

# I'm too skeptical? Where's the proof?

From outright betrayal to good old-fashioned sucking up to the boss, if they've been working long, odds are most people have experienced some form of office politics. Therefore, it seems wise to view other's motives with a healthy amount of skepticism. But where is the line between skepticism and paranoia, and at what point does that paranoia interfere with a person's career?



# a history of betrayal

Highly skeptical individuals view the world as a hostile and dishonest place. These individuals believe they were deceived at some point in their development, and often grew up in an environment where mistrust of others had value as a survival tool. In order to protect themselves from future betrayal, they have become alert and watchful.

On the one hand, these individuals' alertness pays off because there are, in fact, people who will try to take advantage of them. On the other hand, they also alienate potential friends and allies who they incorrectly suspect of being their enemies.

# performance implications

Hogan measures an individual's level of skepticism using the Hogan Development Survey (HDS). The HDS measures dark-side personality–interpersonal tendencies that may be strengths under normal circumstances, but which, under stress or pressure, can become overused and damage an individual's ability to form and maintain relationships.

## no risk/low risk

People with no-risk (0%-39%) and low-risk (40%-69%) scores on the HDS Skeptical scale tend to be perceived as trusting, optimistic, and eager to work with others. They are often open to feedback, easy to coach, and able to accept constructive criticism without taking it personally. Conversely, there is a performance risk at the extreme low end of the scale in regard to being overly trusting.

## moderate risk

People with moderate-risk (70%-89%) scores tend to be critical consumers of information. They are typically perceptive when it comes to others' motives, and are skilled at navigating organizational politics. However, individuals with moderate-risk scores tend to be uncooperative when they don't understand why they should do something. They may be difficult to work with because they tend to exaggerate grievances, be sensitive to criticism, and become accusatory or argumentative when they feel wronged.

## high risk

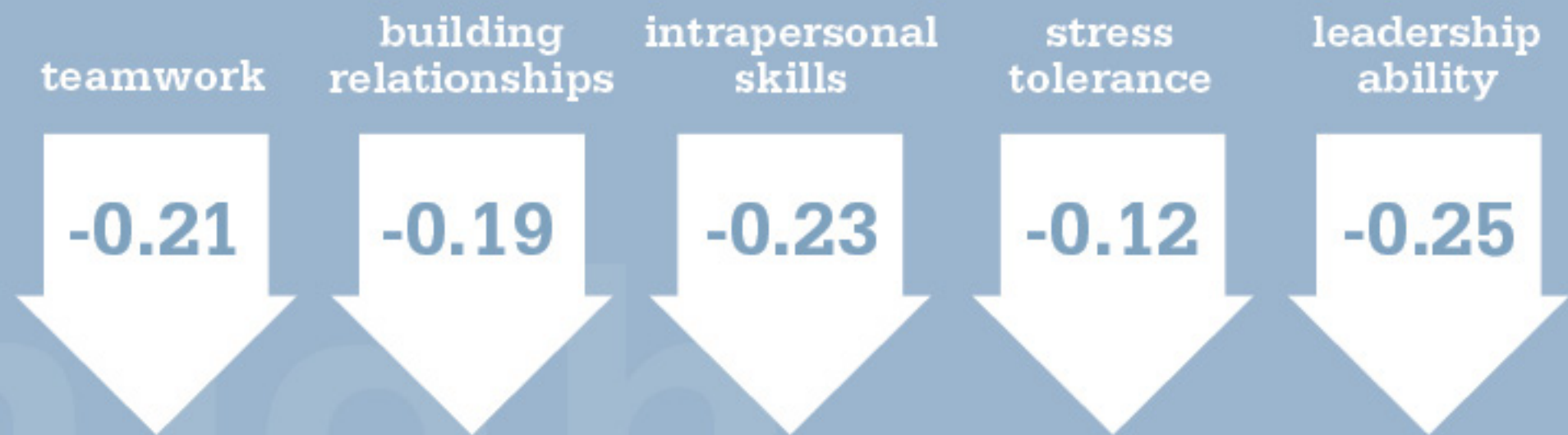
People with high-risk (90%-100%) scores tend to believe that the world is a dangerous place. At their best, they are perceived as bright, they are able to detect logical patterns in the behavior of others, and they can defend their views about the intentions of others with remarkable skill and conviction. At their worst, however, they can be cynical, suspicious, and alert for signs of betrayal in their friends, family, coworkers, and employers. When they perceive mistreatment, they retaliate directly.

# how to manage skepticism

Highly skeptical individuals tend to doubt the sincerity and motives of those who seek to offer constructive developmental feedback. Candor and transparency are particularly important so that they develop the trust required for effective intervention.

Dr. Jeff Foster, director of the Hogan Research Division, and Dr. Joyce Hogan, co-founder and former vice president of Hogan Assessment Systems, analyzed data from the more than 750 research studies in the Hogan research archive.

They found strong negative correlations between high scores on the HDS Skeptical scale and individuals' ability to perform along several competencies:



Highly skeptical individuals benefit from feedback that encourages greater balance in perceptions of others and a willingness to consider multiple motives for others' behavior. These individuals can be encouraged to:

- 1** Become more aware of their tendency to designate people as heroes or villains, with most falling into the latter group.
- 2** Question the assumption that others deliberately attempt to demean, frustrate, or exploit them.
- 3** Risk confiding in others at work to falsify the assumption that colleagues will use such personal information against them.
- 4** Learn skills other than hostility and combativeness to address situations in which they were, in fact, misunderstood or criticized inappropriately.
- 5** Experiment with acting in a more friendly or engaging manner.

**It's healthy to exercise a certain amount of informed skepticism; to evaluate and consider information in order to arrive at a sound conclusion. With the strategic self-awareness provided by Hogan's assessments and the proper coaching, individuals can overcome their impulse to mistrust others and use their skeptical tendencies in a positive way.**

## **about Hogan**

Founded in 1987, Hogan Assessments pioneered the use of personality assessment to improve workplace performance. Twenty-five years later, we are committed to continuing the same spirit of innovation and attention to science.

How do **you** derail? Find out at [www.howdoyouderail.com](http://www.howdoyouderail.com).