

# TALENT ASSESSMENT TOOL HOW TO GUIDE

## MODULE 4

### Instructions:

Here's the process I recommend you follow each quarter.

#### **1. List the names of all the people you are assessing on the talent assessment details form**

(the last page of this document). If you are the VP of Operations and you have five direct reports, you would list each one here. (Note: the CEO is not evaluating members of the leadership team in this meeting. Those assessments are made privately by the CEO in consultation with the CEO's business coach.)

#### **2. Give each person a core values score and a productivity score on a scale of zero to ten.**

Use whole numbers when scoring. No one gets a 7.5; round up or down. Don't make scoring into a giant math problem. Keep things simple. If they are a living, breathing example of the core values every day, they're probably a 9 or a 10. If they consistently and repeatedly break one or more core values, their score will go down appropriately. If they are consistently completing their rocks and hitting their KPIs, their productivity score will probably be very high. If they are missing goals consistently...you get the idea.

**3. Decide, as a company, how you are defining A-, B-, and C-players.** Draw a talent assessment chart (see the next to last page of this document) on a flip chart to be ready for the next step. As a team, agree on what numbers will replace the boxed question marks on the first page of the form. These numbers will determine where people fall on the talent assessment (A, B, C or Toxic C).

Here are the numbers I strongly recommend:

**A-Players**—I recommend putting an 8.5 in the boxes next to the horizontal and vertical lines around the A square. That means that in order to be an A-player, you must score nine or higher in both core values and productivity. Notice I always end my numbers with .5, as this forces people into the categories (A, B, C, or Toxic-C) without anyone being on the line.

**Toxic C-Players**—Examine the bottom square labeled ‘Toxic C.’ Notice how it stretches across the bottom of the chart. This means that no matter how productive you are, if you’re not embracing the company’s core values, you’re toxic. The question for the company is, How low does a core value score have to be to make someone toxic? That’s the box on the right, below the box you just filled in for A-Players. I recommend using 7.5 (again, use a fraction so no one falls on the line). That means anyone who scores seven or below in core values is determined to be toxic to your organization. I know that sounds harsh, but remember, your core values are nonnegotiable behaviors. Scoring a 7 out of 10 on nonnegotiable behaviors should be unacceptable.

**C-Players**—The next piece of the puzzle is the question box in the upper left. This measures another type of C-player. These are folks who may be embodying your core values, but their productivity is so low that they are hurting the company. They aren’t toxic. In fact, they may be wonderful people who fit in well, but they are not productive. I recommend putting a 6.5 in that question box (again, use a fraction so no one falls on the line). That means anyone that scores a 6 or below in productivity is determined to be a C-player. If they are also below a 7.5 in core values, they would be Toxic C.

**B-players**—We don’t need to fill in any more boxed question marks here. These are your solid to mediocre folks who score high enough in core values and productivity to not be C- or Toxic C-Players, but don’t score high enough to be A-players.

**4. Have each member of the leadership team write the initials for each person on a small Post-it Note along with their scores (core values first, productivity second).** If you were evaluating Mike Goldman, you would write “MG 8, 9.”

**5. Have each leader, one at a time, share their scores** with the others so the leadership team knows the talent everyone else has on their departmental team. For instance, the head of operations might say, “I gave Joe Bennett, the director of warehousing, an eight in core values and an eight in productivity. Joe is a B-player.” Then the head of operations puts the Post-it with “JB 8, 8” on the talent assessment chart. Then she does the same for all of her other direct reports.

**6. The other leaders support or challenge each other's scores as needed.**

Leadership team members may have seen things in people that their fellow leaders haven't. "Wait a minute. How can you give Bob a ten for core values? I saw him screaming at somebody out in the hallway yesterday." You can't discuss every person because you'll be there all day, but this is the right time to bring up conflicting assessments and questions.

**7. Once all the scores are on the flip chart, do a quick calculation to determine what percentage of people are A, B, C, or Toxic C.** Then I ask,

"What do we think of our talent this quarter?" The team may be thrilled. Seventy percent of their people might be superstars, and they don't have any Toxic Cs. On the other hand, they may have a bunch of Toxic Cs and only one or two A-players. Then they might be thinking, We've got a big problem here.

**8. Regardless of how the chart shapes up, the team must ask itself, "What did we do to cause this result?"** If they have 70 percent superstars, this might be a sign that their hiring and coaching practices are strong. However, if their ranks are shot through with C-players, they may want to talk about hiring better or doing more effective coaching.

**9. Focus on A-players. It may seem counterintuitive to focus first on A-players.**

Shouldn't we focus first on training and mentoring the B- and C-players? The answer is no. A-players have the greatest potential for growth, the most potential to help your company skyrocket to the moon, the most potential to one day take a seat at the leadership table, and the most potential to get job offers somewhere else. The worst thing you can do for an A-player is say, "Thank God for Susan. She's a superstar, so I can just leave her alone and go focus on my B- and C-players." You should be spending most of your time with your A-players. They are what will make you great. So I'll ask, "What kinds of things should we be doing with these folks?" When I do that, I'll get comments like:

