Executive Development Report

Candidate:
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MARCH 2010

George Sample

Executive Summary

George has a strong inclination to take charge of situation and problems, develop solutions, and implement them. Fairly perfectionistic, he sets high standards for himself and expects as much from both the organization for which he works and his co-workers. He is very results-focused, and though more effective than most at reading people, seems to make limited conscious use of the information he gains about them, at least in the context of the organization. He is very practical and results-focused, and inclined to work with a salient issue (his primary concern is developing business and delivering on promises to clients). It is a significant challenge for him to balance that with the political and interpersonal responsibilities that are necessary aspects of effective performance in senior roles.

George is extremely tough-minded, prepared to do whatever is necessary, even at his personal disadvantage, to achieve the goals he has set for himself and his part of the organization. He applies these same standards to his co-workers, and likely comes across as unreactive and unsympathetic. He is more sensitive than appearances indicate, however, and though able to deal well with pressure, he does not respond well to criticism, but will usually be hurt by it, especially if it is personal.

From a developmental perspective, George has three primary opportunities. First, he will benefit from learning to deal with situations and events more strategically, principally learning to "begin with the end in mind", to quote Stephen Covey. Especially, he should learn to anticipate the problems that his solutions will create, and design his solutions so as to have problems of his choice. While beneficial in itself, it will also help him to develop a better understanding of the contexts in which events occur and people interact.

The second opportunity is as important as the first: he needs to take political realities and individual people's interests into account whether planning or carrying out plans. Of these, paying attention to how people think and feel is the more important. Though the technical facts are certainly important, implementation is done by people, and how he deals with them will often spell the difference between success and failure.

The third opportunity is the most important. Though he is unaware of its pervasiveness in his life, his perfectionistic style has a significant impact on his attitudes and behaviour, and he demands a good deal more of himself than is realistic. More importantly, he demands much more of other people than is either realistic or fair, and has no sympathy for himself or them when expected results do not occur. If he achieves nothing else, he must learn to recognize what is realistic to expect of himself and others, and especially to cease putting the burden on, and blaming, other people. He needs to work smarter, not harder.

While George has the capacity to make the necessary transitions, it will take significant effort on his part to achieve the level of skill that is required. He is not accustomed to thinking in the ways discussed above, and they will seem foreign to him. Nonetheless, the goal is attainable.

Potential

With the exception of *Coachability*, the values that appear in the table below indicate the likely maximum level that the candidate can be expected to attain, relative to the competency clusters that appear in this report. Thus, it is important to refer to the cluster scores when considering the Potential scores. As an example, *Functional/Technical Potential* refers primarily to the *Cognitive Capacity*, *Personal Effectiveness*, and *Action Orientation* clusters: a Potential score of 4 will correspond to scores of 4 or 5 on those clusters.

Coachability can be thought of as Development Potential; in other words, the ability and willingness to learn new behaviours, skills, and knowledge, and to apply them in the work setting. It is a measure of the candidate's current state, not of what could be accomplished.

Potential as Mentor is a measure of the candidate's potential ability to develop others: it corresponds directly to the *Developing Others* aspect of the *Management & Leadership* cluster.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Functional/Technical Potential					5		
Managerial Potential						6	
Leadership Potential						6	
Coachability						6	
Potential as Mentor					5		

Realization of his potential will depend primarily on George's willingness to follow through on the developmental recommendations found elsewhere in this report. At the same time, his ability to both pursue the developmental avenues open to him, and to make effective use of them, will depend in the greatest part on changes in the organization and on the way he is viewed, particularly by his superiors. He needs to approach them differently, and they in turn must recognize both his value and the efforts he is making.

Recommendation

We recommend that George be retained in his current role, and that he be supported particularly in two respects. First, he needs to be supported in his attempts to resolve the problems that plague the organization, and that support must be made evident to others in the organization. Second, he must be supported in obtaining development assistance, with respect to the resources identified elsewhere in this report (and the means to apply them) and provision of executive coaching from outside the organization, as well as the availability of a mentor within it.

