

EXECUTIVE FILE

PARSING PERSONALITIES



Pete Erickson / The Bulletin

JoAn Mann, PREP Profile Systems Inc. president, founder and director of research, started the Bend company 25 years ago. Because of the faltering economy, the company recently switched to an online subscription-based model.

PREP Profile Systems helps companies predict whether a potential employee will be a good fit

By Andrew Moore
The Bulletin

Whether at home or at work, personalities matter.

Ask JoAn Mann, a Bend woman with a passion for understanding what makes people tick. Though she earned degrees in German and fine arts, Mann created her own personality test and has spent more than two decades selling it to companies that want to ensure new employees are a good fit.

"Most people are hired for their skill set and fired for their personality," said Mann, who founded PREP Profile Systems Inc. 25 years ago in Bend.

But the test has multiple applications, Mann said.

An important one is helping companies figure out which personality traits would best suit their efforts to open up business opportunities in a different culture. German companies like details, Mann said, and Japanese companies

The basics

What: PREP Profile Systems Inc.
Where: 19800 Village Office Court, Suite 101, Bend
Employees: Two, plus three independent contractors
Phone: 541-382-1401
E-mail: ja@prep-profiles.com
Web site: www.prep-profiles.com

like trust. Find the employee in the company who has the personality to match the target market and that company has a leg up, she said.

"There's no such thing as the perfect salesman," she said. "It has to do with the personality of the person and the personality of the culture."

Personality tests have existed for many years, but Mann said they were

often time-consuming or intimidating.

She developed hers to be simple, a test that can be taken in five minutes with a roughly eighth-grade vocabulary. The test is taken online, and the results can be filtered through more than 25 reports that perform different analyses.

The reports, which are purchased by the entity ordering the test, show how a job candidate might jibe with the company's personality, or whether a job candidate has the personality typical of a particular profession.

The test also can be taken for free online, though it returns a minimal analysis.

Mann said her original business model worked for many years, but the recession forced companies to cut costs. Revenues dried up, so Mann switched to a subscription-based model that allows entities full access to the testing site for a monthly fee.

Mann answered a few more questions about her business in an interview with *The Bulletin*.

Q: What are some recent challenges your business has overcome?

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— JoAn Mann, PREP Profile Systems Inc.

PREP

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A: Our original business model didn't work anymore, so we had to make huge changes, and we're getting a great reception. We had to re-vamp everything.

Q: What are some recent successes?

A: The work we're doing in China. We're doing lots of work with faith-based groups. They're not a financial success (for PREP),

but we're making a difference in the world with these groups ... there are some great stories and it's an area I'm proudest of.

Q: Any advantages to having your business in Bend?

A: I've been telecommuting since I got started, with a telephone and then the fax, so it's forced me to be much more (information-technology)-based than if I was in a city. We've done lots of online learning, so we were able to flip really fast to an online-based subscription model when the economy went down

fast. For as small as we are, we are very sophisticated from an IT perspective. It would surprise our clients how small we are, but we give big service. Plus, we would have higher overhead (costs) in a city and I wouldn't get to see my (local) end-users.

Q: Any disadvantages?

A: Travel is hard. It takes longer, it's more expensive ... our online presence helps, but there's nothing like meeting face-to-face. And IT staffing is a challenge, though the recession

has helped (as more tech workers have come available).

Q: What do you envision in the company's future?

A: We are looking pretty strong, particularly in the global market where we are now seeing seeds. I see lots of growth in cross-cultural work. As more American companies compete overseas, that creates opportunities for us.

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