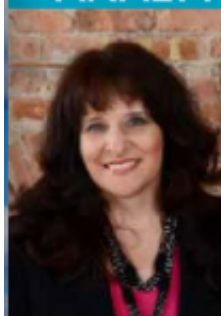


# PORTRAIT OF THE BUSINESS DEVELOPER— “ANALYTICALLY SPEAKING”



by Mary Erlain

Most organizations understand that effective management and deployment of assets can mean the difference between success and failure. They usually define those assets as “things.” Many organizations fail to consider their most critical asset is their human capital. This quote is absolutely not a surprise to me, except maybe considering the author.

*“Little of today’s technology is proprietary. Technology is easily obtained and replicated and only levels the playing field. An organization’s valued human assets cannot be copied.” –Bill Gates*

If Bill Gates is correct, and I believe he is, how do we put some measurements to those human assets? There is a host of information out on the web as I have learned through the research I have done in writing this article. Let’s start with a blank canvas, the interview. **Before you turn the page saying that you aren’t hiring, STOP!** Consider these questions as a means of determining your skill level as well as of those in the BD role in your organization.

Their responses can be a baseline for training, coaching, and development. It is the first step in investing your time into a



## INTERVIEW / HUMAN ASSETS SEARCH QUESTIONS MATRIX

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Customer Service:

Tell me about a time when you made a lasting, positive impression on a customer.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Delegation and Decision-Making:

Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Ability to Work in Varying Work Conditions (stress, changing deadlines, etc.):

Describe for me what you do to handle stressful situations.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Priority Setting:

Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did so successfully.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Creativity and Innovation:

Tell me about a situation in which you were able to find a new and better way of doing something significant.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Work Quality:

Tell me about a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Communication:

Tell me about a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Thinking and Problem Solving:

Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.

### If you’re looking for behaviors that revolve around Leadership:

Tell me about a time when you were able to step into a situation, take charge, muster support and achieve good results.

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valued human asset. You can rephrase the statements above for your existing employees and gain some valuable information.

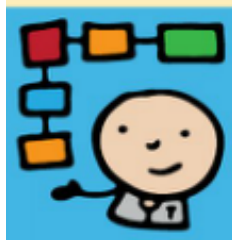
These are **ALL** traits of a great business developer. This is that first step to vet out a candidate, identify strengths and weaknesses in your team, as well as yourself.

The next step would be using an assessment that both tests for mental aptitudes as well as personality dimensions. I use a version that also focuses on business developers. It is written in BD language.

**“Most organizations understand that effective management and deployment of assets can mean the difference between success and failure.”**

An assessment of this type will identify and measure natural tendencies, not behaviors. Why is this important? We have the ability to compensate for our natural tendencies by setting specific goals. It is our natural tendencies that drive our behavior. It will have benchmarks specific to the BD role. Is this a hunter or getter of business, a farmer or keeper, or a combination of both? Are they inside, outside, or in a representative role? The mental aptitudes and personality dimensions of business developers successful in these specific roles are different. It is in those subtle differences that one can succeed or struggle.

To illustrate the assessment, I will refer to the getter and keeper of business combination.



## MENTAL APTITUDES

**Mental Alertness** – reading and practical, deductive and logical reasoning are the focus here. One should be a medium to fast thinker with average to above average comprehension skill. Top performing business developers should have good reasoning and problem-solving

capabilities and should be able to determine a customer or prospect's need and present solutions to meet that need within a reasonable period of time.

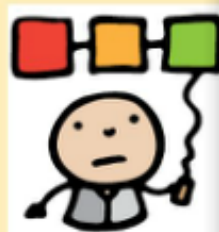
**Business Terms** – should have an average understanding of business terminology obtained either on the job or in a business class. This should enable them to understand the specialized language associated with business, thus being able to communicate business matters to customers and prospects.

**Memory Recall** – good to superior knowledge of events happening in the world around him and should be strongly aware of competitive trends, as well as the economy's effect on BD.

**Vocabulary** – good skills make it easier to understand, communicate, find solutions, command respect, and motivate others.

Additionally, a strong vocabulary promotes confidence in oral and written form. Top performing business developers should be capable of highly complex interchanges and should exhibit confidence in their ability to interact with others.

**Numerical Perception** – this score indicates how one can handle detail work such as writing up contracts and orders. This determines the need to have one's work checked for accuracy.



## PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS

**Energy** – stems from the combination of the person's genetic background, environment, and biochemistry. It is innate energy levels that the person exhibits, such as nervous tension, drive, and energy. What is desired here is a high drive level, but also has the ability to control one's energy level sufficiently to concentrate and remain focused during sales presentations. Too much energy gets in the way of listening and concentration. Too little energy can affect one's ability to start, focus, or accomplish their goals. Top performing business developers invest the energy to be enthusiastic as well as being hard workers.

**Flexibility** – measures the strength of conscience in an individual. This is a subconscious dimension which governs behavior. It is that balance between free-thinking, being innovative and highly creative and quite fixed in the way one feels or sees situations and may be rule-oriented in their outlook and actions. This is also a measure of integrity when combined with other dimensions. The balance of understanding the company's policies regarding pricing and other matters and making promises to the customer is measured here. Top performing business developers understand the rules and guidelines one must work within.

