

**ASSESSING CHARACTER AND UNDERLYING ATTRIBUTES FOR EXCEPTIONALLY CHALLENGING ROLES
AND WORK**

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The Character Assessment & Selection Tool has been created by Patrick Tomlinson & Dr Areti Smaragdi. 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 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,

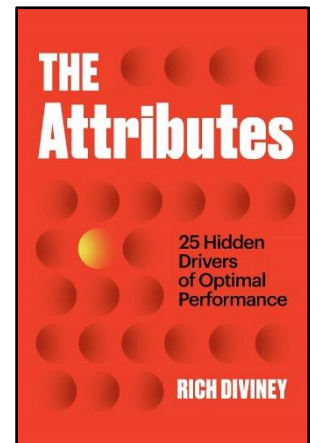
Attributes also affect how people—teams, managers, and subordinates, spouses, children, and friends—interact with one another; a dozen competent, skilled colleagues might be a disaster working together, while a collection of seemingly average individuals excel as a collective.

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, we are completing an online version which will be ready very soon. This will assist 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.

"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**

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.

WHO WE ARE

Patrick Tomlinson - Organizational and Clinical Consultant

- The primary goal of Patrick's work is the development of people and organizations.
- Over 30 years of experience in leadership - professional, workforce & organization development.
- Vast experience in staff selection & development.
- Has conducted longitudinal studies and research on staff retention & helped organizations significantly reduce the costs of ineffective staff selection & development.
- Has helped organizations across the world save £100s K & improve all outcomes.
- Over 6 years of research on the CAST tool.



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Areti Smaragdi, PhD - Psychology Consultant & Assessment Specialist

- Areti has a background in developmental psychology and neuroscience.
- She has co-authored over 30 peer-reviewed articles and designed numerous experimental studies.
- She has co-authored and published two risk assessment manuals for children, in addition to CAST.
- Areti & Patrick started working together in 2020 from a mutual interest in the psychology behind what makes individuals work well together, lead, and develop successful teams and organizations.



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