



Documenting the Relationship
Between Versatility and Job Performance

MANAGERIAL
SUCCESS
STUDY



Versatility: A Key Element of Managerial Performance

Most people recognize that interpersonal skills matter in the workplace. But are they “nice to have” or do they make a significant difference in organizational and individual performance? A new research study shows that interpersonal skills *are* directly related to effective job performance.

The study shows that managers with higher Versatility perform better in critical business areas:

27% better at leading teams
25% better at coaching others
19% more likely to be promoted

Versatility is a significant component of overall success; comparable to intelligence, previous work experience and personality.

WHAT IS VERSATILITY?

Closely related to the concept of social or emotional intelligence, a person’s Versatility is his or her ability to interact effectively and gain support of coworkers. Numerous studies have shown that **emotional intelligence translates to workplace effectiveness**. Other research has shown that emotionally intelligent managers develop more attachment to their organizations, are more committed to their careers, and have greater job satisfaction.

In 2005 The TRACOM Group worked with an international publishing company in a formal study that provided further proof of the connection between Versatility and managerial performance.

Study Overview

The TRACOM research evaluated the relationship between Versatility and various aspects of managerial effectiveness. **The hypothesis was that managers higher in Versatility would perform better compared with managers lower in Versatility.** It was also believed that Versatility would be a measurable part of overall job performance.

Versatility Measure

TRACOM’s Social Style Profile-Enhanced (SSP-E), an online assessment, was used to measure Versatility. An e-mail invitation to complete the SSP-E was sent to 215 managers of which 127 participated

(59% response rate). This group was randomly selected from a variety of functions and locations throughout the United States, and each participant managed at least one direct report. Participation in the research project was voluntary, and managers did not receive individual feedback on their results. None of these managers had ever participated in a TRACOM Social Style workshop, and were therefore not familiar with the Versatility concept.

The SSP-E consists of 88 items rated on a five-point agreement scale, and measures the two factors that make up Social Style (Assertiveness and Responsiveness) and Versatility. Versatility scores range from low to high. In ascending order from low to high, Versatility positions are labelled “W,” “X,” “Y” and “Z.” The lowest 25th percentile of scores are “W,” while the highest 25th percentile are “Z.”

The SSP-E is a multi-rater instrument whereby “self” scores are compared to the scores of “others.”

Managers were allowed to choose the reference group who rated them on the SSP-E, and all analyses were based on these “other” scores.

Managerial Performance Measure

Concurrent with the SSP-E, a job performance questionnaire was sent to each manager’s supervisor and direct reports. A total of 691 performance questionnaires were completed for the 127 participant managers. The performance questionnaire consisted of 47 items measuring various attributes of managerial effectiveness. The performance items were generated from previous research on job performance as well as from experts within the organization who were familiar with the various priorities and job requirements of managers. Each item was rated on a five-point scale ranging from “much below average” to “much above average.”

Participants

The majority of the study participants were “directors” and “mid-level managers,” with only small percentages of “supervisors” and “first-line managers.” Fifty-four percent of the sample were male and 94% were White with 3% African-American and 2% Hispanic. Two individuals did not identify their ethnicity. On average the managers were 46-years-old and had 11 years of service within the organization.

The design of this study largely eliminated same-source bias, in that performance ratings were gathered from both supervisors and direct reports, and managers chose their own group of respondents to complete the SSP-E. Same-source bias can occur when both Versatility ratings and job performance ratings are gathered from the same individuals. SSP-E rating sources were anonymous, and managers were

instructed to choose raters who know them and their work well enough to have well-informed opinions.

Results

Data was tested to answer four primary questions:

- 1) Is Versatility related to managerial effectiveness,
- 2) Is there a meaningful difference in performance between managers with lower Versatility and managers with higher Versatility, and
- 3) Did compensation differ across Versatility scores,
- 4) Is Versatility a significant component of managerial success?

1) Higher Versatility Yields Increased Managerial Effectiveness

Versatility scores were positively correlated with each of the 47 performance indicators for both

supervisor and direct report ratings, indicating that managers with higher Versatility received higher ratings across the work performance items.

Correlation evaluates the connection between two items and determines if a reliable relationship exists. Versatility was strongly related to various important components of managers’ jobs. For example, ability to coach others (.44), ability to work well within a team (.47), ability to establish effective relationships with direct reports (.51), and effectiveness as a team leader (.47), just to name a few. As a comparison, consider the statistical correlation of some commonly held “facts.” The correlation between taking aspirin daily and reduced risk of death by heart attack (.02), antihistamine use and reduced runny nose and sneezing (.11), SAT scores and subsequent college GPA (.20), relationship between weight and height among U.S. adults (.44), and nearness to the equator and temperature (.60). Thus the correlations of Versatility with managerial performance are strong and very meaningful, indicating that the higher a manager’s Versatility, the better his/her work performance will be.

