**Assessing Character and Underlying Attributes for Exceptionally Challenging Roles and Work
(Patrick Tomlinson, 2024)**

The Character Assessment & Selection Tool is based on many years of research and experience. The focus has been on identifying the character and underlying attributes that support prominent levels of resilience and development in exceptionally challenging work. By challenging work, we mean work that is often rife with uncertainty and anxiety, and that can be testing to the extreme. The testing nature of the work can be cognitive and emotional.

CAST can be used for organization staff selection and development or by professionals wishing to explore and maximize their potential. The aim is to,

- identify where someone is at in their development
- the levels of responsibility a person can be expected to manage
- their developmental needs and pathways.

CAST is conducted by an online 1-1 in-person interview or an online form-based assessment (the creation of the form-based assessment is in progress). The in-person interview takes around 1 hour to 1 ¼ hours to complete. It explains an individual's character and attitudes towards life, work, working with others, and development potential. A summary report is provided with graphs that identify where someone is on a continuum concerning these character traits.

- Supportive - demanding style - how a person manages and approaches their development and that of others, such as in a 1-1 relationship, and in groups, such as managing a team or department.
- Growth mindset
- Perseverance
- Ownership
- Sense of purpose

From these insights the following outcomes can be determined:
- Capacity for handling challenging situations and overcoming obstacles.
- Development potential in the short and long term.
- People management and leadership abilities.
- Potential resilience related to different levels of responsibility.
- Developmental needs to maximize progress.

Assessing Character and Attributes

What determines our performance in highly challenging situations has more to do with our character than our skills. Our character is made up of underlying attributes. Attributes are personal qualities but are vitally important in professional situations.

> In such extreme situations, how you perform is much less about what you know than who you are. Your skills aren't necessarily important. What matters more are your attributes. (Diviney, 2021, p.5)

These attributes, such as persistence, purpose, growth mindset (Dweck, 2016), ownership, tenacity, and fortitude, are underlying and often not visible. Diviney (p.6) argues,

> We all have an internal coding, a specific combination of attributes that guide our performance.

Underlying attributes may be dormant and only surface in especially challenging circumstances,

> In fact, sometimes certain attributes are overlooked because we don't even know we have them. Those are what I call "dormant attributes." Typically, they emerge in environments that involve deep challenge, extreme stress, or both. (Diviney, p.24)

As well as having a major influence on individual performance, attributes also have a significant influence on how people work together. Diviney (p.6) says,

> Attributes also affect how people—teams, managers, and subordinates, spouses, children, and friends—interact with one another; a dozen competent, skilled colleagues might be a disaster working together, while a collection of seemingly average individuals excel as a collective.

The core aim of CAST is to examine these underlying attributes and to make some of the hidden or dormant qualities more visible. This is especially helpful when considering a person for roles that they have not been in before and may have little conscious awareness of their attributes and how these will fit with the demands of the role. CAST focuses on character and attributes – it does not assess the more visible and easy-to-measure skills.

The assessment gives feedback on a person's resilience, strengths, and areas of vulnerability that are relevant to different professional roles. It will give an indication of the present and potential levels of responsibility the person is capable of. A full feedback report is provided, with recommendations for development. A consultation can also be offered to discuss the report and answer any queries. Identifying underlying attributes helps create a focused development plan.
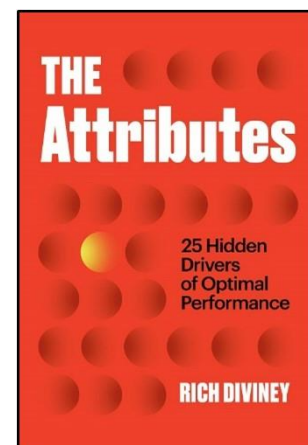
While attributes are part of everyone's circuitry, they're not immutable. They can be tweaked and modified... If you want to understand human performance—yours and others'—the first step is to understand attributes. (Dviney, p.7)

To help make CAST more widely available, we are completing an online version which will be ready very soon. This will assist organizations in accessing assessments in a timely and cost-effective manner to complement existing recruitment and selection processes.

What are the benefits?
- Improved staff retention.
- People in the roles they are suited to.
- Engaged individuals & teams, thriving in their work, & developing.
- Higher quality task performance.
- Improved finances.
- Improved quality of individual/service/organizational development.

Who can benefit?
- ✓ Business Owners
- ✓ Directors
- ✓ Managers
- ✓ Any Professional

We have commissioned over 15 CAST assessments during the past two years. We have used it for senior staff development and selection purposes. The assessments, in our experience, are an accurate indicator of a person's current mindset and abilities. They also highlight the areas of development to focus on what would enable an individual not only to develop professionally but also personally. The report from the CAST assessment of a candidate for a key role in our organization has a big part to play in the decision-making process on appointments and professional development plans.
(Mark McSherry, Director, Ireland)

The results could not be more positive. Through a simple question and answer process, completed over a 75-minute session, we gained insight into employees' strengths and challenges, appropriate methods of support, and current and future role suitability. For any company wanting to gain a greater understanding of their employees and how they and you can best support the task, I would highly recommend this assessment.
(Sean Dunne, Operations Manager, England)

The CAST Assessment tool is brilliantly insightful and delivered in a careful, thoughtful, and affirming way that encourages self-care and self-challenge. It's different from other assessment tools in that it examines aspects of "character" (as opposed to personality), to understand individuals' potential for leadership, resilience, and undertaking high-level

responsibility. I'd recommend it for recruiting to board or high-level roles, and when promoting individuals in-house. It's an exceptional analysis.
(Juliet Allan, Developmental Lead & previously Marketing Director, England)

I recommend the assessment for any manager who wants to focus on selecting the appropriate staff for positions and/or identifying ways of developing resilience.
(Darlene Lyons, Team Leader, N. Ireland)

References

Diviney, R. (2021) *The Attributes: 25 Hidden Drivers of Optimal Performance*, New York: Random House

Dweck, C.S. (2016) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, New York: Penguin Random House L.L.C.

Patrick Tomlinson - Organizational & Clinical Consultant

➢   The primary goal of Patrick's work is the development of people & organizations.
➢   Over 30 years of experience in leadership - professional, workforce & organizational development.
➢   With vast experience in staff selection & development.
➢   Has conducted longitudinal studies and research on staff retention & helped organizations significantly reduce the costs of ineffective staff selection & development.
➢   Has helped organizations across the world save £100s K & improve all outcomes.
➢   Over 8 years of research on the CAST tool.

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