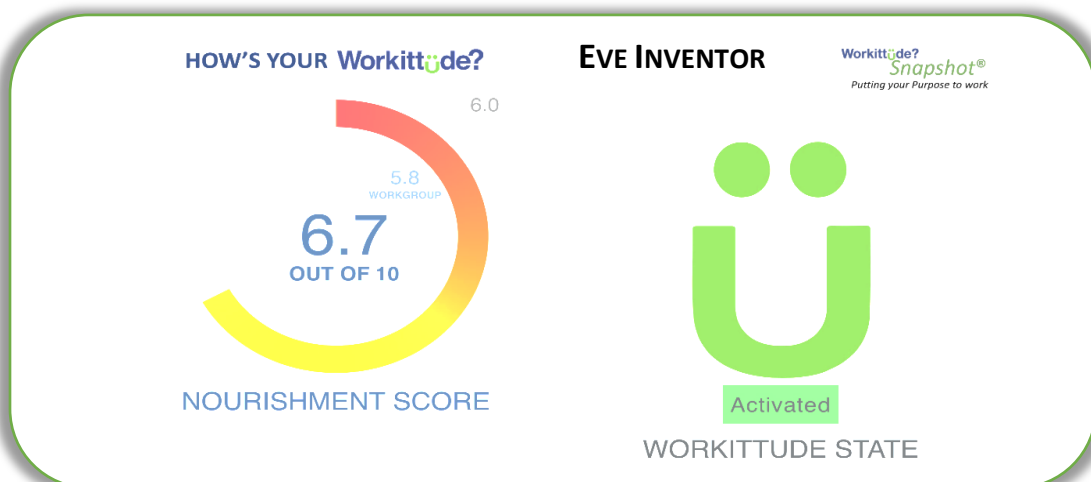
Eve is an MIT honors graduate. Like Adam, she is more than technically competent for her role; she is the inventor of a spinal replacement prosthesis and is looking to continue her work in this field. She is passionate about two things: turning ideas into inventions and helping those who need new body parts get them. As with Adam, we determine for each of the above dimensions whether they are activated, partially activated, or deactivated.



- Her brand, talent, knowledge and skill are all activated.
- Her passion and experience are partially activated.
- So, she is activated by the tasks she needs to perform in the role.

Eve is activated by her work tasks

By aligning her personality with a role that enables this kind of experience, she will thrive. As can be seen below, the role is nourishing to Eve, it satisfies her appetite for meaningful work, her *Workittude*, to a degree beyond that of either the average public or her team.



When it comes to engagement, employers keep missing the point – and needlessly so, given that we have a reliable measure that works.

Even when employers *do* look at personality, they tend to deal in static labels rather than dynamic practical applications.

This is Gallup's approach (StrengthsFinder), as well as that of other popular personality and talent measures like the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator.

These approaches produce broad labels that describe a person's personality. From there, organizations will provide coaching around how the employee's personality is working for or against him or her in their role.

However, such approaches treat personality as static and un-pliable, and they fail to capture how a person's unique personality is *presently* being used. Most organizations lack the technology or tools by which to assess, in an ongoing and dynamic way, how personality is being engaged or disengaged by the tasks assigned. They need a tool that can simultaneously (1) assess personality, (2) assesses the *alignment* between personality and job tasks (with purpose as the outcome), and (3) can do so in a dynamic way to capture any changes over time.


People flee from roles that fail to activate their personalities, just as Adam did. He had every reason to stay except the one he needed.

Fundamentally, Adam needed the kind of employee experience that would attach him to the work role. That experience is all about personality and purpose.

This also explains Eve's success. People actively seek out the kind of nourishment Eve has found. They are hungry for purpose-driven roles that fit their personalities, and engaged workers are better workers. Research has found that they are 12% more productive than others on average.ⁱⁱ

In the opposite direction, evidence indicates that people migrate away from industries or roles that fail to nourish them, like Adam did, and they experience lower engagement when they stay. Manpower Group observed a relationship between engagement and people who change jobs or even industries to better align with their desires. Their conclusion: "Over time people find their way into industries they are happy and comfortable working in."ⁱⁱⁱ

They say that one person in five is in the wrong role and "what seems to be lacking in many interviews is the assessment of the hunger and passion an individual has for the role."



“ People are hungry for purpose-driven roles that fit their personalities, and engaged workers are better workers.”

Your people hunger for meaning. Are you nourishing that appetite?

If employers can identify and measure that appetite and the degree to which it's being satisfied for each employee, then organizations can guide and drive their employees – and themselves – to success.

But the truth is, most employers fail to do this, because they use tools and methods that cannot unleash or optimize the dynamic relationship between the work role, personality, and purpose.

As researchers identify and better understand the ways in which personality and function work in tandem to drive performance, employers face a new mandate: cultivate an alignment between each worker's purpose, as encoded in their personality, and the role they inhabit.

As research and advisory firm Deloitte says in its *2017 Human Capital Trends* report, "Companies need a new approach – one that builds on the foundation of culture and engagement to focus on the employee experience holistically, considering all the contributors to worker satisfaction, engagement...and alignment."^{iv} Fortunately, the tools have been developed for employers to do exactly that, to measure the degree of alignment between personality – and the individual's sense of purpose encoded within it – and their work. Now they need only use it.



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Is your organization ready to put Purpose to work at last?

1. Do you measure present state?

Making sure you put people in the right seat on the bus is a prevalent idea these days, so many companies spend a great amount of time and money ensuring they make good hiring decisions. However, they seldom (if ever) measure *after* the initial hire, to see whether an employee's personality is aligned *right now* with his or her current required tasks. When did you last measure if your employees feel they are still in the right seat?

2. Have you added the key ingredient?

Engagement alone is not enough. Having the right tools, getting enough recognition, and having a good boss, all impact the employee experience. But none of them matter as much as the sense of meaning employees derive from the work they do. Have you identified the sense of purpose your key employees get from their work, and ensured that sense of meaning is present for them?

3. Do you have the right mixture?

To unleash a person's personality, purpose, and performance requires a unique type of expertise. Few business leaders are practiced in matters of personality and psychology. Expert insight and the right tools are required to translate simple measures into successful outcomes.

- Who within your organization keeps you focused upon the employee experience?
- What scientifically sound tool do they use as the basis for their advice to you?
- Are you reaching the goals you set around employee retention, ownership and productivity?

About KTA Solutions

We provide easy tools to solve difficult problems, with the **Workittude? Snapshot** as one of those tools. We emphasize a values-driven, people-focused, work-life integration culture. Our team's sole mission is to deliver simple tools which provide strategies and insight resulting in a measurable increase in retention, employee engagement, performance, and productivity. To do so, we use a unique systematic approach to people development that unlocks the power of a person's personality and purpose. We believe when personality meets the right opportunity, purpose emerges – and performance follows.

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