Strong Job Fit Results in Top Performing Sales Force

LexisNexis® is a leading provider of information solutions to professionals in a variety of areas—legal, business, government, law enforcement, accounting and academic. A member of Reed Elsevier Group, LexisNexis serve the business information needs of their clients through 13,000 employees in 100 countries, providing access to 5 billion searchable documents from more than 32,000 sources.

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> *Tom Rocco*
> *Vice President Sales, California-West*

The Challenges: LexisNexis was founded in 1973 and built their business on its expertise in providing the U.S. law community with legal statutes and case opinions. The period from the mid 1980s through the 1990s was a time of tremendous change for the legal information services industry due to the advent of the Internet. LexisNexis realized that to remain a leader in this industry, they needed to broaden the services they offered to their clients.

The fastest way to obtain the expertise they required to do this was through acquisition. This strategy incorporated several challenges including the need to: identify the best information and technology resources with which to merge, build a world-class sales organization to support the new information services, and develop a process to effectively integrate the acquired staff into the expanded LexisNexis organization.

The Process: To assist with the "people" challenges, the Predictive Index® (PI) was recommended by a LexisNexis executive who had used the behavioral assessment survey at his prior employment. The tool would help the organization identify the people who would "best fit" the LexisNexis culture during the M&A process and assist in building a strong sales team. His recommendation was approved and senior management and sales managers were trained to analyze and apply the Predictive Index results to their challenges.

To support their objective of broadening their service offerings, LexisNexis acquired several content and technology companies including Matthew Bender and Martindale-Hubbell. As part of the merger process, the Predictive Index was used to benchmark the organizational culture of each company to determine the culture fit with LexisNexis. The Predictive Index was also used to place people in the positions that were natural job fits. This allowed LexisNexis to effectively blend the organizations and forecast long-term employee retention.

As a result of the Matthew Bender acquisition, Tom Rocco became Vice President of Sales for the western U.S. Shortly after joining LexisNexis, Tom uncovered two related issues regarding the sales team: there were no clear hiring requirements and high turnover was having a significant impact on productivity. Looking forward, Tom knew that as the business continued to evolve and product offerings grew, the desired selling skills of his team would change as well. LexisNexis would no longer be selling a research product, but holistic sales solutions. This would result in a longer, more complex sales cycle, requiring an account management approach verses an existing transactional method. To address these challenges, Tom needed to find a way to identify the job behaviors necessary for sales success and then match these traits to the individual strengths of his sales team.

Tom attended Predictive Index training which included the use of the PRO, the companion tool to the Predictive Index that profiles the behavioral performance requirements of the job. Using this knowledge, Tom reviewed the PIs of his salespeople against the recommended PRO for the sales position. The results of this exercise showed Tom that the top performers were a strong match to the recommended PI profile while the PI results of the bottom performers deviated significantly from the recommended PRO. Tom used this insight as a foundation for establishing a hiring process for his salespeople. Tom explains, "It's easy to fall in love with a candidate who says the right things and has a strong track record. What we know through experience is if their natural strengths support the job, they can do it long term and be successful. In my tenure at LexisNexis, every time we have deviated from the PRO, we may have had some salespeople that had short term success but they did not last. The Predictive Index is the best thing we have found to help us uncover not the "can do" but the "will do." The Predictive Index process helps insure that the people we're bringing into the organization are inherently a good fit for their job and that they possess the innate characteristics that we know lead to long term job success. I'm not going to deviate from what we know our successful pattern is. It's not worth it."

Tom shared an example of how important job fit is to a person's success and job satisfaction: Tom had a sales representative who was an outstanding performer and wanted to move up in the organization. Based on the company's established growth path, the next step for this person was a managerial role. The individual was promoted but could not understand why he was so desperately unhappy in the new position. Using the information provided from PI and the PRO together, Tom was able to make the manager understand behaviorally why he was struggling in the manager role and highly successful as a sales rep. According to Tom, "The Predictive Index takes the whole emotional part out of explaining an employee's behavioral fits and gaps in relation to their job, and in this case, why he was not performing. The result was moving this person back into an individual contributor role where he has flourished once again."

Tom expanded his use of the Predictive Index beyond hiring and job fit to coaching. "As a management tool, PI is indispensable. The Predictive Index provides the insight to effectively coach and motivate employees for better performance." Tom keeps the PIs of his direct reports within arms reach to assist him in the day-to-day communication and the management of his sales team.

Information provided through the Predictive Index allowed Tom and his managers to coach their direct reports on stronger communication. The goal was to make the employees aware of their specific communication style and the impact it had on the people with whom they interacted: other employees, prospects and customers. Tom shared an example: He had a good employee who had a strong sense of urgency and a need for great detail. These traits were causing her to appear unfriendly, almost hostile, to the other employees. Tom used the Predictive Index to make this employee aware of her communication style and the negative impact it was having on the other employees. The result was powerful. By creating this awareness, it enabled her to adjust her interpersonal skills to support the needs of their audience. Tom shares why PI was so effective in this scenario: "PI is a tool that depersonalizes behavior. In this situation, it allowed me to position the actions of this employee as neither good nor bad, but more as, "This is just how it is." That perspective was the foundation for effective change."

The Results:

The Predictive Index has made a positive difference at LexisNexis in selection and job fit along with employee communication and morale. Tom explains, "PI is not a one time thing. It becomes highly effective when it becomes ingrained in the culture. Our turnover has been reduced by 50% from where it was 7 years ago, and remains lower than the industry average. The team communicates more effectively, resulting in higher morale throughout the entire organization. People are happier in their jobs because they are in the right jobs. I know PI is a key part of our success."

The Predictive Index® is a unique, in-house management tool used by executives throughout the world for over 50 years to develop leaders and build successful businesses. PI Worldwide is an international association of management consultants who help companies use PI to manage their most important resource—their people.