

## Objective

# Fast Track Growth in Manufacturing

Persona, Inc. in Watertown, South Dakota makes high quality, custom signs for major corporations including petroleum and hotel/motel businesses throughout the U.S. and beyond. In 1980 Dennis Holien started the company with 3 people and 7000 square feet of production space grossing \$125,000 in the first year. By 1990 it had grown to a \$4 million operation. Today the company is five times that size—with \$20 million in sales. It has undergone two major plant expansions and now employs over 300 people.

**Challenge:** When John Tischer agreed to become President of Persona in 1991, taking over for its founder, he took on the challenge of accelerating the company's growth. He recognized that to do so he had to assess the company from three vantage points: systems and operations, training, and people resources.

"We wanted to be the best sign company in the nation with the best people," he said, "and stay in front of the competition. People make all the difference. It's a matter of having the right people in the right jobs and motivating them right."

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Tischer had been trained to use the Predictive Index (PI) as a senior manager in the banking industry. He knew that to expand fast and adapt to change he would need people in key roles who could drive things forward. As might be expected in a production business, a number of the top managers were skilled craftsmen whose expertise was technical. Tischer recognized that he would have to institute a significant change in the leadership of the company to ramp up sales and production.

**Results:** Tischer invested in the training of his top 20 people to use the Predictive Index. Using PI, he identified the strengths of his existing managers in sales, operations, production, and purchasing and rearranged their responsibilities to better suit their strengths. He also hired some new talent in management—people who could push the company to greater levels of achievement and success. One example of an outstanding new hire identified with the help of PI: an enterprising purchasing manager who dramatically reduced freight and materials expenses and saved the company \$350,000 in his first year on the job.

"Thanks to PI, this company doesn't hire people who don't fit their jobs any longer," he said. "I am surrounded by top-notch people and we have no turnover to speak of."

In addition to hiring and retaining people, PI has helped Persona improve both quality and production. Managers trained to use PI know how to communicate with their direct reports and how to motivate them for peak performance. “Anybody who leads, directs, and is accountable for others should be trained to use PI,” Tischer said.

Tischer believes there is no quick fix for finding the right people and building a successful company but the Predictive Index has given him a distinct advantage.

The Predictive Index® *is a unique, in-house management tool used by executives throughout the world for more than 40 years to develop leaders and build successful businesses. PI Management Resources is an international association of management consultants who help companies use PI to manage their most important resource—their people. Predictive Index® is a publication of Praendex Incorporated, Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts.*

