



Q&A with Dr. Tony Alessandra, Founder of Assessments 24x7 providing Online, Automated DISC Assessments and Behavioral Profiling Tests enabling Organizations to Maximize Employee Productivity and Boost Performance



Dr. Tony Alessandra
Founder

Assessments 24x7
www.assessments24x7.com

Contact:
Dr. Tony Alessandra
858-456-0028
DrTony@Assessments24x7.com

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Dr. Alessandra, what is the idea behind Assessments 24x7 today?

Dr. Alessandra: The idea is that we help either independent coaches, consultants, managers, trainers and HR professionals within companies to get a better understanding of either their clients or employees through the use of online assessments. We have various types of assessments such as the DISC Assessment. DISC measures four basic behavioral types; Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness. We also have assessments that measure what motivates people. There are seven motivators – Aesthetic: the drive for form, harmony, beauty, balance; Economic: the drive for money, practical results, return; Individualistic: the drive for independence, uniqueness; Political: the drive for control, power, influence; Altruistic: the drive for service, helping others; Regulatory: the drive for structure, order, routine; and Theoretical: the drive for knowledge and understanding. We have a Hartman Assessment that measures your decision making and critical thinking style. Our other assessments measure learning styles, emotional intelligence, sales IQ and more.

CEOCFO: What is the key to a quality assessment? What do you understand at Assessments 24x7 that perhaps others do not about creating something that is really meaningful?

Dr. Alessandra: The two key things that we focus on are simplicity and practicality. When we create an assessment and the report that goes with it, it has to be simple so that the end user who is reading it captures the essence of it. It also has to be practical, either giving them advice on how to focus on their strengths or deal with their struggles or how to effectively use the concepts in their day-to-day interactions with others.

CEOCFO: Does a company turn to you knowing what they want or is it typical for you to help them figure out what they should be assessing?

Dr. Alessandra: I would say both. Typically, somebody contacts us because they say, "I want the DISC Assessment," or "I want the Hartman Assessment." That is a huge part of our business worldwide. However, some people call up and say, "I want to use assessments, either in my business with my employees or I want to use assessments in the hiring process. Tell me how that works and how I might use it." There, we have to educate before we even come up with a solution.

CEOCFO: How do you structure the result so that you are giving enough information to the client without overwhelming them?

Dr. Alessandra: First, you do not want a questionnaire that is too lengthy, because people will burn out before they get to the end of it. You also want to make sure that the report is not too short where they brush it off, or too long where they just

say, "I cannot get through all of this." The assessment should be a validated assessment. In other words, it needs to measure what it purports to measure.

CEOCFO: *How are the assessments judged? How nuanced can an assessment be? Is DISC a standard assessment for every type of organization? Would you break it down?*

Dr. Alessandra: Again, the questionnaires are structured in a variety of ways. For instance, the DISC Assessment is a series of twenty-four questions. Each question has four adjectives. The respondent, for each set of four adjectives, picks the one adjective that most describes them and the one that least describes them, so that is very different. Then we have many other assessments that are what you might call a 360° multi-rater based assessment, where there are a series of questions scored on a Likert scale of one to five, "never" to "always", "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and so on. The Motivators assessment is a series of ten questions. Each question poses a situation such as, "If I were to pick a book to read, the book would cover this subject." Then there are seven possible answers and you have to rank the one you would most likely read, all the way down to the one that you would least likely read. There are many different ways to structure the questionnaire to get the answers and the analysis that the assessment is supposed to provide. Several of our assessments are in multiple languages, such as DISC & Motivators, and the DISC assessment has sales, leadership, service and coaching versions while the Hartman Value Profile also has sales & leadership versions.

"Our assessments are all online, all automated, all electronic with a great admin dashboard... The big thing is to make sure that an assessment is not a "One and Done," where someone takes an assessment, reads it, and then files it away never to be seen again. We look for ways to make sure that assessments become a part of the organization, where they can look at teams based on assessment results, look at how leaders compare to their direct reports, or how we can match job candidates against the benchmarks of the ideal employees."- Dr. Tony Alessandra

CEOCFO: *How easily is it to tell when someone is looking for what they think you want to know or give an answer because they think it will make them look good?*

Dr. Alessandra: There are some assessments that are very difficult to game. There are some assessments where the answers are easy to game. We try to stay away from those that are easy to game. Even when we have an assessment where you look at it and say, "Well you know, I am applying for a sales position, I better give the impression that I am outgoing," or whatever, there should be some internal process that will kick out an assessment if it appears that the person is trying to manipulate the answers. Not all assessments do that and not all of ours do that either. Some of them are very difficult to manipulate. With some, the person who is taking it does not even know which answer they should choose to make them look better!

