

Fully-Tapping Employee Potential - A Three-Point Model

In December 2005, all was going well for Kenneth Stone* when he participated in PeopleFit's talent pool evaluation process alongside his peers and his manager.

During the process, Ken, a regional manager for a financial institution, categorized the roles in his organization into work levels as a way of judging the soundness of his organizational structure, and he was introduced to a three-point model for matching employees to roles.

This two-day process armed Ken with simple but powerful tools to carry out two of his key regional manager accountabilities: 1) structuring his organization for success and 2) fully utilizing and continuously developing his talent pool.

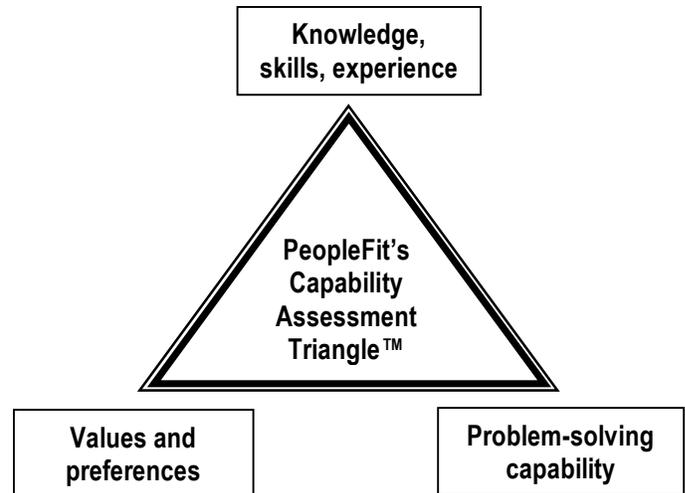
"I've worked for several of the largest financial institutions in America, and none of them ever provided training that was anything like this," says Ken. "When I became a manager over 20 years ago they said, OK, you're a manager now, go manage those people."

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PeopleFit's three-point capability assessment triangle allows managers to isolate how a struggling employee might be mismatched to a job. To be successful in a role an employee must have the right combination of three items: 1) knowledge, skills, experience, 2) values and preferences in the type of work, 3) general problem-solving capability.

After participating in the talent pool evaluation, Ken went back to work and observed his organization through the new lens he acquired



during the process. PeopleFit's three-point talent assessment model allowed Ken to judge whether struggling employees were mismatched to their jobs in terms of preference in the type of work or whether they were mismatched in terms of general problem-solving capability, as the different root causes call for different interventions.

Untapped Potential

As a result, Ken located two employees with problem-solving capability at a level above their current roles. He realized these underutilized employees were bored and capable of contributing more. Although an almost counterintuitive idea, PeopleFit research shows that burnout stems from an overabundance of *unchallenging* work rather than over-challenging work, and, on average, about 20 percent of employees within organizations are underutilized. Attention paid to identifying this underutilized cohort could prevent an organization's high potential talent pool from seeking more challenging work with another organization.

As a result of this insight, Ken created new, higher-level roles and promoted his two underutilized employees. Ken says both employees are enthusiastic about their new more-challenging work and are doing well at it.

*To provide anonymity to our client, we have created a fictitious name.

Mismatched Values

Using PeopleFit's three-point model, Ken realized another frequently-absent employee was not enjoying the type of work she was doing which had a heavy people-managing component. Her role was at the right level, but she preferred individual contributor work. Ken created a role for her at the same level but without the management piece, and she could not be happier.

Additionally, understanding work levels gave Ken the confidence to offer a sales role to a current employee with no sales experience. Ken was confident that the employee could problem-solve at the level of the sales role and he desired the role. This being the case, Ken knew that if they provided sales training to the employee, he would likely be successful as he was a match on the other two points of the three-point model.

Reorganizing for Effectiveness

Finally, on the organizational structure side, Ken looked at his job-level analysis and discovered that he had two work levels reporting to him, but he was expecting the same level of work from both. The manager in the role two levels down was struggling and frustrated. Ken realized he was expecting too high a level of work from that role. As a result, Ken reorganized his structure to have the manager in the role two layers down report to the next higher level role rather than to Ken. Now the expectations of the role two levels down are appropriate, and the formerly struggling manager is meeting expectations.

Reaping the Benefits

Since making the changes in his organization, Ken works less overtime and spends less time in the trenches. He is more engaged at work as he is spending more time on future-focused, bigger-picture projects.

Ken has noticed improved communication, cohesiveness, and attitudes throughout his region. He is proud of the fact that he was able to make all the changes without losing a single employee.

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--Ken Stone

Ken's region's performance was above target before the reorganization and has seen improvement since.

“One of the biggest things I got out of it was a way to easily match people to jobs”, says Ken, “to keep them challenged but not over their heads.” “I never had a clear way to do that before. I would recommend this approach to others as I've seen it benefit my region, my employees, and our company as a whole.”

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Post Script: PeopleFit's consulting is rooted in the total-system, Requisite Organization managerial leadership model. Not long after Ken's success, his company began implementing the full breadth of Requisite practices.

About the Author

Michelle Malay Carter, Vice President with PeopleFit, has over fifteen years experience in training, leadership development, and organizational development, as well as several years' professional experience in marketing and advertising. Also an author and speaker, Ms. Carter's writing has been featured on HR.com, and she served as a visiting lecturer in NC State University.

About PeopleFit

PeopleFit is a management consulting firm specializing in executive-level best practices for embedding corporate values into operations. We help organizations “live their values” and deliver their promises by translating their conceptual values printed on the poster in the employee breakroom into everyday work processes and managerial practices. Our work-levels organizational design structure allows communication to naturally translate up and down the organization without the commonplace gaps or overlaps that impede work, accountability, and engagement within many firms.

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