

# Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.—a DuPont Business—Cultivates Common Corporate Language Using Myers-Briggs® Assessment



## CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

### BUSINESS OVERVIEW:

World's leading developer and supplier to farmers worldwide of advanced plant genetics. Has 5,000 employees, and provides services to customers in nearly 70 countries.

### CHALLENGE:

Wanted more consistency in its employee development tools and a tool that would work globally.

### SOLUTION:

Turned to the Myers-Briggs® assessment and made it a core element of its employee development program—and has begun to launch programs in the United States and in Europe.

### RESULTS:

Has had overwhelmingly positive feedback so far — more than 175 employees at all levels have participated in the training program and there is strong employee demand for additional MBTI training programs.

Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., a DuPont business, knows that if you want something to grow, you have to nurture and cultivate it. And that applies to both products and people. Pioneer, a subsidiary of DuPont, is the world's leading developer and supplier of advanced plant genetics to farmers worldwide. Its mission is to increase customer productivity and profitability and to develop sustainable agricultural systems for people everywhere. With a customer orientation and a focus on innovation, Pioneer is a leader in the agriculture industry. Headquartered in Johnston, Iowa, since the 1920s it has provided services to customers in nearly 70 countries, and today has more than 5,000 employees.

The company's product lines include alfalfa, canola, corn, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, wheat, and forage and grain additives. Pioneer also develops leading-edge research programs focused on creating new products to meet customer needs. It employs more than 1,700 researchers in 25 countries, all well-established experts in the science of crop genetics. These researchers focus on insect and disease resistance, genomics, quality traits, agronomic traits, and precision farming technologies to better manage crop production. The company addresses nutrition and develops products to increase the efficiency and profitability of livestock producers, farmers, and end users worldwide.

With its global focus, Pioneer also is strongly committed to employee development at its sites throughout the world. In April 2006, the company began exploring the use of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) instrument from CPP to aid in its employee development efforts.

For more than 50 years, the MBTI instrument has helped millions of individuals throughout the world gain a deeper understanding of themselves and how they interact with others. The MBTI assessment helps people transform themselves—by giving them a powerful tool for improving how they communicate, learn, and work. The MBTI instrument's wide-ranging applications promote growth and development in many organizational settings, including business, counseling, and education.

## PIONEER TURNS TO THE MBTI® TOOL

Why did Pioneer choose the MBTI assessment? According to Steve Larson, Talent Development Manager at Pioneer, "We had a number of tools that various divisions were using, and it was becoming confusing. We had too many

tools and were looking for more consistency. And, frankly, the ones we were using weren't quite meeting our needs."

Larson works in the human resources group and has been with the company for more than 14 years. He was familiar with the MBTI assessment from a previous job and thought it had all the capabilities Pioneer required. "We wanted something that was rich, and that could be used in a number of different applications," he says. "Having been in the HR business for some time, I was familiar with the MBTI instrument. I knew it had the capability to offer not just type feedback to our employees, but also could help with leadership development, communication improvement, and team building, and it could help us with organizational change."

### **MBTI® MOMENTUM BUILDS—FROM ONE SESSION TO ANOTHER**

Says Larson, "I knew that once we started working with the MBTI instrument, the momentum would catch up with us. And indeed it has." Once a core group (Larson and five others) were qualified to administer the MBTI instrument, they began introducing it to employees at all levels of the organization. Larson delivered his first session in November 2006 to a team that had been brought together to work on product development—something that had to be accomplished very quickly. Larson says the group was composed of a lot of smart people, yet they were facing challenges completing the project.

That initial session led to another session, in January 2007, held at an internal learning forum. These forums are held every 18 months and are aimed at one business division comprised of technicians in the field and in the lab whose tasks include taking readings and analyzing data. After the group leader from his initial team-building training encouraged Larson to put the MBTI instrument on the agenda of the learning forum, Larson was surprised and pleased to learn how quickly the word spread. Within a few days, more than 24 people from across the country had signed up for his session.