Cognitive Capacity

Effective performance in business is supported by strong academic, analytic, and problem-solving skills. The Cognitive Capacity cluster is composed of Analytic Thinking, Conceptual Thinking, and Expertise, 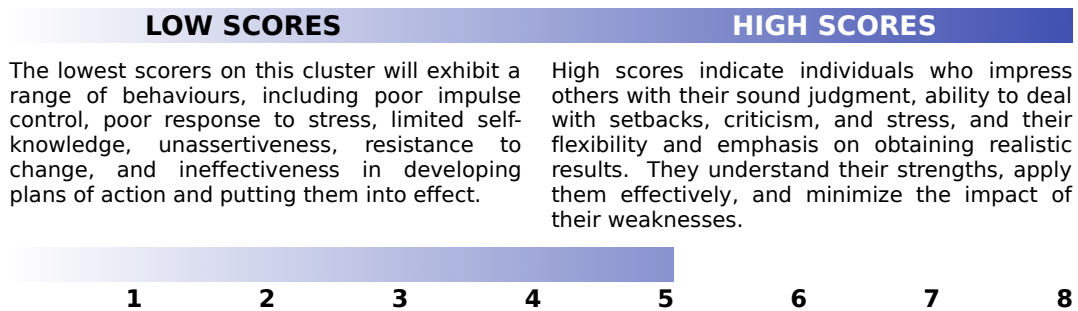and thus includes the capacity to analyze problems, conceptualize situations and potential results, and develop creative or innovative solutions. It also includes the individual's level of training and experience, and her/his ability and readiness to apply knowledge and skills to solving problems and developing plans of action. The eight levels of this cluster correspond to those of the underlying competencies. We expect senior managers and executives, and those who would succeed to these roles, to attain a score of 6 or greater.

LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES
Low scores on this cluster generally indicate low levels of ability, knowledge, and training. Moderately low scores may also indicate the presence of good to superior capacity in an individual who fails to demonstrate it in any meaningful way. People with very low scores typically take considerably longer than the average person to learn new information and procedures, and may learn them imperfectly. They often lack awareness of their limitations.	High scores are obtained by people with exceptional intellectual skills and superior training, who make full use of their analytical and conceptual reasoning skills and of knowledge acquired formally and informally. They learn and adapt to new information and ideas quickly. Those with very high scores are usually true strategic thinkers.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

➢ Overall, critical thinking skills appear similar to those of the average American adult. There is particular strength, however, with respect to understanding the assumptions that people make when making decisions.

➢ Somewhat limited deductive reasoning skills, which suggest a comparably limited capacity for looking ahead to ascertain the possible results of an intended action: he may be surprised at times by the outcomes that are actually achieved.

➢ Limited inferential skills, in company with a natural orientation toward what is practical and tangible, indicate a tendency to very literal and linear thinking. Thinks tactically, not strategically, whatever his own perception may be.

Personal Effectiveness

The Personal Effectiveness cluster is composed of the Self-Management, Self-Confidence, Flexibility, and Planning & Order competencies. Senior managers and executives are expected to demonstrate good self-control, manage stress effectively, respond well to change, and be able to organize themselves and their activities in a useful manner. In combination with superior cognitive capacity, high levels of performance on the competencies included in this cluster allow for superior decision-making and judgment. The eight levels of this cluster correspond to those of the underlying competencies. We expect senior managers and executives, and those who would succeed to these roles, to attain a score of 6 or greater.

LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES
The lowest scorers on this cluster will exhibit a range of behaviours, including poor impulse control, poor response to stress, limited self-knowledge, unassertiveness, resistance to change, and ineffectiveness in developing plans of action and putting them into effect.	High scores indicate individuals who impress others with their sound judgment, ability to deal with setbacks, criticism, and stress, and their flexibility and emphasis on obtaining realistic results. They understand their strengths, apply them effectively, and minimize the impact of their weaknesses.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

➢ Sets high standards for his own performance, and also for those with whom he works. Extremely tough-minded: not forgiving of himself or others when mistakes are made. Generally perfectionistic, and thus inclined to overstate the desired goal and underestimate his effectiveness in attaining it. Will project this onto others as well.

