

# HRTECH

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## Outlook **EUROPE**

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**ASSESSMENTS**  
EDITION

Redefining  
**Talent**  
**Management**  
from a systems  
perspective

Dr Maretha Prinsloo,  
Founder MD Psychologist

# Cognadev

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# COVER STORY



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## Redefining **Talent Management** from a systems perspective

**T**alent management initiatives are often guided by psychological assessment results. But even in the technologically prolific enterprise world, assessing an individual's psychological functioning is easier said than done. Conventional Psychometrics, structured interviews, situational judgement tests (SJTs), and the more recent introduction of gamification into candidate assessments can only provide a rough outline of the applicant being assessed for a job role. However, appropriate and in-depth information of the psychological functioning of candidates and teams remains a prerequisite for the strategic viability of organizations.

In 1994 Dr Maretha Prinsloo founded Cognadev; an organization devoted to more accurately assessing and developing cognitive functioning, value orientations, and the motivational drive of adults from an integral, theory and systems-based perspective.

The unique assessment methodologies that were subsequently developed include the Cognitive Process Profile (CPP) - based on the holonic information processing model (IPM) of Prinsloo. The CPP is an automated simulation exercise designed to externalize and track the thought processes of individuals engaged in a complex cognitive task. This was followed by the creation of the Learning Orientation Index (LOI) for the cognitive assessment of young adults; the Value Orientations (VO) aimed at measuring worldviews and their organizing frameworks; and the Motivational Profile (MP) indicating a person's drive and energy in their life, work, and relationships.

Cognadev has since deployed these assessments on a secure, cloud-based platform aimed at supporting HCM decisions related to recruitment, placement, team compilation, leadership succession and organizational transformation. The methodologies used by Cognadev for the assessments of cognition, values and motivation are unique, evidence-based, and are holistically integrated to match people to work roles at all levels of an organization. Advanced data modeling and validation/analytics supporting the validity and workplace utility of these tools has been (and continues to be) conducted by Cognadev's Chief Research Scientist, Dr Paul Barrett. Over the past two decades, Cognadev's sophisticated assessments and customer-centric service approach have been adopted by a wide variety of organizations seeking to optimize their people practices.

In conversation with HR Tech Outlook Europe, Dr Maretha Prinsloo—founder of Cognadev—shares her insights on the significance of the Cognadev assessments in selecting, placing, and developing candidates for business-critical roles within an enterprise.

### **The Psychological and Workplace Functioning of People**

“I established Cognadev in 1994 to address a need in the market for a new generation of unique, fair and valid ways to holistically assess the integrated psychological and workplace functioning of people and teams, thereby avoiding the use of conventional ability tests and self-report questionnaires” begins Maretha. “Our online assessments are automated and include deep-structure gamified simulation exercises, wherein scoring is implemented automatically by algorithmic expert systems and embedded autonomous semantic analytics.” What makes these assessment results noteworthy is that they are holistic, integrated and contextualized to specific work requirements, designed to ensure optimal people-job matching. Alongside Cognadev's Cognitive Process Profile (CPP) solution, the market was also introduced to the Learning Orientation Index (LOI) for the cognitive assessment of young adults. Whereas cognitive functioning can be regarded as a prerequisite for work performance, the results should, however, be interpreted holistically in terms of a person's worldview and valuing systems. The Value Orientations (VO) tool, based on the 'Spiral Dynamics' (SD) model of Graves, was subsequently designed to assess “levels” of consciousness, perceptual- and decision-making frameworks and cultural memes.

The VO does not rely on self-report responses as do most Personality tests but instead is designed to utilize the principles of 'resonance', 'consistency', and 'altitude' of a person's responses. Given the importance of a person's drive and vitality, the development of the Motivational Profile (MP) followed. “The MP is Jungian in nature and capitalizes on the non-transparent use of archetypes/metaphors to reveal subconscious aspects of a person's drive and energy in their life in general, their work and their relationships,” adds Maretha.

