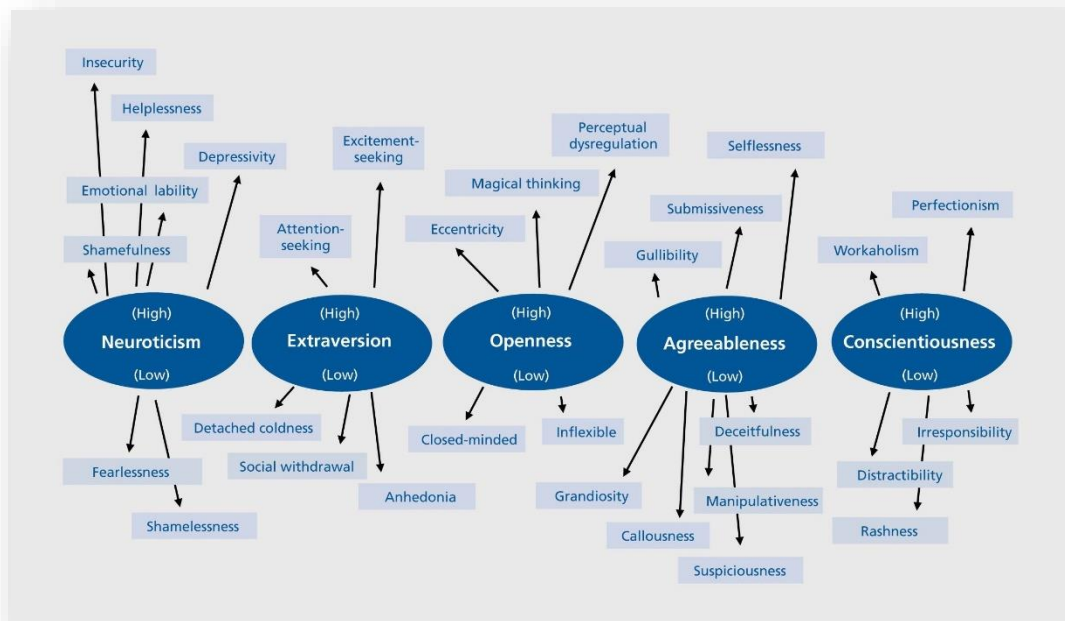


The Productivity and Personality Connection



The word *productivity* evokes a plethora of sentiments. For the modern organization, productivity is heavily sought after and often synonymous with efficiency and reliability. However, the way in which productivity is packaged or presented generally determines an employee's attitude and receptivity towards this ideal. While at the surface productivity may seem like a very simple concept; i.e. *“the ratio of output per unit of input”*, for employees, it might be misconstrued as “just another thing” to add to an already long to-do-list.

In examining productivity levels and finding solutions to productive inefficiencies at an organizational level, business leaders tend to direct most of their efforts towards

process improvement strategies. While processes have a major part to play in making or breaking businesses, there is another very important factor which is far too often neglected; **PEOPLE!**

People are at the core of productivity. An organization may have all the right processes in place, offer the best training and equipment but if the employees (people) do not have the right attitude or personality, productivity will take a significant dive. Understanding employee personalities is therefore an integral part of mastering the productivity equation.

What is personality?

American psychologist Gordon Willard Allport describes personality as *“the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristics behavior and thought”* (Allport, 1961, p. 28).

Weinberg and Gould offer an even simpler definition; *“The characteristics or blend of characteristics that make a person unique”* (Weinberg & Gould, 1999).

How we think and feel is therefore no coincidence. In fact, our thoughts and feelings are determined by a number of characteristics which make each of us unique. Psychologists have identified five broad categories of underlying personality traits which affect how we act and react. These traits; extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism/emotional stability are more commonly known as “The Big 5.”

How does personality affect productivity?

Laboratory research carried out by Maria Cubel et al, which appeared in the May 2016 issue of The Economic Journal explored the relationship between labour market performance and productivity. In particular, this research sought to analyse the impact of “The Big 5” personality traits on performance. The research revealed, that “neurotic/emotional unstable” employees perform badly in the work place while individuals with conscientious personality traits performed better. Additionally, personality traits like extraversion and openness had a major impact on employee productivity.

Now that we know this, what can we do with it?

The truth of the matter is that while genetic pre-dispositions may cause a person to favour or portray one personality trait over another, personality traits are not fixed. In fact, regardless of underlying personality traits, an individual’s reaction to a given situation would be conditioned by the situation in question and a number of other variables. Personality is far too complexed to simply conclude that all emotionally stable and conscientious people will be highly productive. Each situation and individual would need to be examined on a case by case basis.

Notwithstanding, the results of this research will not only greatly help employees with self-assessment and subsequent self-improvement but similarly it will be a very useful tool for leaders seeking to build high performing teams. Understanding the connection between personality and productivity will help employers/prospective employers understand their employees even better and will prove very useful in working with employees to achieve greater productivity and organizational success.

About the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC)

Established in October 2013, The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) is responsible for the identification of key issues related to competitiveness and productivity in Saint Lucia.

The NCPC and its Technical Secretariat is committed to providing the necessary advocacy and research to produce timely and effective recommendations to policymakers on issues that affect both competitiveness and productivity on island. For more information about productivity or on the NCPC, visit www.stluciancpc.org; www.facebook.com/stluciancpc, call 468-5571/5576 or send an e-mail to stluciancpc@gmail.com