➢ Generally tends to be cautious and somewhat conservative with regard to decisions, notwithstanding a strong tendency to make them very quickly. At times, considers his decisions to be impulsive, though a more realistic evaluation suggests otherwise.

➢ Inclined to be anxious about results, and unduly concerned about achieving them. Nonetheless, seems to deal fairly well with pressure.

➢ Somewhat averse to change: will not respond well to the unexpected or unknown.

➢ Despite thinking otherwise, is inclined to be oversensitive to criticism, becoming defensive or withdrawn. People of his general personality type seem imperturbable on the surface and hide their feelings, but are easily hurt by mistreatment. Given the pressures and lack of support he is currently experiencing, this compounds the impact of his perfectionist tendencies

Action Orientation

The Action Orientation cluster combines Achievement Orientation, Initiative, and Information-Seeking. It is a measure of drive and ambition, and is focused on attaining goals and producing measurable results. The ten levels of this cluster correspond to those of the underlying competencies. We expect senior managers and executives, and those who would succeed to these roles, to attain a score of 7 or greater.
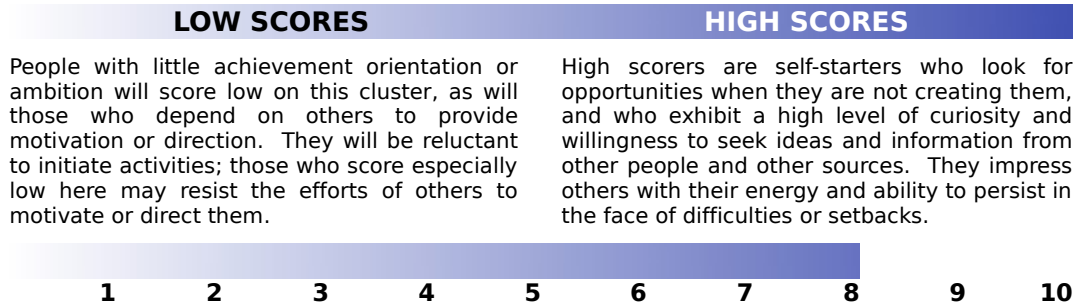
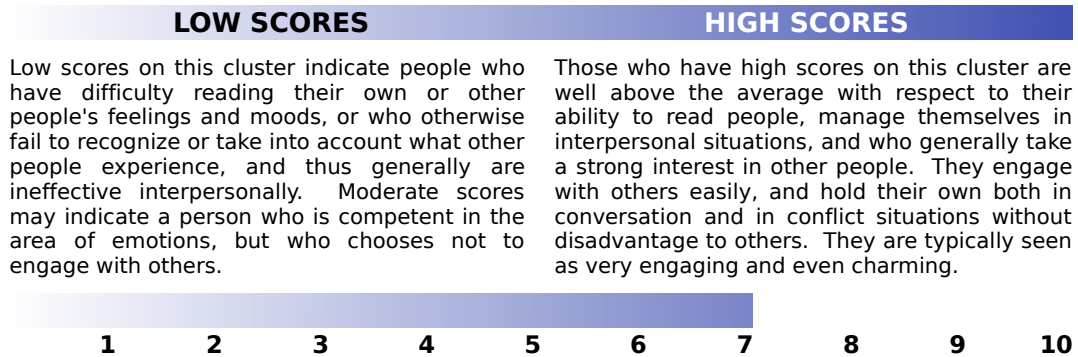| LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES
People with little achievement orientation or ambition will score low on this cluster, as will those who depend on others to provide motivation or direction. They will be reluctant to initiate activities; those who score especially low here may resist the efforts of others to motivate or direct them.	High scorers are self-starters who look for opportunities when they are not creating them, and who exhibit a high level of curiosity and willingness to seek ideas and information from other people and other sources. They impress others with their energy and ability to persist in the face of difficulties or setbacks.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

➢ Energetic and results-oriented, easily takes charge of problems and situations and focuses on identifying and delivering on specific outcomes.

➢ Seeks mastery and achievement: superior performance is particularly important to him.

