

Original research, initiated by Kathy Kolbe over two decades ago, is now converging in a powerful way with the Gallup Organization's message.

Put Kolbe in Your Toolbox Today

By Mari D. Martin

Glory Hallelujah! We have stopped trying to change people. Well, maybe. The verdict is still out, but Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, senior management consultants for the Gallup Organization and authors of *First, Break All the Rules* have helped us,

through their extensive corporate research, come to understand that:

People don't change that much.

Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out.

Try to draw out what was left in.

That will be hard enough.

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First, Break All the Rules was copyrighted in 1999, and in 2003 still ranks as one of the top ten business books of the year.

According to the authors, Gallup "set out to devise a way to measure strong workplaces: workplaces that would attract and retain the most productive employees and scare away the ROAD warriors." The research of the Gallup Organization yielded many discoveries, but these three are the most powerful:

First, talented employees need great managers. The immediate manager's relationship with the employee is critical to that employee's performance. The authors write, "an employee may join Disney or GE or Time Warner because she is lured by their generous benefits package and their reputation for valuing employees. But it is her relationship with her immediate manager that will determine how long she stays and how productive she is while she is there."

Second, people don't change that much. Great managers don't send someone off to a training program to get fixed, they instead try to find ways to discover the unique strengths of that individual and capitalize on them. Great managers "try to help each person become more and more of who he already is," state the authors.

Third, twelve simple questions can determine the strength of a workplace. Those twelve questions can be divided into four categories. The authors liken it to a mountain: Base Camp, Camp 1, Camp 2 and Camp 3 (the most advanced stage of the climb). Their research indicates that great managers take aim at Base Camp and Camp 1. "(Great managers) know that the core of a strong and vibrant workplace can be found in the first six questions." They are:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?

3. Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?

Very interesting. Very, very interesting. As many of you know, we have been sharing the power of the Kolbe Concept® with you for years (13 to be exact). Original research initiated by Kathy Kolbe over two decades ago is now converging in a powerful way with the Gallup Organization's message. Kathy identified and then found a way to measure natural, unchangeable, recurring patterns of behavior that drive differing types of actions, creativity and productivity of individuals. She calls these our "striving instincts." They are innate, a necessity for us to use, our driving force, our observable results, OUR TALENTS!

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The problem arises in that individuals and their managers may never discover their talents. Buckingham and Coffman indicate, "so few individuals ever come

to know their true talent and so many managers fail to notice the clues.”

Harvard Business Review has just published their first special issue in their 79 year history, and devoted the entire publication to just this subject. They call it: Breakthrough Leadership. The central focus of the issue is:

*Know yourself--this is the best strategy now;
Help your followers discover what they are good at; and
Promote and cultivate self-knowledge*

Many of our customers who have been using the Kolbe tools for years to identify instinctual talent and utilize it to its fullest, realize they are light years ahead of their competition. You can be too. The Kolbe system is a cost efficient and very effective method to implement the Gallup research findings.

How does Kolbe help an organization? Kolbe helps us discover our natural, unchangeable, creative instincts that determine how each of us use our time and energy, and how we each solve problems and make decisions. It is an indicator of how each person will become engaged in a project, assignment, or task. So when these instincts are identified and allowed to thrive in the workplace, and when teams are built with the right chemistry around these instincts, individuals will work together in remarkable ways. This process helps managers understand why people accomplish the same tasks differently. It

helps to maximize the talents of the team members and provides for higher levels of enthusiasm and personal job satisfaction.

The foundation of the system is comprised of three Kolbe indexes: the Kolbe A™ index, the Kolbe B™ index and the Kolbe C™ index. We call this the A/B/C approach.

The Kolbe A is taken by the individual and provides a common vocabulary for understanding, utilizing and managing each individual's “striving instincts.” The Kolbe A index describes the innate or instinctive method for operation (MO).

“For an individual to be engaged in their work environment, you must know their instincts.”

It provides you and others with valuable information about how you strive, how you communicate, and how you get things done. When people get the results back they are amazed at the accuracy. We hear people say, “I can't believe how accurate this is,” or “you have nailed exactly the way I operate.” It is an index, not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Each of the results provides for contributions that are essential for organizations to succeed.

The Kolbe B index is taken by the individual and defines, from his/her perspective the current job demands. This tool helps the individual, the

manager and the team members or co-workers understand the talents she “perceives” are necessary for her to do her job. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. The A result and B result can be compared and the similarities and differences are immediately identified. When differences occur, it helps to recognize when job demands are counter to the instinctive talent of the jobholder and the level of stress this can cause. Kolbe is a coaching system and provides prescriptions and recommendations to relieve this stress.

