

SkillsOne™ Technology Enables Texas Instruments to Get More out of Assessments



When he was hired by Texas Instruments as its Manager of Coaching and Assessment Services, Steve Hardesty was already a believer in the potential of assessments to improve workplace development. Upon his arrival at TI, he found that his enthusiasm for the use of assessments was shared but there was room for improvement. What enabled TI to achieve a breakthrough in the use of assessments was on-line administration provided by the new SkillsOne Web site.

Although strong concentrations of TI's 34,000 employees live and work in northern Texas, many are scattered around the United States and nearly half are outside the nation's borders. Hardesty needed to find ways to serve this far-flung workforce both efficiently and consistently. Part of the answer was technology.

Assessments can be powerful tools for improving understanding of self and others. In the hands of an experienced workshop facilitator, they can streamline and focus a leadership development or team-building exercise. They are efficient as well, usually requiring only a few minutes for the participant to complete.

But, Hardesty learned, the scoring of assessments was not so efficient. For some assessments, the questionnaire had to be mailed to a scoring center. In light of the turnaround time of up to one week, if participants signed up late for a workshop or delayed in completing the questionnaire, the session would have to proceed without their having results in hand. And with self-scorable assessments, the trainer often would not see the results for some or most of a group before the session began. These problems were compounded by the tendency of trainers, some with no formal qualification or certification in the use of assessments, to select new instruments that might not be validated or were inappropriate for the specific purpose of the workshop.

Then CPP, Inc., introduced online administration and management for its assessments. "The SkillsOne™ Web site was just what we needed," reports Hardesty. "Now, everyone who will participate in a workshop or training session is asked to complete a questionnaire online. Last-minute sign-ups are no problem. The trainer gets the results in advance—in time to tailor each session to the specific participants. For the trainer, it makes all the difference to have

the assessments completed and the results in hand." With its diverse, dispersed, and technologically advanced workforce, TI was ready for online assessments. "When the SkillsOne site came out, we were all over it," says Kathryn Collins, Director of Worldwide Training and Organization Effectiveness.

One added benefit of SkillsOne for Hardesty was that it enabled him to pare the list of assessments used. All CPP assessments, including the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® instrument, have a strong foundation of research and user experience plus plenty of supporting materials. "We have been able to standardize around a smaller number of assessments," reports Hardesty.

"Executive coaching is an important part of my job," he continues. "Online administration lets me use more assessments more effectively. The coaching subject can complete the pre-work in easy chunks, and I have a great deal of information before a session begins."

CPP's SkillsOne Web site has even given Texas Instruments leverage with other assessment providers. "In one case we were able to push a vendor that was entirely paper based to go online—first on our Intranet and eventually on its own Web site."

Here is how the process works now at TI: When Hardesty is using Myers-Briggs® assessments, to help improve team communications, for example, he reviews the results in advance but holds them back. "I start by explaining the underlying theory and type preferences," says Hardesty. "Then we go into an exercise in which each participant tries to identify his or her own preferences. When I finally reveal their individual assessment results, they are genuinely ready. And they are open to the next step—the practical application of Myers-Briggs awareness in the workplace."

The underlying assessments have not changed, but the use of technology to deliver and manage them has enabled both trainers and trainees at Texas Instruments to arrive at workshops better prepared and to leave with more tangible and longer-lasting results.

MBTI, Myers-Briggs, and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are registered trademarks of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Trust. The CPP logo is a trademark of CPP, Inc.