➢ Strong orientation toward projects and performance: this is an operational or tactical perspective; not inclined to view the organization in a strategic manner, which will limit his appreciation of the broader issues it faces.

Interpersonal Effectiveness

The Interpersonal Effectiveness competency cluster includes both the candidate's ability to read, respond to, and manage interactions with other people, and interest in engaging and building relationships with them. Given the critical part that relationships play in organizations, it is a considerable advantage to possess strong skills and a readiness to develop positive and support relationships with people within the organization as well as outside it. The ten levels of this cluster correspond to those of the underlying competencies. We expect senior managers and executives, and those who would succeed to these roles, to attain a score of 7 or greater on this cluster.
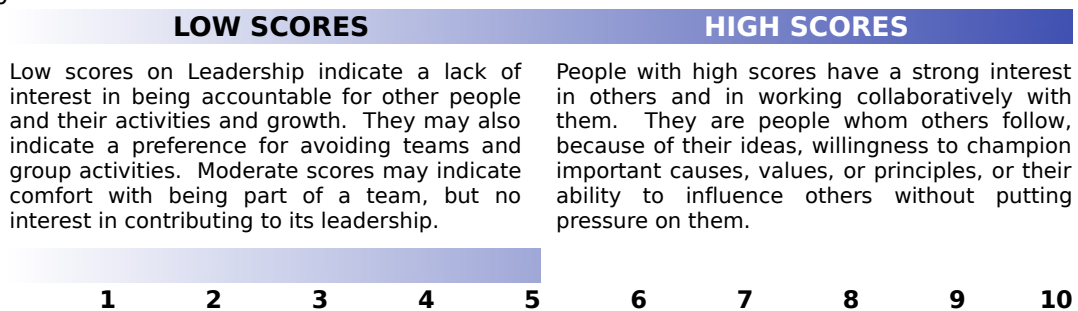
LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES
Low scores on this cluster indicate people who have difficulty reading their own or other people's feelings and moods, or who otherwise fail to recognize or take into account what other people experience, and thus generally are ineffective interpersonally. Moderate scores may indicate a person who is competent in the area of emotions, but who chooses not to engage with others.	Those who have high scores on this cluster are well above the average with respect to their ability to read people, manage themselves in interpersonal situations, and who generally take a strong interest in other people. They engage with others easily, and hold their own both in conversation and in conflict situations without disadvantage to others. They are typically seen as very engaging and even charming.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

➢ Emotional skills generally a little stronger than those of most people: will recognize others' reactions and feelings more often than not, and is capable of responding appropriately. At times, however, this will be overshadowed by his need to produce specific results or by his reaction to criticism or a setback.

➢ Comfortable with people, though not especially gregarious: tends to prefer his own company, and when with others will prefer meeting 2 or 3 at once over meeting a large group.

➢ Inclined to be cautious about committing himself to a relationship: will wait for others to make overtures, rather than initiate contact or seek increased intimacy.

Leadership & Management

The Leadership & Management cluster is concerned with the actual practice of leading and managing people, groups, and organizations. Included in this cluster are Developing Others, Directiveness, Influencing Others, Teamwork & Cooperation, and Team Leadership. Because leading people is distinctly different from managing things, there are two scores for this competency cluster. Leadership is about engaging other people, motivating them through one's principles, values, or espoused goals, and enabling their participation in a team effort. Management is more concerned with marshalling of resources, establishment of procedures, and ensuring that tasks are completed by those responsible for them. Senior managers and executives need to be effective at both of these, though at more senior levels leadership becomes more important than management. The ten levels of this cluster reflect the range of scores of the underlying competencies. We expect senior managers and executives to score at or above 8 on Leadership and 6 on Management.
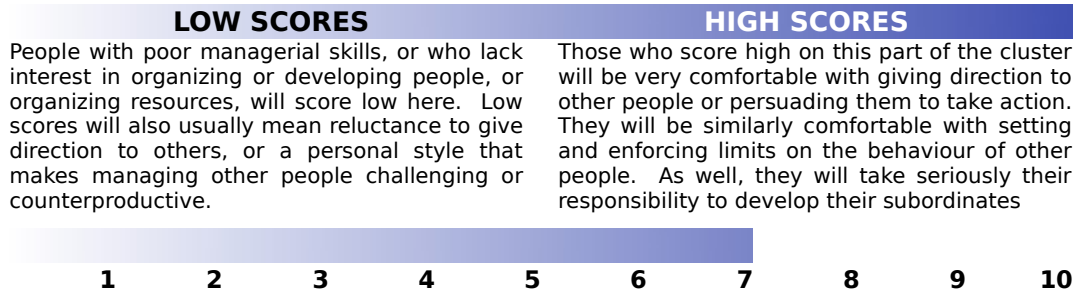
Leadership

LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES
Low scores on Leadership indicate a lack of interest in being accountable for other people and their activities and growth. They may also indicate a preference for avoiding teams and group activities. Moderate scores may indicate comfort with being part of a team, but no interest in contributing to its leadership.	People with high scores have a strong interest in others and in working collaboratively with them. They are people whom others follow, because of their ideas, willingness to champion important causes, values, or principles, or their ability to influence others without putting pressure on them.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

➢ Focused on the organization's performance, and oriented to act upward. Puts his primary emphasis on what the organization does, rather than on its sociopolitical character and issues.

➢ Generally tolerant and non-judgmental with regard to others; indeed, despite his tough-mindedness, is reluctant to hurt people, and thus may not confront them until he becomes annoyed with their actions or performance.

➢ Will tend to look at development of subordinates more from the perspective of what the organization needs than from an evaluation of their interests and skills.

➢ In a team environment, while wanting to share the responsibility of making decisions and carrying them out, can act independently of the team: does not fear isolation if his decisions are unpopular.

➢ In his current environment, likely finds it difficult to conduct himself as a leader, as opposed to being a manager. The overall score above is more representative of his current status than of his potential.

Management

LOW SCORES	HIGH SCORES
People with poor managerial skills, or who lack interest in organizing or developing people, or organizing resources, will score low here. Low scores will also usually mean reluctance to give direction to others, or a personal style that makes managing other people challenging or counterproductive.	Those who score high on this part of the cluster will be very comfortable with giving direction to other people or persuading them to take action. They will be similarly comfortable with setting and enforcing limits on the behaviour of other people. As well, they will take seriously their responsibility to develop their subordinates

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

- Willing to take charge of people, singly or in groups, and inclined to positions where he can direct others or be accountable for their performance. When in charge of people, will be dominant and can be demanding. This tendency is likely greater than he realizes, and can lead to subordinates becoming dependent on him.

- Strong results orientation: will tend to organize and manage people according to the tasks, projects, or goals that most need attention. Does not seem to deal with people according to their interests or personal goals.

- Despite the tendency to take control and rely on his interpretation of what is needed, tends to prefer team environments, and wants to share at least some decision-making and accountability for results. In part, this may stem from having unnecessarily high (perfectionist) standards and thus possibly feeling insufficiently equipped to handle them alone.

Developmental Recommendations

The issues that George faces point to three areas in which development will be particularly important. First, he needs to be able to look at and think about situations from a more strategic perspective. Second, and at least as important, is the need to take people and their individual interests and capabilities into account. An aspect of this that has more application across the organization is learning to deal with its politics. Third, he needs to, as the saying goes, "cut himself some slack", and even more, to be more understanding of others.

1. George's natural way of thinking about things is very practical and direct: he deals with the observed facts, develops plans of action that take them into account, and ensures that those plans are carried out as intended. There is another approach, in some sense diametrically opposed, that takes into account the long-term goal and its characteristics. This is a strategic approach, and it includes not only the problem or task at hand, but the context in which it occurs, and the problems that any solution will create. Rather than beginning with the observed facts, strategic approaches begin, as Stephen Cover has put it, "with the end in mind". Learning to think strategically is not an especially easy task, but there are procedures and techniques available that can be mastered, that will make the task more fruitful and less onerous.