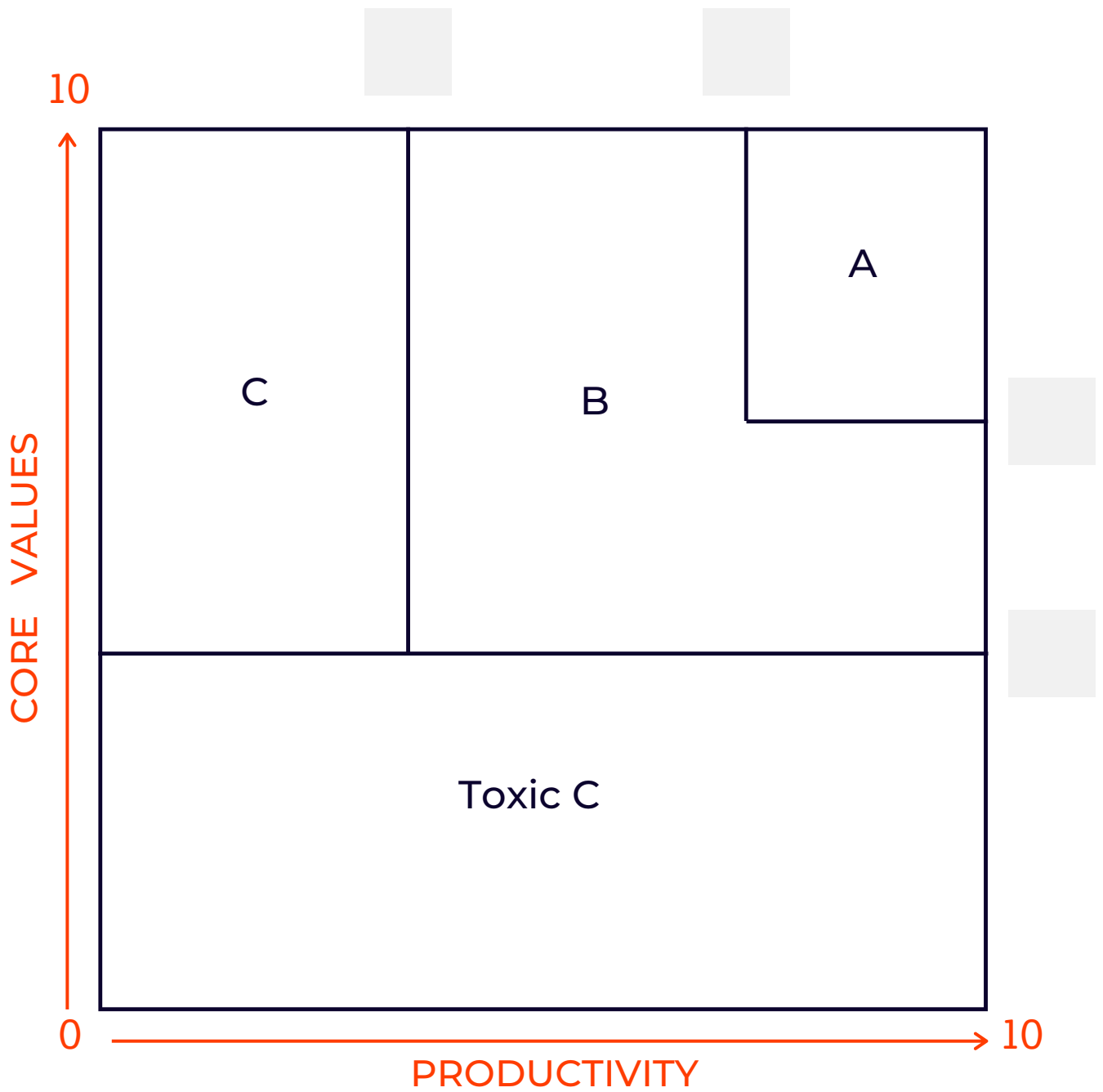
- a. Let's re-recruit them.
- b. Let's take steps to ensure they want to stay with us.
- c. Let's recognize their work publicly and privately.
- d. Let's challenge them and give them harder work so they remain challenged.
- e. Let's give them more training.
- f. Let's do a better job of leveraging their strengths.
- g. Let's coach and mentor them more.
- h. Let's promote them.

**10. While this discussion is taking place, the leaders jot down on the second page of the form their action plan for those A-players that directly report to them.** The leaders should have a different action plan for each A-player. One A-player may be overdue for a promotion, while another may only need a pat on the back. Each quarter, these leaders should have an action plan to mentor, coach, challenge, or reward these A-players.

**11. Create action plans for your B-players.** Your goal is to coach B-players to become A-players. There are two possibilities for turning a B-player into an A-player. First, you can coach them to improve productivity and/or core values in the current role. Second, you can change their role to better leverage their strengths. Doing this can raise their productivity (by focusing on their natural talents) and their core values (they might do a better job of living the values if they're focused on what they love doing).

**12. Ask yourself a critical question about each of your C- and Toxic C-players:** Are you going to coach or cut the cord? Everyone deserves a chance to succeed. Everyone deserves coaching if they're not meeting the requirements of the job. However, I've seen too many companies hold on to C-and Toxic C-players for one to two years, hoping and praying that things will improve. That's not fair to your company and not fair to the low-performing team member. Everyone can be an A-player somewhere. If they can't do it within your organization, you need to set them free to do it somewhere else.

For my clients, if a leader decides they are going to coach, they have ninety days—until the next quarterly meeting—to get performance up into at least the B-player level. If the improvement doesn't happen, but you still want to give them more coaching, guess what? You may be the C-player.



Team Member Initials	Core Value Score (1-10)	Productivity Score (1-10)	Action Plan