That session led to yet another when the planners of Pioneer's European learning forum asked if Larson could deliver a workshop at an upcoming meeting in Austria. Working with the CPP team, Larson discovered that MBTI tools are available in 21 languages, so he could provide the assessment in participants' native languages. In preparation for the session, Larson asked the participants to go as far as they could with the MBTI tool in English, knowing that they could retake the assessment later in their native language. The majority of people who signed up completed the tool in English via SkillsOne.com, CPP's online assessment delivery system. Larson then traveled to Austria to deliver the training session and the results. Upon returning from Austria CPP facilitated the opportunity to complete the MBTI in French and German for employees who chose not to complete the MBTI in English.

Leaders from the research business unit for Europe sat in on part of the workshop and became encouraged about what they saw. Says Larson, "They wanted me to work with the HR team in Europe so this kind of development could occur

on a more frequent basis. Not long after that, two more HR people traveled to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to get training in MBTI utilization"

### **ADDRESSING CULTURAL CHALLENGES**

Larson believes that some of the organizational issues faced by employees in former Eastern Bloc countries could be addressed using the MBTI instrument—for example, organizational change, leadership through change, transitions, and stress. The challenge in some of these countries, particularly Romania, Hungary, and Poland, is that the younger people entering the workforce seem not have the same social structure their parents did. Older generations, which include some current managers and supervisors, lived under various communist regimes and tended not to have control over their education. Larson thinks that, in addition to helping resolve cultural differences, the MBTI assessment has helped Pioneer's managers understand the viewpoints and perspectives of their younger workers.

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—Steve Larson,  
Talent Development Manager  
Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.

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The MBTI tool provides a common corporate language, even across cultures. With a common language, managers and employees can better understand the eight personality preferences—Extraversion, Introversion, Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, Feeling, Judging, and Perceiving—and how these influence their work life.

Larson says that some of his colleagues have become MBTI qualified in order to help address the complexity of cultural and societal issues across Europe. In explaining this commitment to the MBTI instrument, Larson says, "To give them [in-country teams] the results session and then take off would not be ethical. We want to help them as much as we can, follow up again in six months, and keep an eye on where issues may be happening."

While Larson says it's premature to talk about results, he says that, so far, "The feedback from the training sessions has been very positive. People go to these and then tell someone else, and two weeks later I get a call from someone who has heard about the sessions and wants to explore doing one for his or her group."

Larson is determined to develop a strategy for using the MBTI assessment throughout Pioneer. This strategic approach would begin with the United States, Europe, and South America (Pioneer's next target market) and then roll out in other countries—including parts of Asia, India, and even South Africa. Larson believes that if they set goals to get this training out to the organization, in a few years they will have trained the entire organization and its teams. To date, more than 175 Pioneer employees have taken the MBTI assessment.

Larson plans to use the same model as a basis for additional employee development programs: first, getting HR colleagues involved and qualified, and then working with CPP resources in various countries. Larson says, "We'll tap into the vendors CPP has aligned with because we believe we can learn a lot from them. So much of this has caught on through word of mouth, and that tells us that we are providing a good overall experience. I'm pleased at the feedback—not just in the e-mails and on the evaluation forms, but in the sessions, you see the lightbulbs going on in people's heads. They get the MBTI assessment and feel more enriched from the experience."

Larson admits he's had a passion for psychology since he was a child, "I have to get more involved. I don't want to just throw any tool out there and say, okay, here's your type—good luck! We want to make sure we are allowing people to work with it, once they understand it. It is our agricultural mentality that comes into play here—we can throw a plant in the ground, but if we aren't fertilizing it, watering it, monitoring its growth and vigor, we wouldn't know if we had a good product. We have to do the same thing with this tool."

And by all accounts, the MBTI assessment is clearly being nurtured and cultivated at Pioneer.

## About CPP, Inc.

Since its founding in 1956, CPP, Inc., has been a leading publisher and provider of innovative products and services for individual and organizational development. CPP has been supplying reliable training solutions to businesses of all sizes, including the Fortune 500, for more than 50 years. The company's hundreds of unique offerings have been used by millions of individuals in more than 100 countries, in more than 20 languages, to help people and organizations grow and develop by improving performance and increasing understanding. Among CPP's world-renowned brands and services are CPP Professional Services and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), Strong Interest Inventory®, Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), FIRO-B®, CPI 260®, and California Psychological Inventory™ (CPI™) assessments, and Davies-Black® Publishing.

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