BELBIN® GetSet

The philosophy behind the Team Role testing tool for Young People

Sooner or later every young person leaves formal education. The change can be very abrupt. An institutional life designed for numbers of people who are being processed in a broadly similar way finally gives way to a very different situation. There is a sudden loss of structure: there is no-one to announce what is to happen next. An individual stands, or can feel, quite alone. And so a new challenge has to be faced. Every individual who enters into this unfamiliar world has to find a way forward. Those who can declare to themselves:

"Here I am, and this is where I want to go" will be better placed than those who confess, whether secretly or openly, "I'm not sure what I want to do".

So how can this self-awareness be achieved? One way to resolve the uncertainty is to seek vocational guidance and then to make a choice on an intended career. This can offer real advantages to those who have built up their own maturity and have developed a strong sense of personal identity. However, using vocational guidance to help young people decide what to do on leaving education, before they have even understood themselves, can be premature.

Firstly, vocational guidance places a strong emphasis on interests as a means of identifying career choice. Yet the perception of a job, with its seeming attractions and undisclosed disadvantages, is often out of touch with the reality: air stewards and stewardesses routinely experience the insides of aircraft and hotels, real travel scarcely being part of the job itself. Rather, a more accurate description would be to say that an air steward or stewardess requires the ability to treat people with care and consideration – observant of the needs of others. He or she would also have to be good at attending to detail and at following set procedures. An individual who naturally behaves in this way is likely to be more suitable for the job than someone who enjoys travelling.

Secondly, it is also worth remembering that a wide range of roles is usually available within any one occupational title. For example, not all engineers do the same thing. Some need to be practical, others analytical – what is needed is very much dependent upon the type of work that is required. Such roles have to be discovered and are not properly open to conjecture from the outside. Those who are confident about their own image and identity have a much better chance of discovering what these roles are and of opening them up in a constructive way.

Generally, most careers carry stereotypes about what they involve, so their image can be misleading. In fact, the people who succeed within any one occupational area, whether in industry, business, the professions and the public services do not fall into any one type. Yet, in spite of wide individual differences, experience shows that those who succeed in one occupation often fare well in another. The explanation is that success in most areas of work depends on general ability and on teamwork - and a good team, as in sport, requires people with distinctive strengths who slot well into at least one of a number of valued roles.

Good qualifications certainly facilitate entry into particular vocations and lay the foundations for further advancement. But once entry is gained to a particular occupation, the starting advantage of good qualifications tends to recede. The most valued individuals, as judged by their later careers, tend to be those held to possess general maturity. They have learnt to manage themselves well, know which roles they can best play and which they should avoid, and are well prepared to face a variety of work situations.

Daniel Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence* (1999) reports that "for success in all jobs, personal competence is twice as important as IQ and technical skills, and for success in a leadership position, it is 6 times as important as IQ or technical skill". The key ingredients of personal competence are: Self Awareness, Self management, Social Awareness and Social Skills.

The importance of character attributes as opposed to the mere possession of skills is made particularly apparent in a study of Improvers versus Non-Improvers at Work. The study investigated how it was that among the population of early school leavers, most of whom had poor educational records, some made positive headway as soon as they left the world of education and started work. The results showed that one main difference related to behaviour and had little to do with technical skills or knowledge. Even among well educated candidates who enter industry at a different level, those who have made their mark through gaining early promotion appear to be no better technically than those who are passed over. Rather, it is their self-management and their ability to manage their role relationships with others that stand to the fore. These successful young people were aware of what they could contribute, as well as what they could not do and were not afraid to ask for help.

If young people can present a clear picture of themselves to the outside world, being a picture they are happy about and one that realistically represents who they are, they are more likely to achieve personal fulfilment. Even with limited skills, young people who are clear about their identity will find a way of rising above their disadvantage. Their literacy and spelling may be sub-standard. Or their lack of numeracy may debar them from any job that entails handling figures. Yet because they never mislead anyone in terms of what they can and cannot do, they are never likely to let anyone down. Given time, what they can contribute will increase in value.

So, the philosophy behind **Get Set** is that personal maturity should be built up before a career choice is made. After all, how can anyone determine whether an opportunity or opening is suitable if they do not have a proper understanding of themselves? Thus the guidance provided by **Get Set** should help young people to be confident about who they are and what they have to offer. Then, when the right opening occurs, the young person should be in the position to seize the opportunity with confidence. This means conveying an image that is convincing to others. The pre-requisite for this is accurate information about the person – information that has been absorbed and properly assimilated.

So how should a sense of personal identity be fostered in young people? Our recommendation is that young people need to improve their understanding of how other people see them. If a number of people, acting independently, all see in an individual the same basic characteristic, there are sure grounds for believing this is a distinctive feature of their personality. The need then becomes to build on that feature to good effect. So an observed personal characteristic can be turned into something of value. If young people can use their personal strengths to contribute to the environment they are entering and can play a constructive role, they will be in a better position to gain insight into their own aptitudes. **Get Set** is there to help young people along this road.

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