EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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Do People See a Value in Interpersonal Skills Training?

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT RESEARCH

TRACOM GROUP
THE CREATOR OF SOCIALSTYLE™

Growth-aspiring organizations continually look for ways to improve their organizational performance. Employee training programs are common, but measuring the benefits and payback of these initiatives is difficult. Organizations often consider one or more of the following questions:

- Have we equipped staff with the tools to successfully address inevitable workplace productivity problems?
- Are developmental activities aligned to support priority business initiatives?
- Do we use the interpersonal skills model preferred by both training professionals and program participants?
- Have we measured the impact of investments in training and development?
- Could our training and development efforts achieve greater success?

To help answer these questions, The TRACOM Group, conducted a research study of more than 500 recent graduates of interpersonal skills training programs. These "end users" were asked about their training experience and the impact that training has in the workplace. The results of the research study follow.

Key Findings

- An overwhelming majority of training program participants had experienced workplace conflict situations, communication breakdowns and negative performance due to interpersonal issues.

- More than three-fourths of participants had personally experienced difficulties in relationships that were due to personal style differences.

- When these difficulties occur, 75 percent believe that applying Social Style concepts would improve the situation.

- More than 70 percent of participants had previously completed a personal development assessment. Social Style was identified as "easier to understand and use" by 90 percent of respondents who had experienced another assessment(s) and felt there was a difference.

- 80 percent said a multi-rater profile made them more aware of challenges or opportunities they would not have otherwise considered.

Participant Views on Interpersonal Challenges in the Workplace

The survey asked a series of questions regarding specific negative situations that can arise in the workplace. Participants were asked if they had seen or experienced instances of workplace conflict, communication breakdown, negative morale and relationship difficulties that were due to differences in personal style.

Not surprisingly, these situations had been experienced by the majority of respondents. More than 85 percent cited conflict and communication

FIGURE A: Percentage of respondents who say personal style differences in their workplace had caused:

Conflict Situations	87%
Communications Breakdowns	88%
Negative Performance	58%
Low Morale	62%
Difficult Relationships	76%

problems. Nearly 60 percent said that performance had been negatively affected by personal style differences.

More important than the existence of these problems is the participants strong belief that understanding and applying Social Style would improve the workplace situation. For example, participants who said performance would improve through applying Social Style outnumbered those who said performance would not improve by more than 17 to one. Figure B shows participants held similarly strong beliefs about the benefits of Social Style in regard to other workplace problems.

their ease of understanding and use. More than 90 percent of those identified Social Style as "easier to understand and use."

A majority (80%) felt that having a multi-rater profile with "self" and "other" scores made them "more aware of challenges and opportunities that would not have otherwise been considered. Only Social Style is available as a multi-rater profile among leading assessment models.

There has been much industry-wide debate about the need for ongoing follow-up to maximize impact of training programs, and a large majority of this study's participants see the benefits of follow-up. Nearly 80 percent said they "would

building and maintaining co-worker relationships
- 97% believe it is important for managing conflict
- 94% believe it is important for retaining valued employees

In that study, 88 percent of corporate training executives who had used Social Style believed it worked "very well" or "extremely well." This was significantly more than the number of executives who believed that other interpersonal models such as Myers-Briggs (73 percent) and DiSC (61 percent) worked well.

The end user data also builds on TRACOM's *Managerial Success Study*, which looked at job performance of managers at an international publishing company. That 2005 study compared Versatility — TRACOM's measure of a person's ability to establish effective relationships — with performance on 47 job competencies such as managing conflict, coaching others and leading teams. It clearly showed that **managers with high Versatility outperformed managers with low Versatility in all areas of managerial performance.** Findings from this study are highlighted in Figure C.

FIGURE B: Participant response to "Would applying Social Style improve results in the following situations?"

	YES	NO
Conflict Situations	375	18
Communications Breakdowns	392	16
Negative Performance	358	21
Low Morale	343	32
Difficult Relationships	375	36

Participants' Preferred Training Model
While respondents had participated in a Social Style training program in the two months prior to completing this survey, most had previously experienced another assessment earlier in their careers. More than 70 percent of those surveyed had previously undergone a personal development assessment. This prior experience provides an opportunity to compare participants' beliefs about Social Style with other assessments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and DiSC.

More than half of the people who had experienced multiple assess-ments felt there were differences in
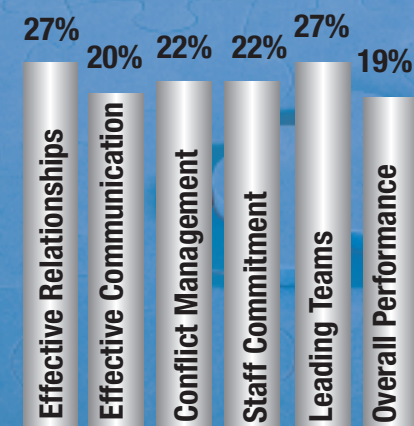
benefit from a follow-up profile." Clearly interpersonal effectiveness is a lifelong skill and a periodic refresher and review is helpful to most people.

Considerations of Previous Research Studies
This research shows that end users believe applying Social Style can improve the workplace. It confirms the findings of two earlier research studies. In the *Evaluating Corporate Training Practices* study, training professionals strongly indicated their belief that interpersonal skills were very important for a multitude of work tasks:
- 98% believe it is important for communicating effectively
- 98% believe it is important for

FIGURE C: VERSATILITY IMPROVES MANAGERIAL PERFORMANCE BY:

Effective Relationships	Effective Communication	Conflict Management	Staff Commitment	Leading Teams	Overall Performance
27%	20%	22%	22%	27%	19%

Collectively these three studies provide a comprehensive evaluation of the need for and impact of interpersonal skills and training. Corporate training professionals say these skills are needed to perform specific workplace roles and directly support business goals. These executives also identify Social Style as the most effective interpersonal skills model.

Similarly, a study of program participants shows that end users find the Social Style model easier to understand and use. They overwhelmingly say applying Social Style improves results in their workplace.

Finally, a comprehensive study of corporate managers shows that those who have high levels of interpersonal skills significantly outperform others in all areas of managerial responsibility. These high Versatility managers even earn significantly higher compensation, further evidence of their workplace contributions.

For more information or to discuss your organization's performance efforts, contact The TRACOM Group at 303-470-4928 or visit our website at www.TRACOMCORP.com

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- Managerial Success Study

- Corporate Training Best Practices Research

- The Impact of Interpersonal Effectiveness Whitepaper

- The Value of Multi-rater Profiles Whitepaper

TRACOM Research Overview

TRACOM is committed to ongoing research that documents the connection between interpersonal skills and job performance. We have helped to improve organizational and individual performance for nearly 50 years.

We regularly work with organizations to study performance in a variety of industries, employee populations and functional roles. Contact us to discuss your own performance research study.

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