



Executive Coaching Development Report for
Newco Inc, New York, NY

April 12th – 14th, 2009

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Date: April 2nd, 2009

TAIS

The
Attentional &
Interpersonal
Style Inventory

Part 1

The previous Situational Leadership Report for Joe captures his strengths and key challenges in need of coaching in order to develop. They are summarized in the chart below.

Key Assets or Strengths on which he should build	Key challenges which he can learn skills for addressing
Fine attention control and ability to handle pressure. Specifically, he has great political sense and instincts. He uses this ability to establish rapport quickly with many people. He recognizes what people are doing well and celebrates their every success.	Joe reacts more on impressions than on detailed scrutiny of such things as performance records. He does not leverage his political sense for optimum competitive advantage because he is too considerate.
Joe is well behaved and cares about other people. He controls his anger quite well.	His concern about controlling his criticism to avoid hurting people's feelings limits holding people accountable. This is a case of a strength becoming a liability unless it is managed.

Coaching proceeds best when it is targeted. People can really be coached on only one thing at a time so ideally we would highlight only one or two targets per person for optimum return on coaching investment. In Joe's case, two of his tendencies can be addressed in a coordinated way. Consider the following advice to him which gives him a handle on how becoming more focused or detailed in writing performance expectations can help him hold people accountable. When he allows expectations to be nebulous, lacking real metrics, he leaves the situation open for his soft-hearted tendency to give people the benefit of the doubt.

You need to rely on measurement systems that clearly point out who is performing and who is not. The more time you spend in making these equitable and realistic, the easier your job of identifying poor performers will become. The right scoreboard means you don't have to be the one bringing the bad news—it is clear. But you have to support this process completely.

Ideally, Joe would learn ways to address issues and give constructive criticism so that he did not threaten his likeability. He needs to be tutored through this process and

made to use eye contact to remain strong when delivering a strong message of zero tolerance. Here his fine ability to read people will provide him with accurate feedback on how his message has been received and ultimately give him the timing for tough messages that many people lack. He needs to be taught a way to lower his stress level on the spot (centering) so that he does not allow his discomfort to cloud what he sees or change the tone of his voice from strong to hesitant or apologetic. He needs enough supervised practice at this so that he realizes that he will actually become stronger when he is appropriately tough and resolute. He will even come to understand that his many compliments will mean more when people realize he has the ability to set limits and provide criticism as well.

A large part of his holding people accountable is to teach him how to co-develop expectations with each person, including his boss. This process requires a focus on details that Joe may lack in the heat of battle. More importantly, following the process will get the buy-in from each person so that performance reviews are cleaner and never surprising. This process done well actually performs the hard part of feedback so well because everyone can read a scoreboard. When Joe realizes that he has a mechanism for holding people accountable, he can gradually provide more on-the-spot feedback to people when they are failing to move toward those agreed-upon goals.

It may help if Joe's coach is able to provide Joe with some examples of times when constructive criticism was actually a gift. Most of us know that sports coaches tend to be toughest on the best athletes for obvious reasons. With this in mind, Joe can find in his own experience an example of someone caring enough about him to exhort him to be better. They provided this criticism not because they wanted to put Joe down, but because they believed in him. With such a story in mind, Joe can set the stage for providing similar constructive feedback or gifts to each of his people. This will make it easier for him to be critical and for them to receive his mid course corrections.

Once again, the coach needs to remind Joe that he is underutilizing his ability to track and monitor people in real time. Of course, he notices both what people are doing right and what mistakes they are making, but currently he chooses to comment almost exclusively on their successes. This is unbalanced feedback and what has been said above can help him restore the balance that people need to develop optimally.

Part 2

The Implications of Joe Somebody's TAIS Results for Coaching

Attentional Processes: You have an impressive attentional profile with the ability to toggle effectively among the three different attentional styles even under pressure. Your key asset is your ability to read people in real time and to establish rapport quickly with a lot of people. You excel at catching people doing something right and reinforcing such actions when they happen. You have such a tendency to believe in your street sense that you may react more on impressions than details. You need to learn some skepticism to the extent that you will seek out data to confirm or negate your impressions. You need to do this as a routine before you make major human resources decisions.

Coaching and Leadership Style: You have the style and attitude to lead people by using the One-Minute-Manager advice; "catch people doing something right." You lead better when you are with people and can interact with them personally. Because you are less effective leading by memo and decree, you need to work harder on putting in place systems which attend to even the smallest detail. In particular, you need to embrace performance management systems and adhere to them and see that all your people adhere to them as well.

Social Style: You certainly enjoy meeting people and working with them, attending to their needs, and cheerleading their successes. You are so outgoing and desirous of people liking you and each other that you will often try to finesse conflict rather than address it directly. You will find you are more effective when you balance your copious amounts of support with some constructive criticism. People may even value your support all the more when they realize that you can be tough as well.

You seem to be designed to take advantage of the lessons and philosophies of tai chi as described above. You like to motivate more with positive reinforcement than by coercion. This obviously makes you initially effective at encouraging people to work together. What is most often absent is a sense that there is some force behind the positive intentions. People are probably going to take advantage of your good nature and desire to avoid conflict. The good news is that when you learn some techniques for addressing conflict head on and even providing some constructive criticism, your ability to read people and friendly nature will enable you to say things to people that few others can do. But make no mistake about it; you do need to develop some steel underneath your cotton.

Given the opportunity to manage by wandering around, you are one of the first to notice how things are working and whether they need changing. You can do this in groups as well as with individuals finding what makes them tick and when they are off keel. Yet

managing change takes more—it takes pointing the way and making sure people are performing as expected. While you can use your wonderful ability to read people to assess who is working and who is not, your desire to have everyone like you gets in the way of implementing change in a consistent manner replete with consequences for those who don't measure up. You need to rely on measurement systems that clearly point out who is performing and who is not. The more time you spend in making these equitable and realistic the easier your job of identifying poor performers will become. The right scoreboard means you don't have to be the one bringing the bad news—it is clear. But you have to support this process completely.