2) Versatility—A Measurable Difference in Managerial Effectiveness

With the research proving that Versatility is positively and significantly related to workplace effectiveness, the next step was to examine if differences in performance existed between managers with lower Versatility and managers with higher Versatility. The research hypothesis was that managers would differ significantly across job performance measures depending on their Versatility category.

It was found that high Versatility managers did measurably outperform low Versatility managers on 46 of the 47 performance measures. For example, “effectiveness as a team leader”

Table 1: Job Performance Correlations with Versatility

PERFORMANCE MEASURE CORRELATION W/VERSATILITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE CORRELATION W/VERSATILITY
Ability to establish effective relationships with direct reports	.51
Ability to work well within a team	.47
Effectiveness as a team leader	.47
Ability to be open with others	.45
Ability to effectively coach others	.44
Ability to establish effective relationship with supervisor	.43
Ability to positively impact the commitment of his/her direct reports to the organization	.42
Ability to influence or persuade others	.41
Ability to effectively communicate with others	.40
Ability to effectively manage conflict	.40
Overall performance	.40
Ability to establish effective relationships with customers/clients	.39
Willingness to set challenging and realistic goals	.38
Ability to prioritize and focus on what is important	.37
Persistence in overcoming obstacles	.36
Ability to manage change initiatives	.34
Willingness to look for new ways to improve the effectiveness of his/her work	.34
Willingness to ask for or seek challenging work assignments	.33
Ability to adjust to multiple demands and priorities	.33
Commitment to the success of the organization	.33
Potential to be promoted to the next level	.32
Taking responsibility for his/her work	.31
Willingness to volunteer for things that are not required	.29
Following through on commitments	.28
Decisiveness/making timely decisions	.28
Understanding of customers’ business and needs	.27
Ability to work under pressure	.25
Attention to detail	.24

Note: all correlations significant at $p < .01$.

VERSATILITY IS LINKED TO MANAGERIAL PERFORMANCE.

PUT THE BENEFITS OF VERSATILITY TRAINING TO WORK FOR YOU!

Table 2: Percentage Increase In Effectiveness

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	% INCREASE FROM W TO Z	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	% INCREASE FROM W TO Z
Ability to establish effective relationships with direct reports	27%	Ability to prioritize and focus on what is important	18%
Effectiveness as a team leader	27%	Persistence in overcoming obstacles	18%
Ability to effectively coach others	25%	Ability to establish effective relationships with customers/clients	17%
Ability to work well within a team	23%	Willingness to volunteer for things that are not required	17%
Ability to effectively manage conflict	22%	Ability to adjust to multiple demands and priorities	17%
Ability to provide constructive performance reviews	22%	Ability to manage change initiatives	16%
Ability to be open with others	22%	Willingness to look for new ways to improve the effectiveness of his/her work	16%
Ability to positively impact the commitment of his/her direct reports to the organization	22%	Decisiveness/making timely decisions	16%
Ability to effectively communicate with others	20%	Taking responsibility for his/her work	15%
Overall performance	20%	Ability to offer constructive suggestions	15%
Personal initiative	19%	Commitment to the success of the organization	15%
Willingness to ask for or seek challenging work assignments	19%	Following through on commitments	14%
Potential to be promoted to the next level	19%	Ability to learn new information	12%
Ability to influence or persuade others	18%	Understanding of customers' business & needs	11%
Ability to establish effective relationship with supervisor	18%	Ability to work under pressure	11%
Willingness to set challenging and realistic goals	18%	Attention to detail	9%

Summary and Implications

This research study using a diverse group of managers from throughout the U.S. is additional evidence that the TRACOM Versatility measure is a powerful indicator of workplace effectiveness. As Versatility increases, so does performance. Further, there are significant and noticeable differences in performance between managers with lower Versatility and those with higher Versatility. Importantly, Social Style itself is not related to workplace performance, indicating that people of any Style can be effective managers. Thus it's not a person's Style that determines success, rather how effectively each person uses their Style with others.

MANAGERS WITH HIGH VERSATILITY SIGNIFICANTLY OUTPERFORM LOW VERSATILITY

increased 27 percent between managers rated as W Versatility and managers rated as Z Versatility.

3) Higher Versatility Means Higher Pay

Compensation data for the managers was analyzed to identify any Versatility-related differences. It was found that highly Versatile managers received 29 percent more in total compensation than low Versatile managers. The average annual difference between the groups was \$30,000, showing that organizations place higher value on those managers with higher Versatility. Compensation was not significantly related to job tenure.

