



**KEEP
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AND
CARRY
ON**



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Everyone has worked with someone they could describe as a pistol, a live wire, or a short fuse. These excitable individuals' energy and enthusiasm can energize their peers and employees, but their mood can turn on a dime, and when it does, they will have others walking on eggshells to avoid setting them off.

What makes these time-bomb personalities tick, and how can you keep your excitable employees from unleashing their dark side?



Mixed Messages

Excitable individuals typically report an early family environment that was unpredictable and emotionally volatile. Behaviors that were praised one day might be punished the next, leading them to be doubtful and confused about parental expectations.

As adults, highly excitable people experience an approach-avoidance conflict: they want acceptance but expect rejection. This fear becomes self-fulfilling. Because they expect to be disappointed or even exploited, high-excitable individuals are vigilant for signs of criticism and prepared to strike back emotionally. These frequent outbursts serve three functions: (1) they attract attention, (2) they allow the illusion of control or power, and (3) they keep others at a distance where they are ultimately less threatening.

At work, excitable individuals tend to seem aimless and dispirited. After their initial enthusiasm for a project, job, or relationship, they become easily frustrated and tend to abandon ship.



Performance Implications

Hogan measures excitability using the Excitable scale of the Hogan Development Survey, a personality assessment that measures dark-side characteristics. Dark-side personality characteristics are qualities that may be strengths under normal circumstances, but, under increased stress, pressure, or boredom, can become crippling interpersonal obstacles.

- **No- and low-risk scores** on the Excitable scale indicate individuals who tend to be pleasant, calm under pressure, resilient, and stable in relationships with subordinates, colleagues, and supervisors. However, they are also unlikely to show enthusiasm for new ideas or opportunities, and may have trouble motivating others.
- **Moderately low scores** indicate individuals who are sufficiently emotional to seem enthusiastic or frustrated, and remain composed and steady in times of crisis. They tend to be persistent and able to maintain mutually respectful working relationships.
- **Moderately high scores** on the Excitable scale indicate individuals who are energetic but also moody and irritable. They tend to be sympathetic to the problems of others, but can be emotionally unpredictable and quick to doubt people or projects that don't proceed as expected.
- **High scores** on the Excitable scale indicate individuals who are energetic, volatile, and sometimes explosive. They are sensitive to criticism and quick to feel disrespected when challenged, engaging in frequent emotional outbursts that tend to alienate subordinates and colleagues. High scorers tend to abandon projects when they encounter roadblocks, and seem unfulfilled by work and relationships.



Developmental Recommendations

Excitable individuals may see developmental feedback as criticism or rejection, and may respond with self-protective displays of emotion. Feedback will be most successful when it is offered calmly and compassionately. Excitable individuals should be encouraged to:

- **Recognize the tendency** to see disagreement as criticism, take time to reflect, and request additional information to avoid overreacting.
- **Communicate consistently** to ensure others understand standards and expectations.
- **Try to relax** and stay optimistic during stressful times. This will communicate to staff and colleagues that perseverance will ultimately pay off.
- **Avoid becoming overly optimistic** about new projects or people; this will reduce the likelihood of discouragement down the line.
- **Remember that emotional outbursts** will upset staff, reduce their productivity, and negatively affect their performance.



The Bottom Line

In moderate amounts, excitable individuals' energy and enthusiasm can be a tremendous energizing force in the office, especially when it comes to new projects and people. With the strategic self-awareness provided by Hogan's personality assessments and targeted coaching, you can ensure these individuals don't become a destructive force.

About Hogan

Founded in 1987, Hogan Assessment Systems pioneered the use of personality assessment to improve workplace performance. Hogan's assessment solutions help businesses reduce turnover and increase productivity by hiring the right people, developing key talent, and evaluating leadership potential.