



Introduction to the “Dark-Side” of Personality for the London PPMA Group, 24/09/2010

“Fighting Our Demons at Work”

The “dark-side” of personality is essentially that aspect of human personality which pre-disposes us to behave “less-constructively” towards others. It may manifest itself in situations where we find it difficult to maintain “acceptable” or “normal” modes of behaviour, e.g. when we are feeling stressed or where we have power over others. This has some rather obvious implications to the work-place in 2010, which is characterised by a number of different, and potent, stressors!

The dark-side of personality has been a subject of intrigue for many writers and researchers for some time now, including the American Occupational Psychologist Robert Hogan. Hogan and his colleagues have produced a robust psychometric assessment of the dark-side of personality – the Hogan Development Survey (HDS). This is based around eleven “themes”, or potential career “derailers”, which are related to some well-known personality disorders.

The HDS has been developed to provide insight into the extent to which someone may be pre-disposed to exhibit behaviours related to one or more of these “derailers”. The hypothesis is that these derailers can really get in the way of someone’s development and career progression, but also, that *people can learn to manage them*, given that a) they have sufficient self-awareness, b) they want to learn to develop effective management strategies and c) they are provided with appropriate support. The identification of these dark-side tendencies, using a robust diagnostic such as the HDS, can be a powerful aid to development, especially when accompanied by some skilful coaching. The HDS therefore provides a route-map and the language for this type of development process. Obviously, the individual concerned, together with the people with whom they work and/or their (prospective) employer, can derive great benefit from such insight and activity!

The aims of the session are:

- To elucidate more precisely what these 11 themes or derailers are, together with how to recognise typical behaviours associated with each of them.
- Why, as HR practitioners, it is a good idea to have some awareness of the dark-side of personality and its significance in various HR processes and how this awareness can be used practically and constructively.
- To provide an initial opportunity for reflection and self-analysis.
- To explain how “dark side” personality analysis can dovetail with high-potential assessment.
- To explore some recent research which elucidates some pronounced dark-side differences between the UK public and private sectors.

The session itself will be based around a formal presentation, together with one or two hand-outs and as much audience participation as possible. It is also hoped to provide a bit of light-heartedness



and entertainment! There will also be a plenary session. The presentation, together with other documents and materials, will be made available to session attendees via the DWHR website.

David Woollard
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