The Kolbe C index is taken by the immediate manager, but can also be completed by others who have the knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the role. This tool helps the immediate manager fully understand his requirements for performance. It identifies the characteristics needed for success from his viewpoint.

Kolbe helps us discover our natural, unchangeable creative instincts that determine how each of us use our time and energy, and how we each solve problems and make decisions. It is an indicator of how each person will become engaged in a project, assignment, or task.

The A result and C result are compared to identify the similarities and differences in how the person is

instinctively performing, and how close those results are to the manager’s requirements. The B result and C result are compared to identify if the individual and the manager are viewing the role in the same way. These comparisons are an objective tool to enhance dialog, and ultimately performance.

When the differences between the Kolbe A (reality) and the Kolbe B (self-expectations) and the Kolbe C (external requirements) are great, a miscast has probably occurred. Misalignment of Kolbe A/B/C indexes leads to increased levels of stress, lower productivity, and performance expectations not being met.

According to the Gallup research, “if you want to turn talent into performance, you have to position each person so that you are paying her to do what she is naturally wired to do. You have to cast her in the right role. The manager’s role is to reach inside each employee and release his unique talents into performance. Specifically, the manager creates performance in each employee by speeding up the reaction between the employee’s talents and the company’s goals, and between the employee’s talents and the customers’ needs.”

Let’s tie this all together to the Gallup questions. Gallup indicates that great managers focus on the first six questions.

Do I know what is expected of me at work? (Kolbe B and Kolbe C)

Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right? (Kolbe A identifies the working environment that allows each individual to be successful)

Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day? (Kolbe A)

In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work? (Kolbe A/B/C)

Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person? (Kolbe A)

Is there someone at work who encourages my development? (Kolbe A/B/C)

If the strengths of a workplace can be simplified to twelve questions, and the above six are the key questions that great managers focus on, then the Kolbe system is a method for building strong workplaces with higher levels of productivity, profit, retention and customer satisfaction. (Not only does Kolbe help with the key six questions, but with all twelve.)

One of our clients, Volkswagen/Audi encourages the use of both Kolbe and Gallup. VW/Audi began working with PSG implementing Kolbe in 1996. They began working with the Gallup survey four years ago.

Kristi Stepp, Knowledge Enhancement Team Leader, VW Credit, as well as internal Certified Kolbe Specialist, has

this to say, “our work with the Gallup Organization is part of our desire to become one of the best places to work in North America.”

She continues, “Gallup, like Kolbe acknowledges there are three parts of the mind. They identify each of these parts as ‘talents’—thinking talents, relating talents, and striving talents. Our ‘Building a Stronger Workplace’ survey includes the Gallup 12 questions. One of the twelve questions is, ‘at work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?’ An employee’s answer to this question is directly linked to the alignment between their three ‘talents’ and the work they do. While some employees find it quite easy to answer this question, others often find it quite difficult. I’ve found Kolbe to be a wonderful tool to help people become clear on their ‘striving talent.’ Since most people come to work to do the absolute best job they can, the focus on their striving instincts is a great place to help people become more clear on their personal talent and ultimate job alignment.”

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Another one of our clients, Agility Health (formerly Brooks Rehab Solutions), also uses both Kolbe and Gallup. Like VW they started using Kolbe in 1996 and are now into their fourth year with Gallup.

Chris Wright, COO and internal Certified Kolbe Specialist, has this to say about the two systems. “For an individual to be *engaged* in their work environment, you must know their instincts. Kolbe helps us ‘know how necessary’ a specific environment is to that individual’s success. Kolbe provides the strategies that will work best for the individual. Gallup’s action plans are more of a team activity to work on a desired change in their environment. The bottom line is that Kolbe has helped us drive business results, mainly because it gave us the language and the understanding of how people need to work so we have been more specific and effective with our tools and communication out in the field. Most organizations require an indicator of ‘employee satisfaction’ and Gallup has given us, in my opinion, the best tool, process, and results that I have ever seen for that type of survey. But Kolbe is an essential piece for the Gallup surveys to work.”

Many of our customers who have been using the Kolbe tools for years to identify instinctual talent and utilize it to its fullest, realize they are light years ahead of their competition.

With awareness and attention finally focusing on discovering individual talents and casting people accordingly, there is a possibility that Maslow’s theories will now play out. Maslow believed that

people actualize in different ways based on their instinctual makeup, and that those differences must be identified, supported and encouraged. And, when this identification, support and encouragement are happening, then true synergy within organizations will occur. Maybe, just maybe this will be the decade that his inspiring vision from the 60s will finally become a global reality.