Which traits predict job performance

Mom always said that personality and smarts go farther than good looks. And now even psychologists are on her side.

For years, psychologists turned to cognitive ability, brainpower, as a predictor of job performance. Smarter people were considered more likely to succeed on the job. But intelligence is only part of the story.

Other important factors in job performance - creativity, leadership, integrity, attendance and cooperation — are related to personality, not intelligence.

When psychologists are trying to determine what kind of personality someone has, they look at the "Big Five": whether someone is an extravert; whether they are agreeable; whether they are conscientious; whether they're emotionally stable; and whether they're open to experience.

Beyond that, though, psychologists disagree.

One research camp argues that conscientiousness — being responsible, dependable, organized and persistent — is generic to success.

But using conscientiousness as a standard of job performance won't work for all jobs. For some jobs, particularly creative ones, conscientiousness may be a liability, rather than an asset. Some research shows that while conscientiousness predicts performance in realistic and conventional jobs, it impedes success in investigative, artistic and social jobs that require innovation, creativity and spontaneity.

Interpersonal skills are another predictor of job performance. As the workplace moves toward teamwork and service-oriented jobs, evaluating interpersonal skills becomes increasingly important.

Psychologists say that what they call 'contextual performance' also leads to good job performance. Contextual performance means doing things beyond the simple job performance, such as volunteering, putting in extra effort, cooperating, following rules and procedures, and endorsing the goals of the organization.

If you're looking to see if you'll do well at a job, you need to see if you have the personality that fits the job, not just the smarts to do the job.

link: http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/predict-job-performance.aspx