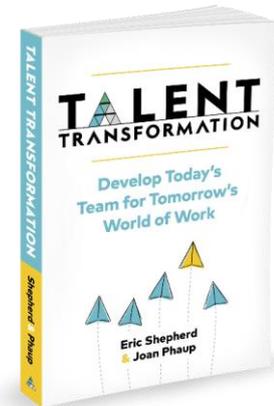# "Talent Transformation" – *how assessments help make people decisions*

This is a review of a book published by Eric Shepherd and Joan Phaup on talent challenges in the workplace and how assessments can contribute.

Challenges the book deals with

Even before Covid-19, the world was undergoing a "Fourth Industrial Revolution", digitally transforming many human interactions and experiences. In this thought-provoking book, Shepherd and Phaup focus on the implications of this in talent management and suggest that

> *"Technological progress will impact all aspects of life, but it may be that employers and workers feel its implications most acutely".*

Lots of jobs are now redundant or changing. But new jobs are also appearing. Covid-19 is accelerating this change. So how do business and HR leaders manage people in the new world? The fundamental issue this ~250-page, inspirational book seeks to address is how employers and businesses can adjust to these changes and get the best performance from their workforce.

What the book covers – the Talent Transformation Pyramid

The big concept in the book is what the authors call the Talent Transformation Pyramid. This consists of 12 factors that contribute to individual, team and organization performance. For example, two key factors are "Technical and Functional Skills" and "Social and Emotional Intelligence". It's easy to relate to the concept that these are critical requirements for most job roles. Other factors include personality, physical and cognitive abilities, competencies and readiness.

The book suggests that aligning on a vocabulary and framework to describe these factors is vital to understanding how to measure and improve performance. By being precise about the different factors that contribute to individual, team and organizational performance, it's then possible to measure these factors.

What the book covers – using assessments

Eric Shepherd, one of the book's authors was CEO of Questionmark for two decades and is one of the most knowledgeable and inspiring thought leaders about the use of assessments in business. The best part of the book for me is a 90 page or so tour de force explanation of how assessments have evolved, the principles behind assessment, how to assess individuals and how to assess teams.

There is coverage of validity and reliability, errors of measurement, assessment security, how to evaluate trends and comparisons in assessment results and a comparison of correlation and causation. For assessing individuals, Shepherd and Phaup give good advice on how to measure the different factors in the pyramid including behaviors and capabilities. For assessing teams, they describe how to assess team leaders and different ways of measuring team capabilities. Key concepts are to use competencies well and to ensure there is always an evidence base.

The book goes on to describe how organizational results can be measured, and how to combine the concepts covered earlier to add organizational value and where the future may go.

How the book might help

I have known and worked closely with the authors over many years, but I am not sugar coating my language to suggest that this book will be an excellent and accessible read for anyone working in talent management, HR and/or assessments. Other authors could easily have spent 1000 pages on the subjects covered in this book. If you are looking for a readable description of key concepts in assessment, and a new way of thinking about how to measure performance, this book is an excellent read.

Ultimately the premise of the book is that the decisions we make about people (hire, promote, manage and fire) are critical to the success of any organization, and that assessments are crucial to gather data to make those decisions.

To give Shepherd and Phaup the last word:

> *"Comprehensive data will bring patterns to light and expose correlations, making it easier to make well-informed decisions, predict readiness to perform, anticipate challenges and determine appropriate interventions."*

"Talent Transformation" is published by Talent Transformation Press on October 20th, 2020 and is available in e-book and paperback versions in all usual book channels.