

Dave Kurlan is a top-rated speaker, best-selling author, sales thought leader and highly regarded sales development expert.



As promised for today, I'm revealing the single article, from among my former 999 blog articles which my readers voted "best", to be my 1,000th post. It's not [my personal favorite](#), it's not the most well-written, it's not the [most viewed](#), it's not the most entertaining, it's not the most insightful nor is it the most linked to. But from among the 15 for which you could vote, this was your choice:

Exposed - Personality Tests Disguised as Sales Assessments

(originally posted on January 28, 2009)

Yesterday, I met with a longtime client who, in his previous company, used [OMG's assessments](#) to identify what needed to change in order to double revenue from \$30 million to \$60 million. In his new company, which is already about twelve times that size, he wants to double revenue again. He said, "I just wasted two years with the _____ assessment." The assessment to which he referred was a personality assessment marketed as a sales assessment. He could have referred to any personality or behavioral styles assessment.

Many people are not going to like this article. I'm about to expose the findings in personality-based and behavioral-based assessments which assessment companies have been marketing as sales assessments for the last dozen years.

First, you'll need to read this piece, [Personality Assessments for Sales - The Definitive Case Study](#). **Really, you need to read it first!**

There isn't a tremendous difference between personality assessments and behavioral styles assessments. Popular behavioral styles assessments, like the various versions of DISC, produce findings along four dimensions (categories) while some personality assessments, like those using the PF16 as their underlying engine or instrument, can measure traits in as many as sixteen dimensions.

But personality assessments and behavioral styles assessments are not predictive of sales performance. They don't conduct predictive validity studies, as we do, because their assessments don't predict. Instead, they conduct construct validity studies, which only show to what extent an assessment measures a specific trait and not necessarily the traits which you want to know about, but the traits which they can actually measure.

So here's the problem. Their marketing material usually says something like, "Salespeople must be able to Prospect, Question, Manage Objections and Close. They must have Product Knowledge. They must be accountable, have drive, be self-starters and be coachable." You read those words and say, "Yes, yes. That is exactly what we need." And the masquerade is on.

As I wrote in the [other article](#), personality-based sales assessments don't really measure what you need to know. Instead they report on what *they* can actually measure. In the table below, I'll list some of the most common "findings" in personality and behavioral styles tests which are *marketed* as sales assessments, describe what is really being measured and compare that to what [Objective Management Group](#) (OMG) measures and reports.

<i>Finding</i>	<i>Measures</i>	<i>OMG Finding</i>	<i>What OMG Actually Measures</i>
<i>Drive or achievement</i>	<i>General need to achieve</i>	<i>Desire</i>	<i>How important it is to achieve success in sales</i>
<i>Resilience</i>	<i>General ability to cope with adversity</i>	<i>Bravery</i>	<i>The sales-specific scenarios which will be problematic and the individual's ability to handle them</i>

<i>Rejection</i>	<i>How the individual reacts to not being accepted or not having their ideas accepted</i>	<i>Difficulty Recovering from Rejection</i>	<i>The impact that "getting hung up on" or "getting a no" will have when they close and how long it may take to recover</i>
<i>Emotions</i>	<i>Emotional steadiness</i>	<i>Ability to Control Emotions</i>	<i>The likelihood that, when a salesperson is caught off guard or in an uncomfortable situation, they will panic and lose control of the sales call</i>
<i>Sociable</i>	<i>How comfortable they feel and how appropriately they behave in social situations</i>	<i>Bonding and Rapport</i>	<i>How quickly they develop relationships with their prospects</i>
<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Whether they are a confident person</i>	<i>Record Collection</i>	<i>The sales-specific beliefs which support or sabotage their sales outcomes</i>
<i>Coachable</i>	<i>Whether they are open to new ideas</i>	<i>Trainable</i>	<i>Whether they have the incentive to improve their sales competencies</i>

These are just some of the most common findings. Since [OMG's assessments](#) are so sales-specific, there are literally dozens of findings covering everything which can possibly happen in sales including, but not limited to, prospecting, closing, qualifying, account management, farming, use of the sales process, ability to handle stalls, put-offs, objections and work remotely, growth potential, development needs and more. What's most important to understand about assessments is that:

- The questions in the personality tests are asked in the context of social settings, not sales settings, so none of the findings are sales-specific.
- Because the findings in personality assessments are not sales-specific, they're not predictive.
- Personality assessments are generally one-size-fits-all, without regard to your market, its challenges, your competition, your pricing, the resistance which your salespeople will face, your compensation plan and how specific selling strengths and weaknesses will impact those conditions.
- Assessments of your existing salespeople should be useful for development. If you don't have sales-specific findings, you're only developing them as people, not salespeople.
- How is [OMG](#) different? Assessments are only a minor part of an effective sales force evaluation. The most important part is to be able to learn:
 - What impact sales management is having on the salespeople.
 - Whether you've been hiring the right people.
 - Whether your sales force can execute your strategies.

- Whether your systems and processes support the sales force.
- Whether sales management is effective.
- If you can develop more of a sales culture.
- Whether the salespeople can make a transition such as account manager types to hunters and closers; presenters and quoters to consultative sales types; transactional sale to a solution sale; etc.
- Who can be developed?
- If you're attempting to downsize or rightsize the sales force, which individuals actually have the ability to help you do more with less?
- How much better can they get?
- What it will take?
- What would be the ROI on development?
- Why do you get the specific results which you get?
- What is the quality of your pipeline?
- Etc.
- When used for hiring and selection, an assessment must be an accurate predictor of sales success for a particular sales role in your particular company, calling on your particular market, with its particular challenges and competition. A personality assessment won't consistently identify the people who will succeed, while OMG's assessment, with its [95% Predictive Validity](#), will. We can differentiate between Recommended (they meet our criteria and yours); Recommended - Ideal (they are recommended and they will ramp up more quickly than normal); and Recommended - Perfect (they are recommended ideal and they meet additional customized criteria which match up with your most effective producers).

In summary, whether you're using a personality assessment, behavioral styles assessment, psychological assessment, or psychometric (describes all of the above) assessment, it's the marketing that's sales-specific, not the findings. Use them at your own risk.