   In George's case, it will be necessary to also develop stronger inferential and deductive reasoning skills, in order to make it easier to develop a strategic perspective. The books by Edward De Bono provide ideas, perspectives, and techniques to accomplish this. Either *De Bono's Thinking Course* or *Teach Yourself to Think* will provide these. This approach is known as "lateral thinking": included in its value for George is the way it enables looking at situations from unusual points of view. With respect to planning, Nadler & Hibino's *Breakthrough Thinking* provides a well-laid-out strategic planning process based in part on identifying the problems that one wants to solve (as opposed to what is presented).

2. A primary concern of George's development centres around his interactions with his co-workers. There are two important aspects to this: one interpersonal and the other political. George does not appear to develop points of view about people, focusing instead on the facts of a situation. What he does not seem to grasp is that the facts of a situation include the people and their expectations and interests. Fortunately, George has an ability to relate to people that seems a little above the average: he can read their reactions and attune his own emotions to make the most of a situation. He has an above-average capacity for empathy that could be used to a much greater degree. The essential issue for George is to start paying attention to people and the messages that they are giving him, that cannot be expressed in their words or in the way they write proposals. Before communication comes relationship, and all else comes after. He cannot expect positive results from planning activities with people whose real concerns are unknown to him. Particularly with co-workers, it is essential to develop an appreciation of their motives, concerns, goals, and capacities. He has the ability to adapt to people with a wide range of beliefs and personalities: this is an asset that will be more valuable with more attention paid to their individual characteristics.

   Also important, in the context of the organization, is to learn to deal with its political realities. Putting more focus on managing upwards is essential, and that also means learning as much as possible about those above. Whether one agrees with corporate policy, as a manager one's job is to make it work to the best effect. Where there are people who cannot be moved but are not contributing, the solution includes working around them. To do this effectively means knowing as much as possible about them, and especially using that information in planning. In politics

(including the politics of the organization), there is a message in every action: the secret is to discover that message and use it to the advantage of the organization and its people, including oneself. In this regard, he should obtain a copy of Gottman and DeClaire's *The Relationship Cure*, do all the exercises it contains, and make the practices it suggests part of his daily routine. For an appropriate perspective on managing people, *The Empowered Manager* will be very helpful.

3. Making good progress on the third issue is likely to have the most positive impact. Though George is not as perfectionistic as some people, he is nonetheless quite driven, and puts more pressure on himself (and on those around him) than is either necessary or deserved.   More significantly, however, his responses to the assessment instruments indicate that he has very little sympathy for himself or other people. It appears that mistakes are simply not acceptable to him: he cannot forgive himself or anyone else. This subjects him to intolerable pressure: he feels compelled to perform at a high level, and there is no room for mistakes. He not only subjects himself to this pressure; he projects it onto others as well. It is not surprising that he tends to be quite anxious: he cannot trust others (or himself) to do things "the right way".   That expectation easily communicates itself to other people, especially those who are sensitive to emotional cues; they tend to react negatively, and George's own heightened sensitivity tends to lead to greater apprehension. This can become a vicious cycle. George needs to recognize and understand the impact that this has on him and the people around him. Further, given the importance of learning to focus more on people and their interests, managing his expectations of them is essential to that development. *When Perfect Isn't Good Enough* (see the Resources list below) provides both understanding of perfectionism and exercises that will help manage it more effectively and reduce its impact. He should begin his developmental reading with this book, followed (even accompanied) closely by *The Relationship Cure*.   The other reading can follow these two.

Resources

Antony, Martin M. & Swinson, Richard P. *When Perfect Isn't Good Enough*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 1998.

Block, Peter. *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1990.

De Bono, Edward. *De Bono's Thinking Course.* London: BBC Books, 1994.

De Bono, Edward. *Teach Yourself To Think*. London: Penguin, 1996.

De Bono, Edward. *Six Thinking Hats*. London: Penguin, 1999.

Gottman, John M. & DeClaire, Joan. *The Relationship Cure: a five-step guide to strengthening your marriage, family, and friendships*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001.

Nadler, Gerald & Hibino, Shozo. *Breakthrough Thinking.* Rev. 2nd ed. Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1994.