CEOCFO: *When an assessment is done is it graded or is it looked at electronically? Is there a human element to how you produce the results? What is the process?*

Dr. Alessandra: Our assessments are all online, all automated, all electronic with a great admin dashboard. There are algorithms and a mathematical process to score the assessment. For instance, the DISC Assessment has a more sophisticated algorithm, so it just depends. One of the more difficult ones to score is the Hartman Assessment, which some people just call the HVP. It has a very sophisticated algorithm that will kick out your score if you try to game it. With the DISC Assessment, there are three types of analyses that will kick the assessment out and basically say, "Come back another day and re-take it. We could not compute your results."

CEOCFO: *What has changed over time in assessments; either how people use them or how they are structured? What have we learned or what has changed in society that there is a need to either update or revamp?*

Dr. Alessandra: I have been in the assessment business since 1974. From 1974 through 1996 it was all paper based. In 1996, I put my first assessment online for free and had nearly 10,000 people per month taking it before the BFO – blinding flash of obvious – hit me – this could be a good business. Today, more and more companies are using assessments, particularly in the hiring process, because it is a more objective way to analyze a candidate. There is no question that there are parts of the hiring process, like a resume, an interview, education level, experience and recommendations that are still a very important part of the hiring process. However, I've heard it said that a resume is like a balance sheet without liabilities. Then an interview is, in a sense, like a first date - you only put your best foot forward. It may not be the actual, every day, real you. Then when it comes to a recommendation, in today's litigious environment, it is really difficult for a past employer to give an objective 'bad' evaluation of an employee. You might get sued! Therefore, there has to be some objective component in the hiring process beyond those elements. We tell people that if you are going to use an assessment in the hiring process, it should not be more than twenty percent of the total decision. However, assessments

have become much more sophisticated. People are using more than one assessment in the hiring process to get a broader view of the applicant, such as their behavioral style, internal motivators and critical thinking (decision-making) style.

CEOCFO: *What are the certified practitioners on your site? Are there people that are using your assessments, working with other companies?*

Dr. Alessandra: A certified practitioner is someone who has gone through a multi-hour process to learn how to affectively use an assessment and how to debrief that assessment with their employees or clients. Therefore, it is a whole process that allows you to dig much deeper into using an assessment, whether it is debriefing it or whether it is possibly even giving a workshop. Certified practitioners get extra in-depth training to go through this and be more of an expert. We have five core assessments that we certify people in: DISC, Motivators, Hartman, Learning Styles and Emotional Intelligence.

CEOCFO: *Are there areas and types of positions that assessments are not used overall the way you think they should? On the other hand, are there some areas where companies may be over assessed? What do you find as you are working with so many different companies in so many different countries?*

Dr. Alessandra: You can certainly over-assess somebody. I would say that, in general, the most assessments I usually see a company give to an employee would be three; three different assessments, typically not more. Where are assessments under used? I would say for entry level, hourly employees. Companies also decide not to use assessments where there might be a lot of turnover. In fact, where there is a lot of turnover is the very reason to use assessments to try to determine who are the best employees, who are the most loyal and who would be the most effective, so that I can cut down on my turnover. The cost of employee turnover to a company, very often, is much greater than the cost of assessments to ensure that the company is increasing its chances of hiring top performers.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out and how do companies find you if they are looking?*

Dr. Alessandra: There is a lot of competition. When people call in to us it is usually because they have either seen us online or through our search engine optimization, or even our ads that we might do with certain associations or organizations. However, I have been a keynote professional speaker since 1974. I am in the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame, so I have some visibility in the business community. Oftentimes, people will contact us because they know me or my name and know I am associated with Assessments 24x7, so they reach out that way. Those would typically be companies, not necessarily individual people. We do not really deal at the retail level, where someone would come to our site and buy one assessment. We typically sell either directly to companies, corporations or to training companies that do the training for corporations or to independent business coaches, consultants and trainers.

CEOCFO: *What is ahead for Assessments 24x7? What is next for you?*

Dr. Alessandra: We are constantly honing our assessment portfolio, making sure that we are offering assessments that people are asking for or need. For instance, one assessment we just added was a company-wide assessment called the Performance Gap Indicator, that measures a company's culture by having as many of the employees within the company as possible answer the assessment. Then we do an analysis of how everyone answered all the questions. We break it down demographically (male vs. female, length of time in the company, different departments) so that you can see how your own employees believe the company is performing in various aspects of the business, such as culture, training, leadership, service and operations. We are looking at developing a cognitive test which measures someone's verbal, reasoning and mathematical skills. We are bringing on a second instructional designer because we also develop training materials such as PowerPoint slides, leader guides, participant workbooks, and so on, that will help our independent coaches and our corporate clients conduct workshops on our assessments, whether it is a one hour, half day or full day program. The big thing is to make sure that an assessment is not a "One and Done," where someone takes an assessment, reads it, and then files it away never to be seen again. We look for ways to make sure that assessments become a part of the organization, where they can look at teams based on assessment results, look at how leaders compare to their direct reports, or how we can match job candidates against the benchmarks of the ideal employees. Those are the areas that we are moving into; just looking for ways to make the assessments a deeper part of an organization, team building, personal growth and so on.



ASSESSMENTS 24x7
A Global Leader in Online Assessments