

**3 Critical Mistakes
Trainers Commonly Make
As They Implement And
Use Assessments...**

...And How You Can Avoid Them

By Dr. Tony Alessandra



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About The Author

Tony Alessandra, PhD, CSP, CPAE

Dr. Alessandra is the founder and president of **Online Assessments**, a company that offers online multi-rater assessments on a powerful technology platform in the areas of leadership, team building, sales skills, time management, DISC, behavioral styles, writing skills and goal setting.

Tony helps companies build customers, relationships, and the bottom-line. Companies learn how to achieve market dominance through specific strategies designed to outmarket, outsell, and outservice the competition by applying Dr. Alessandra's marketing, sales, service, and relationship-building skills. He offers practical ideas that produce profitable bottom-line results.

Tony has a street-wise, college-smart perspective on business, having fought his way out of NYC to eventually realizing success as a graduate professor of marketing, entrepreneur, business author, and keynote speaker. He earned his MBA in 1970 from the University of Connecticut---and his PhD in marketing in 1976 from Georgia State University.

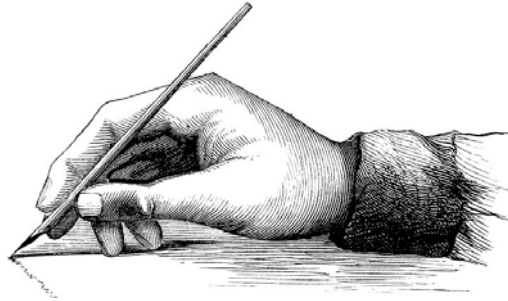
Dr. Alessandra is a widely published author with 14 books translated into 17 foreign languages including *Charisma* (Warner Books, 1998); *The Platinum Rule* (Warner Books, 1996); *Collaborative Selling* (John Wiley & Sons, 1993); and *Communicating at Work* (Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1993). He is featured in over 50 audio/video programs and films, including *Relationship Strategies* (American Media); *The Dynamics of Effective Listening* (Nightingale-Conant); and *Non-Manipulative Selling* (Walt Disney).

Recognized by *Meetings & Conventions Magazine* as “one of America’s most electrifying speakers,” Dr. Alessandra was inducted into the Speakers Hall of Fame in 1985---and is a member of the Speakers Roundtable, a group of 20 of the world’s top professional speakers. Tony's polished style, powerful message and proven ability as a consummate business strategist consistently earns rave reviews.

Mistake #1--Thinking That A Paper-Based System Is Cost Effective

When paper & pencil assessments first appeared on the training horizon...they revolutionized the process.

Now, for the first time, students and trainers alike were able to see what was going on with greater clarity than ever before.



This new tool was embraced and widely used to accelerate the processes of growth, understanding and learning...but there were a few problems:

Compliance

Step one was getting trainees to fill out the assessment. Many saw it as a tedious chore. Compliance (unless the velvet glove comes out) was typically 60% to 80% at best.

Many were happy to “settle” for that level of compliance, but the drop-off tended to undermine the total training effort and cast some doubt on the value.

Do the Math

The second hurdle in the compliance problem was related to scoring.

Most people don't do graphing and math well.

Frankly, many paper assessments are scored just plain wrong. Getting the wrong numbers in the box, adding things up incorrectly...creates a trainer's worst nightmare...working on the wrong training objective because of bad data.



Is It Done Yet?

Vendor scored assessments may be scored correctly, but create a whole other set of problems: the time lag involved to produce the results and a host of privacy and confidentiality issues as paper documents float around through mail systems.

Much of the impact of the assessment comes when the results are available immediately as opposed to a time lag.

"You know, I'm not sure what our training should focus on."



Another significant problem with paper based systems is the difficulty in consolidating the results...a very desirable process if you're working with a big group.

Learning, through group assessment, what the group needs are, and designing training to target those needs, produces the best results.

When you're staring at a stack of 200 completed assessments that "what to focus on" information is so close, but so far away.

If you could spend more time designing training to a precise set of needs rather than collating and summing paper assessment results...do you think your training effectiveness would improve?

Visibility—Not Hidden In File Drawer

Certain assessments can be of tremendous value if their summary information is shared.

But the process of gathering and collating that data, putting it into a coherent graphic display and getting it to the people who can make a difference is hampered if your paper assessments are lying in the bottom of a file drawer.



Conclusion: The hidden cost of assessments is in the administrative burden of issuing, tracking, scoring and disseminating the information. A paper-based system sentences the trainer to an unnecessary block of administrative time that could be better invested in the analysis of results and directed training in the areas that matter most. To try a free sample of a totally automated online assessment, send an email to assess@360-assessments.com

Mistake #2--Using a System That Is Only Descriptive In Nature



Now that many trainers are able to use assessments in an online environment many of the drawbacks of the paper based assessments have disappeared.