**Organization** – measures the person's attitudes about organization and how one's work is best performed. It is also indicative of the general outlook a person has concerning the necessity of planning one's work. A desirable score would be that balance between the need for organization and the ability to be flexible and reactive when required. Top



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performing business developers are big goal setters.

**Communication** – measures the degree to which an individual has the desire and motivation to interact with others. Some people enjoy interaction with others, while other people would prefer very little interaction. This measures if someone is introverted or extroverted. It's not surprising that introverts can struggle in this role. Top performing business developers have the ability to listen to others and will communicate in return without monopolizing the conversation.

**Emotional Maturity** - measures ego strength and as such is the key not only to emotional adjustment, but also to how well an individual deals with environmental and situational stress. This has a component of age that needs to be taken into account when measuring this dimension. As we age, our level of emotional maturity should increase. It is a red flag when we see very low numbers on someone who has had years in the business world. This dimension determines if there is a good emotional balance to meet deadlines. This also indicates how someone responds when there is pressure to meet these deadlines. Top performing business developers have a willingness to hold themselves accountable to the results of their efforts and respond with a higher level of maturity when under situational stress.

**Assertiveness** - carries the heaviest hereditary rating in the personality dimensions. It is the power dimension of personality and is primarily a measurement of self-assertiveness. This dimension can be augmented or modified through proper training and personal effort. Top performing business developers will have that delicate balance of being assertive and expressing their views, but not to the point of being overly controlling, aggressive, or hard-headed.

**Competitiveness** - This competitive nature is environmentally produced. This measurement evaluates the person as an individual competitor, rather than as part of a team. A mid-range score is what is ideal. They will have the desire to excel and compete, as well as work cooperatively in a team endeavor. This is a good range for most business getter and keeper positions.



Top performing business developers have the drive to win, but not at the expense of the team, company, or customer.

**Mental Toughness** – this dimension measures the physical and mental attributes and is a measurement of an individual's vigor or capacity for endurance. “Tender-minded” or “tough-minded” individuals result from their environmental influences. It also measures one's ability to have empathy. A low score may indicate a business developer's inability to handle rejection and they could become discouraged. A score that is too high may present an issue where a business developer could struggle showing empathy when problems arise. Top performing business developers are persistent as well as empathetic.

**Questioning /Probing** - this dimension measures the worldliness of an individual. Extreme scores in this dimension may hamper job effectiveness. A balance is necessary for success; a person who is too trusting to the point of being gullible, to someone who is too skeptical to the point of being suspicious, will struggle as a business getter or keeper. Top performing business developers ask questions to understand the customer's situation, goals, objectives, concerns, and hesitations. They make their prospect think!

**Motivation** - is one of the most critical dimensions in the assessment. It describes how a person can best be motivated, which is of primary concern to employers. This dimension outlines the rewards that the business establishment can most appropriately confer. These rewards should be, when possible, what particular individuals consider key to their lifestyles. This will also indicate one's ability to handle risk. Top performing business developers will have a willingness to take some risk, but that risk should be balanced and somewhat calculated.

There should be some measure of **Distortion** to determine the frankness of the individual reporting about oneself. Questions that are embedded throughout the assessment determine one's willingness to be open about themselves. It is desirable for an individual to not be afraid to admit their weaknesses. This scale measures the extent to which individuals attempt to present themselves in a favorable light regarding conformity, self-control or moral values. Undesirably high scores often result from over-analysis of the questions, and the individual's need to look for the hidden meaning or not willing to share true self. This measurement can be used as a screening and coaching tool. If a person has difficulty being frank about their strengths and weaknesses, they

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may need additional development to help them through this block.

### **Now that we have applied some analytics, what next?**

If this data you have collected is about an employee, then share it with them. Get their feedback to see if they agree with the testing data. Once this is done and they do agree, you now have a tool to coach, teach, and train your business developer.

If the data you collected is about you, reach for the impartial third party for their input and assistance. My feeling is always “Be the change.” Develop some goals specific to your strengths and weaknesses to develop a plan for your success.

I have done training and development without the information listed above as an employee in another firm. The results were miserable at best. It had very little to do with the methodology, process, or talent in the room. I was training a group of strangers even though I knew them all by name. I had very little data in which to target the training for the team. I had little control over the process of delivery. As I have looked back on this engagement, I can see one large failure in the process. The process did not meet each business developer at their level of expertise and need. As I have developed my own firm, I am committed to the steps listed above so that I can learn more about people on the front

end so that I decrease the risk of losing them along the way, and offer them the opportunity to be a top performer. •



Mary Erlain is President of Peak Development Strategies since 2007. As a published author of the “10 Answer Keys” business book series, international speaker, coach, and consultant, she helps her clients significantly accelerate growth in their businesses. Mary offers business professionals the support, guidance, and direction they need to thrive in their business roles. She is the Director of Training and Development as well as a Certified Sales Auditor with Verde Martin. Mary can be reached at [M.Erlain@Peak-DS.com](mailto:M.Erlain@Peak-DS.com). Visit her websites at [www.peak-ds.com](http://www.peak-ds.com) and [www.the5generations.com](http://www.the5generations.com).