To integrate and contextualize a person's holistic psychological profile i.e., their intellectual functioning, level of consciousness, worldview, cultural memes, and motivational drivers (in terms of particular job-role requirements), we have developed a comprehensive job analysis system: the Contextualized Competency Mapping (CCM) and its accompanying Integrated Competency Report (ICR). As with all the people assessment tools developed by Cognadev, the job analysis (CCM) and integrated reporting (ICR) tools are autonomous, online, expert system applications with automated reporting delivered to clients.

These report formats have been carefully curated using a mixture of classifications, text-based explanations, and explanatory graphics, providing the HR practitioner with the necessary tools and information to assist them in addressing HCM functions.

All the above tools and functionalities are deployed on a cloud-based delivery platform from which users can nominate candidates, download reports, and access data and other information. Given the above assessment tools are aimed at high-stakes assessments for leadership roles, Cognadev has also developed a cost-effective volume assessment platform,

referred to as Cliquidity, for high-volume/mass recruitment assessment purposes, organizational audits, workforce analytics, and talent pooling.

Alongside the innovative assessment methodologies, a noteworthy aspect of the company's modus operandi is its reliance on integral, holonic models of psychological functioning which provide new frameworks for understanding individual differences among people. This theoretically founded approach creates value beyond that of the typical discrete and statistically derived constructs found within conventional self-report questionnaire psychometrics.



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and embedded  
autonomous semantic  
analytics***



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### **Understanding Human Consciousness to Facilitate Leadership, Visibility and Growth**

An exemplary collaboration that validates Cognadev's approach to talent management and organizational development took place within a multinational manufacturing company with its head office in Switzerland. The due diligence results of an independent third-party evaluation indicated the core organizational challenge for the corporate was its culture, characterized by inadequate governance and compliance standards. A complete cultural transformation focused on the organization's executive leadership was recommended. With the aim of understanding and mapping the leadership profiles of the executive as well as the cultural and role requirements involved, Cognadev consequently delivered a comprehensive assessment strategy across all the corporate executive regions in Asia, Europe, North and South America. The initiative resulted in the adjustment of job- and organizational structures coupled with the repositioning of two thirds of the executive.

After a collaboration that spanned three years, the performance of the executive continuum across different regions of operation was evaluated internally and externally through a second independent due-diligence exercise. On the financial front, the executive team contributed to a significant improvement in performance, which translated to a €3 bn lift to the net asset value of the organization. As verified by 360-degree feedback, the executive team also reported greater job satisfaction and self-actualization. Furthermore, the modal location within a bell-curve representation of executive performance moved significantly toward higher

levels of performance and effectiveness. More importantly, the cultural weaknesses identified in the first due-diligence process were eliminated by a more robust and proactive organization structure strengthened by ethical business practices.

"Cognadev partners with consulting groups globally, using practitioners who are professionally registered and accredited by Cognadev. Over the past two decades, we have serviced hundreds of organizations across all types of industries, including Fortune 500 companies, consulting firms and educational institutions," says Maretha.

### **Future-Proofing Businesses**

Instead of a primarily commercially-driven approach to the provision of routine 'same as' assessment and HCM solutions, Cognadev is rooted in a deep and passionate interest in psychological functioning. Since workplace systems and organizational effectiveness are conditional upon the positioning of individuals and teams within constituent subsystems, Cognadev attaches a much greater importance to a comprehensive understanding of the individual and their psychology than many assessment organizations.

As Maretha states: "Simply put, we aim to dynamically match the right person to the right job and provide guidelines for their personal growth." Looking back at Maretha's initial reasoning which highlighted the need for a new paradigm in people assessment, it is safe to say that Cognadev's founder foresaw the utility of assessment practices to future-proof businesses for the long run - safeguarding the HR function against ever emerging social, technical and economic challenges. 

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*The annual listing of 10 companies that are at the forefront of providing  
Assessments solution and impacting businesses*