Like any new technology...once one set of problems is solved, a whole new set emerges...and the same has happened with the proliferation of online assessments.

The vast majority might give a good indication of “where” a person is with respect to an analytical model...but unless the insight is leveraged with prescription, the process may have done little more good than reading your horoscope.

Imagine the physician telling the patient, “It looks like there are some warning signs of cancer.” And then says, “That’s the end of our appointment.”

The patient pleads, “Doctor, what do I do?”

The doctor says, “Well, that’s not my field. I just diagnose whether you have something or not, and that’s it.”

Many assessments only give you a description, an introspective look at yourself. Some go a little further.

Unfortunately, insufficient prescriptive information can create stress and undermine the entire assessment process.

2 Dimensions of “Prescription”

There are 2 elements to look for in the prescriptive advice.

The first is volume of information. Usually an assessment will identify a number



of characteristics and make a number of distinctions. Many fall short at this point when they only make a sweeping summary statement or series of statements. In this case, you're looking for a greater volume of information as it relates to those distinctions and characteristics.

Once the volume of information is sufficient, the question of quality comes into play. Unless the prescriptive information is actionable, it is of little value. Confusing or vague "prescriptions" serve only to frustrate the person once they've invested their time, honesty, and vulnerability in the process.



Conclusion: Assessments that are diagnostic only can build stress and a sense of low self-esteem. Any system selected must provide prescriptive information to enable the employee to take self-directed action towards improving their performance.

For a sample of effective prescriptive information in an assessment context, send an email to: sample@360-assessments.com

Mistake #3--Not Selecting Assessment Tools That Provide Full 360° Views

Every decade or so, an advancement comes along that completely revolutionizes the status quo.



The 360° view for assessments is just such a breakthrough.

If you don't understand the profound implications of this approach, you owe it to yourself to examine what follows to get a clear picture.

The 360° assessment involves those "around" the person being assessed. Their opinions and inputs are fed into the assessment process resulting in a much more complete and accurate view of those being assessed.

A reasonable question is, "Why 360°? Seems like a lot of extra work?"

There are essentially 2 reasons the 360° is such a leap forward:

Spoof the Test

One of the challenges with assessments is that crafty respondents can "game" the process.

By responding to questions the way they think the boss, the company, the organization "wants" them to respond, the respondents can wind up with nearly useless information.

Conversely, if the respondent is aware that this is a 360° process, the levels of openness and honesty frequently shift in a direction that gives a more accurate picture.



Positional Misperception

The other challenge with assessments is that people behave very differently as their role changes throughout the work day.

The field service person, for example has one set of behaviors and attitude they exhibit while dealing “inside” the company...and a different set of behaviors when dealing with customers.



We observed a dramatic example of this recently.

In the sales assessment, there are three groups of people that you can send these out to:

Your sales managers

Your colleagues

Your clients

When this sales manager reviewed the results of his team he was shocked to see his rating of his sales rep were substantially lower than the sales rep’s self assessment.

Here’s the problem...

When the boss says you’re underperforming and the team member thinks they’re doing great...it creates a lot of tension in the team.

(and the problem for salespeople is that fully 90% of their work may be outside of view or earshot of the boss.)

The manager got the idea to provide the assessment to the salesperson’s clients.

Particularly in sales, the prospect/client is the one who ultimately decides who’s doing a good job.

Interestingly, the clients, in this case, rated the salesperson very high in the exact same skill areas the manager had rated him low.

The manager was able to adjust his view and be a better coach to the salesperson because the perspective was altered by the client.



Sadly, there is one major drawback to the 360°....

In the past, the process of the 360° came with a large administrative burden.



As a paper process, there were mailing, delivery and compliance issues.

Assuming you jumped over all those hurdles, you then had to spend the time required to score and consolidate the information into a single, coherent document.

The Internet and data processing came along and solved some of those problems...but 360° assessments vary widely in their usefulness and ability to reduce your administrative work load.



Conclusion: A system that doesn't offer a 360° view is less effective in today's workplace. The importance of working on collaborative teams makes this capability a hard and fast requirement.



To receive our free report, “10 Questions to Ask Any 360° Assessment Vendor to Insure You Get a Top Notch Process” send an email to top10@360-assessments.com .

Conclusion



Unfortunately, there are a lot more than 3 fatal mistakes you can make today!

Instead of putting your energy, effort and money into fixing any fatal mistake after the fact, it may be time to take a more careful look at how a comprehensive online assessment process can reduce your aggravation and increase your profits.

Take advantage of the tools offered.

Learn and understand the latest approaches to delivering a higher quality of training, reducing the administrative burden and maintaining your sanity (it's easier than you might think)...

The business climate will continue to be chaotic...but with a little investment of your time, you can reap big rewards for you and your team.



To receive a complete set of the documents referenced in this report, please send an email to complete@360-assessments.com.