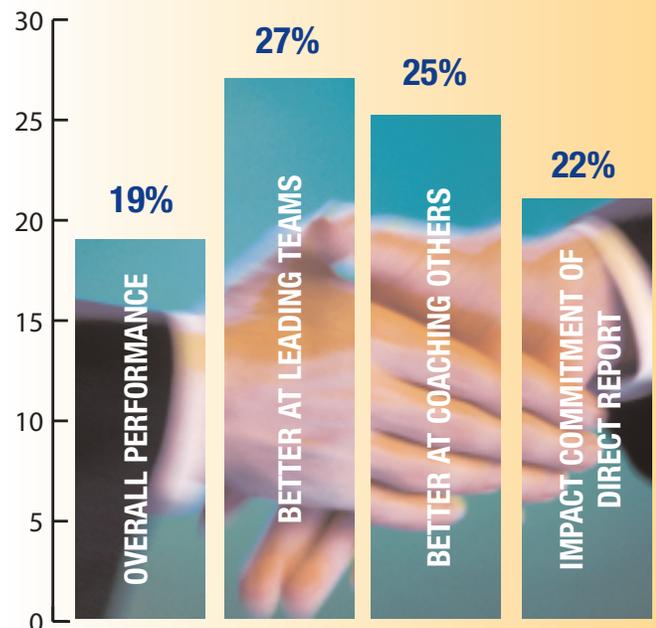
4) Versatility – A Predictor of Job Performance

Our third question was whether

Versatility could be measured as a significant part of job performance. The research hypothesis was that Versatility can predict performance. The category of “overall job performance” was used to test this hypothesis.

A statistical technique known as multiple regression analysis was used to test how well Versatility predicted overall job performance. Versatility accounted for 15% of the variance in overall job performance. This is comparable to the influence of other measures such as intelligence, education or personality.

Table 3: The Case for Versatility Training



Putting a TRACOM Research Study to Work for You Can Really Pay Off.

Documenting the Relationship Between Versatility and Job Performance

Overview

Social Style and Versatility have helped improve organizational and individual performance for nearly 50 years. Our validated research model and the proven relationship between Versatility and performance are two important reasons Social Style is the most recognized and implemented interpersonal effectiveness model in the world.

How a TRACOM Research Project Benefits Your Company

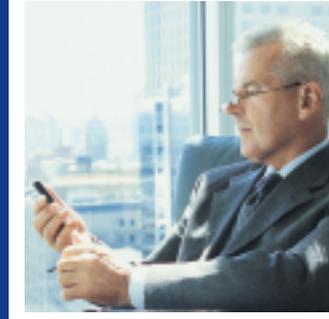
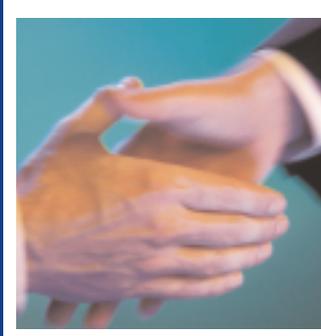
TRACOM is committed to the ongoing research of the connection between Versatility and job performance. We regularly work with organizations to study Versatility in different industries, functional roles, geographies and employee populations. These studies provide valuable data and performance metrics and can often be conducted at no incremental charge. Because the study is customized to the organization and audience, it generates insights regarding business impact and return on learning initiatives.

Study Guidelines

Research studies are conducted in a rigorous and reliable manner to ensure the validity and objectivity of the data. Each project should meet the following criteria.

- Each participant completes TRACOM's Social Style Profile – Enhanced, which is an online multi-rater survey.
- Identification of additional research criterion or “performance measures” relevant to your company and staff. This provides “outcome data” to compare with each participant’s Versatility scores. These measures should reflect your organizational culture and industry as well as participant job levels and job types.
- Pre-existing criterion data such as sales figures, service levels or performance evaluation scores may be used if appropriate, timely and unbiased. TRACOM provides a research team to work with you to evaluate the use of such data.
- Data will be reported in summary format. Individual participant results are confidential and will not be shared with the partner organization.
- A minimum number of participants are required to ensure statistical reliability.





Participate in a TRACOM Research Project and Discover How to Effectively Improve Your Company's Performance

As organizations continually look for operational efficiencies and competitive advantages, it's important to consider the performance potential that exists with their own people. This study adds to the proof that Versatility does in fact make for better performing managers. Combined with other studies that document the ability to improve a person's – and group's – Versatility, it makes a compelling case for organizations to focus on these valuable skills as a business imperative in today's competitive market.

To enhance your company's performance, contact us to discuss your objectives.

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