Remote Management and Communication Style: As indicated earlier, you are better in person when you are able to see and hear for yourself what is going on. Modern communications which connect us all electronically but not personally are a bit of an anathema for you. **We suggest strongly that you spend a good deal of time up front meeting everyone personally, seeing for yourself what they're about and determining what moves them. Once you establish this rapport, your electronic and telephone communications will be to people that you know and who know you. Thus, it will be easier to insert some of your personality into these otherwise dry communiqués.**

Part 3

Key Team Building Competencies/Attitudes

One of the enduring ironies is that modern organizations seek people who are self starters and somewhat independent and then realize that they need to groom them to work together in teams. The very qualities that make a great individual contributor may become counterproductive in collaborative efforts if they dominate interactions. Thus, we are going to examine how your tendencies help you with the three competencies below and how they may get in your way when you rely on them too much and lose flexibility in your approach to team efforts.

INFLUENCE. The ability to influence others effectively is a high echelon skill for getting people to work together synergistically. Contrast the term *influence* with *coercion*. Both share the act of taking charge and the goal of proactively making things happen. Thereafter, their paths and signatures differ dramatically. A pivotal difference is how coercion takes away choices from others. This is the reason it often backfires. The Chinese martial art of *taijiquan* has been described as “*the art of hiding steel in cotton.*” Tai Chi masters move their opponents yet in such subtle ways that the person being moved does not feel hit. But they are definitely influenced. In tai chi, when one tries too hard to push someone around essentially ignoring that person's energy and intent, timing and effectiveness suffer greatly. A lesson to be heeded.

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coercion. This obviously makes you initially effective at encouraging people to work together. What is most often absent is a sense that there is some force behind the positive intentions. People are probably going to take advantage of your good nature and desire to avoid conflict. **The good news is that when you learn some techniques for addressing conflict head on and even providing some constructive criticism, your ability to read people and friendly nature will enable you to say things to people that few others can do. But make no mistake about it; you do need to develop some steel underneath your cotton.**

COLLABORATION. The term collaboration seems to accompany many of the finer efforts involving multiple talents. Check how often you hear it used when two or more people produce fine music, when theatre groups excel, and when volunteer organizations make a difference. There is something about the word that indicates the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The word also connotes contributions from all people regardless of formal rank and often the blurring of the lines about who contributed what. It is obvious that those who make teams go endorse Bob Galvin's definition of humility—*"Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking more of other people."* While the former CEO of Motorola's definition is not correct in the strict dictionary sense, it is actually better for our purposes. No matter how skilled you are, you need the enthusiastic contributions of many others. Collaboration relies more on relatedness than on position, status or power.

Collaboration is a word that probably fits your mouth as well as any. We can be reasonably sure that those who have worked with you feel that you value their contributions considerably. You almost never let your own ego get in the way of effective teamwork and giving credit where credit is due. Paradoxically, you have trouble working with those people who don't share your positive attitude towards everybody else. And to put together the best team you will need to use even those people who can get on your nerves—those people who are naturally critical, who can find flaws in even the most positive events. **One of the challenges of real management is learning to blend in their proper roles those who differ from us. Even such people can make a real contribution to your team by keeping everyone on their toes. Think about how easy going a team of clones of you would be. What would be missing?**

CHANGE MANAGEMENT: Change is an enduring theme in modern corporations. While change is inevitable and ever present, how we as individuals handle it often defines our corporate life. When a business metric such as productivity is too low, motivating our teams and ourselves is a key building block. Assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating any required change is a primary leadership and coaching imperative. Self awareness of our change readiness and that of our team is the first step to leading the modifications that are needed.

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well as with individuals finding what makes them tick and when they are off keel. Yet managing change takes more—it takes pointing the way and making sure people are performing as expected. While you can use your wonderful ability to read people to assess who is working and who is not, your desire to have everyone like you gets in the way of implementing change in a consistent manner replete with consequences for those who don't measure up. **You need to rely on measurement systems that clearly point out who is performing and who is not. The more time you spend in making these equitable and realistic the easier your job of identifying poor performers will become. The right scoreboard means you don't have to be the one bringing the bad news—it is clear. But you have to support this process completely.**

Part 4

TAIS & Change

Distractions: the weeds of concentration, the enemies of performance.

In general, distractions dilute or diminish performance on any competence. In addition, feeling distracted or off your game means that you have fewer mental resources to deal proactively with change. Thus, you do not want high scores on any of the following three scales—the noise side of the positive attentional styles or signal.

- External Distractibility—external events cause attention to leave task to track or notice irrelevant happenings.
- Internal Distractibility—wandering minds cause listening gaps and can overcomplicate communication. They cause a lot of “accidents.”
- Reduced Flexibility—indicates the degree to which either of two main human emotions (anger and anxiety) causes tunnel vision, slowing down adjustments in real time. Almost no one is ever creative, clever, or flexible when angry or anxious. As one consultant has proclaimed, “Stress makes people stupid.” Or at least resistant to change and not very clever.

Individual Change Challenges. Essentially, TAIS inventory profiles indicate your preferences or tendencies. Having to react in a manner opposite your stated preference takes you out of your comfort zone so we all feel motivated to get back to situations that we like. Thus, you can look at all TAIS inventory scales especially the interpersonal styles as indications of your ideal working style. Any human characteristic can be helpful or counterproductive depending on the situation. In general, your goal is to master each style of attending or interacting so you can use it at the right time in the right amount. The above sections provide some hints as to where you may tend to do too much or not enough of a specified reaction.