

Many of us have used career assessments as young people to choose a major, explore a first job opportunity, or prepare for interviews. But career assessments aren't just for adolescents and emerging adults. They can be used throughout your career to help you thrive. In fact, career assessment is one of the most underutilized tools for ongoing development, even though research consistently highlights its value. A 2021 Gallup study found that only 23% of employees strongly agree they can apply their strengths at work every day, yet those who do are six times more likely to be engaged and 15% less likely to quit. Career assessments help bridge that gap between potential and performance.

WHAT CAREER ASSESSMENTS REALLY DO

At their best, assessments can enhance self-awareness, improve team collaboration, and support leadership development. They help individuals:

- Understand which tasks energize or drain them.
- Clarify their preferred team roles and communication styles.
- Recognize their values and motivators.
- Translate natural strengths into concrete strategies for growth.

But they're often misunderstood. Unlike performance reviews or tests, career assessments are not meant to *evaluate* you; they're tools for reflection and exploration.

WHAT COMMON ASSESSMENTS ARE USED

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is one of the most widely used personality assessments in the world. The MBTI helps professionals understand their

preferences across four dimensions of personality and how they might complement other team members. Research shows that teams who understand MBTI types have improved communication and decreased conflict.

The **Strong Interest Inventory** maps your interests to over 100 careers and fields of study, highlighting top themes and preferred environments. It's based on more than 80 years of research and is particularly useful during career transitions or retirement planning.

Developed by Gallup, **StrengthsFinder** helps individuals identify what they do best and how to develop these strengths into consistent performance. The assessment offers insight into how you can contribute uniquely and effectively in both individual and team settings. Research shows that teams who focus on strengths every day have 12.5% greater productivity and six times higher engagement.

The Marcus Buckingham Company developed **StandOut** to identify your top "Strength Roles"—how you contribute most naturally at work. Companies using StandOut see up to 29% increases in employee engagement.

Many informal values assessment tools, such as card sorts and checklists, are readily available online, and they focus on what drives meaning in your work, which is crucial for long-term satisfaction. They're especially useful for executives, career changers, and those nearing retirement.

CAREER ASSESSMENT TOOLS CAN HELP THROUGHOUT YOUR WORK LIFE

BY GRETA A. DAVIS

WHY ASSESSMENTS MATTER FOR LEADERSHIP

Assessments aren't just useful for individual growth; they are powerful for developing leaders and teams. Leaders who understand their own and others' working styles are more effective in managing team dynamics, more likely to foster good working environments, and better at identifying and developing talent.

GUIDANCE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

While assessments provide rich data, the real power lies in how you interpret and apply that information. An assessment report won't change your career — but a conversation with a coach or counselor just might.

A skilled professional can help you choose the right tool(s) for your goals, apply results with nuance, plan your career, and advance the goals of your work team.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Whether you're launching a new chapter, leading a team, or simply feeling a little stuck, a career assessment might be the tool you didn't know you needed. When used thoughtfully, these tools bring clarity, confidence, and renewed purpose to your work.



GRETA DAVIS (University of North Texas) is a career counselor and consultant, workplace and employment coach, and clinical associate professor at Southern Methodist University, where she teaches career counseling and development.