

**ASSESSING CHARACTER AND UNDERLYING ATTRIBUTES FOR EXCEPTIONALLY CHALLENGING
ROLES AND WORK - PATRICK TOMLINSON (2024, revised 2025)**



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The Character Assessment & Selection Tool has been created by Patrick Tomlinson. It is based on many years of research and experience in identifying the character and underlying attributes that support prominent levels of resilience and development in exceptionally challenging work. By challenging work, we mean work that is often rife with uncertainty and anxiety, and that can be emotionally testing and challenging to the extreme. CAST can be used for purposes of organization staff selection and development or on its own by professionals wishing to explore and maximize their potential.



CAST is conducted by an online 1-1 in-person interview or an online automated form-based assessment. It takes around 1 hour to 1 ¼ hours to complete. It provides a detailed understanding of an individual's character and attitudes towards life, work, working with others, and development potential.

Assessing Character and Attributes

What determines our performance in highly challenging situations is more to do with our character than our skills, and our character is made up of underlying attributes. Attributes are personal qualities, but are vitally important in professional situations. “In such extreme situations, how you perform is much less about what you know than who you are. Your skills aren’t necessarily important. What matters more are your attributes.” (Diviney, 2021, p.5)

These attributes, such as persistence, purpose, growth mindset (Dweck 2016), ownership, tenacity, and fortitude, are underlying and often not visible. Diviney (p.6) argues, “We all have an internal coding, a specific combination of attributes that guide our performance.” Underlying attributes may be dormant and only surface in especially challenging circumstances.

In fact, sometimes certain attributes are overlooked because we don’t even know we have them. Those are what I call “dormant attributes.” Typically, they emerge in environments that involve deep challenge, extreme stress, or both. (Diviney, p.24)

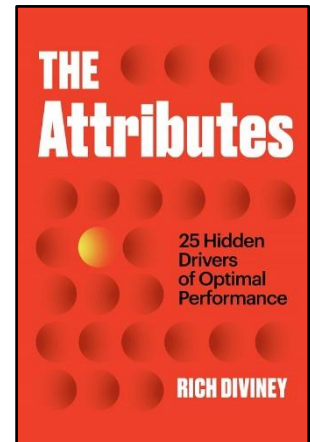
As well as having a major influence on individual performance, attributes also have a significant influence on how people work together. Diviney (p.6) says,

Attributes also affect how people—teams, managers, and subordinates, spouses, children, and friends—interact with one another; a dozen competent, skilled colleagues might be a disaster working together, while a collection of seemingly average individuals excel as a collective.

The core aim of CAST is to examine these underlying attributes and to make some of the hidden or dormant qualities more visible. This is especially helpful when considering a person for roles that they have not been in before and may have little conscious awareness of their attributes and how these will fit with the demands of the role. CAST focuses on character and attributes – it does not assess the more visible and easy-to-measure skills.

The assessment gives feedback on a person's resilience, strengths, and areas of vulnerability that are relevant to different professional roles. It will give an indication of the present and potential levels of responsibility the person is capable of. A full feedback report is provided, with recommendations for development. A consultation can also be offered to discuss the report and answer any queries. Identifying underlying attributes helps create a focused development plan.

While attributes are part of everyone's circuitry, they're not immutable. They can be tweaked and modified... If you want to understand human performance—yours and others'—the first step is to understand attributes. (Dviney, p.7)



To help make CAST more widely available, an online automated version is now available.

<https://www.castassessment.com/optionsandprices>

This assists organizations in accessing assessments in a timely and cost-effective manner to complement existing recruitment and selection processes.

What are the benefits?

- Improved staff retention.
- People in the roles they are suited to.
- Engaged teams, thriving in their work, and developing.
- Higher quality task performance.
- Improved finances.
- Improved quality of individual/service/organizational development.

Who can benefit?

It will be of excellent value to professionals and organizations who work with children and young people who have suffered trauma and other adversities. Among others, this includes,

- Directors
- Managers
- Social Care Workers
- Foster Carers
- Social Workers
- Therapists
- Business Owners
- CAST can also be equally useful for other roles and fields of work.

Endorsements

‘CAST is a very, very smart tool indeed. I was thoroughly impressed with the process too. It's very personable and sincerely accurate, and if you are serious about your personal/professional development and the development of others, then look no further.

Director of Talent & Performance, UK

‘We have commissioned over 15 CAST assessments during the past two years. We have used it for senior staff development and selection purposes. The assessments, in our experience, are an accurate indicator of a person's current mindset and abilities. They also highlight the areas of development to focus on what would enable an individual not only to develop professionally but also personally. The report from the CAST assessment of a candidate for a key role in our organization has a big part to play in the decision-making process on appointments and professional development plans.

Director, Ireland

‘The results could not be more positive. Through a simple question and answer process, completed over a 75-minute session, we gained insight into employees' strengths and challenges, appropriate methods of support, and current and future role suitability. For any company wanting to gain a greater understanding of their employees and how they and you can best support the task, I would highly recommend this assessment

Operations Manager, England

‘I would recommend the assessment for any manager who wants to focus on selecting the appropriate staff for positions and/or identifying ways of developing resilience.

Team Leader, N. Ireland

‘The CAST Assessment tool is brilliantly insightful and delivered in a careful, thoughtful, and affirming way that encourages self-care and self-challenge. It's different from other assessment tools in that it examines aspects of 'character' (as opposed to personality) to understand individuals' potential for leadership, resilience, and undertaking high-level responsibility.

‘I'd really recommend CAST for recruiting to board or high-level roles, and when promoting individuals in-house. It's an exceptional analysis.”

Development Lead, Marketing Director, England

‘The relational approach utilized to complete the CAST, I felt, set it superior from other tools, as within that relational exchange, Patrick was able to ascertain more about my personal qualities, but more importantly, my values.

Assistant Commissioner, Ireland

References

Diviney, R. (2021) *The Attributes: 25 Hidden Drivers of Optimal Performance*, New York: Random House

Dweck, C.S. (2016) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, New York: Penguin Random House L.L.C.

PATRICK TOMLINSON BRIEF BIO: The primary goal of Patrick's work is the development of people and organizations. Throughout his career, he has identified development to be the driving force related to positive outcomes for everyone, service users, professionals, and organizations.



- ✓ Patrick has over 30 years of experience in leadership - professional, workforce & organization development.
- ✓ Vast experience in staff selection & development.
- ✓ He has conducted longitudinal studies and research on staff retention & helped organizations significantly reduce the costs of ineffective staff selection & development.
- ✓ He has helped organizations across the world save £100s K & improve all outcomes.
- ✓ Over 8 years of research on the CAST tool.

His experience spans from 1985 in the field of trauma and attachment-informed services. He began as a residential care worker in a therapeutic community for young people and has experience as a team leader, senior manager, Director, CEO, consultant, and mentor. He is the author/co-author/editor of numerous papers and books. He is a qualified clinician, strategic leader, and manager. Working in several countries, Patrick has helped develop therapeutic models that have gained national and international recognition. In 2008, he created Patrick Tomlinson Associates to provide services focused on development for people and organizations. The following services are provided,

- Character Assessment & Selection Tool (CAST): for Personal & Professional Development, & Staff Selection
- Therapeutic Model Development
- Developmental Mentoring, Leadership & Organizational Development, Consultancy, & Clinical Supervision
- Non-Executive Director

Websites:

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