

# Assess Character Alongside Competency for Hiring and Promoting, MIT Sloan Report Says

HR Dive | Carolyn Crist | October 28, 2024

Evaluating character can lead to greater returns, more effective leadership, greater psychological safety and better engagement, the report noted.



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Since company culture reflects the character of people within an organization, assessing workers' character attributes can help with hiring and promoting, Mary Crossan, professor of strategic leadership at Western University and author of an Oct. 22 report on character-based hiring and promotion published in MIT Sloan Management Review, said in a statement.

However, looking at isolated elements of character — such as courage or drive alone — can lead to a limited perspective, Crossan said. Instead, it's important to use a science-based approach that covers numerous interconnected dimensions.

"It's easy to recognize and close gaps of competence, but many organizations have been flying blind on character," Crossan said. "Character can transform the culture of an organization, for good or bad. Bringing it into HR practices such as hiring and promotion gives managers the opportunity to make it an organizational asset."

Crossan's "Leader Character Framework" includes 11 character dimensions: judgment, transcendence, drive, collaboration, humanity, humility, integrity, temperance, justice, accountability and courage.

Character assessments should be conducted as a separate interview, Crossan said, and allow for more free-flowing and personalized conversations than typical structured interviews used to assess competencies.

When conducting these interviews, the author noted, HR pros should keep several considerations in mind. For instance, interviews can reveal the interviewer's character as well as the interviewee's character. In addition, the interviewer should observe the clusters of character dimensions that emerge, strengths and weaknesses, and the overall strength of character development.

"It's particularly important to consider character when promoting from within, as the person being evaluated in the organization is already known to other employees," Crossan said. "Promotions send a strong signal as to what character traits are valued by leadership and, consequently, what kind of culture the organization seeks to promote."

Other types of character or personality assessments can help leaders to personalize workplace efforts. For instance, Slack has developed five personas to explain how workers engage with their colleagues, share knowledge in the workplace and use technology to handle their day-to-day tasks.

Certain workplace personality tests can also lead to greater inclusion, according to a Society for Human Resource Management conference session. Considering employees' different cognitive styles can transform workplace relationships, especially when workers can self-identify and feel comfortable embracing a holistic set of traits.