

# How the Lumina Splash app provides coaching at your fingertips



*Lumina Learning has placed itself at the forefront of workplace coaching through its innovative learning and development tools, with growing numbers of organisations introducing their staff to Lumina Spark and its various sister methods.*

*Now, Lumina has delivered its coaching power right into the palm of your hand, with the recent release of the Splash App: a mobile-enabled version of Spark that aims to demystify psychometrics in the public eye and get more people to use them.*

*To find out about how the app works, we spoke to its co-creator at Lumina: Splash evangelist Nikita Mikhailov. His excitement for the project is running high...*



## **What sparked Lumina Learning to launch the app?**

More and more people are using mobiles to interact with information and the wider world. But psychometrics haven't kept up with this, and many of them are still rooted in that tried-and-trusted form of data representation, which many people will know – namely, PDFs. This is a legacy from the old days of psychometrics, where the practitioner would have to administer, score and draw a portrait using paper and pencil – so as a visualisation, the graphics were only ever as good as you could draw them yourself.

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Since practitioners have been using the internet, many of them have simply brought that paper-and-pencil, PDF approach online – which hasn't made the best use of the increasingly sophisticated devices that we have in our pockets. Remember, people now have more computing power in the palms of their hands than what was used to put a man on the moon! So why not harness that power to advance the cause of psychometric coaching?

### **How does that help Lumina to ensure its assessments are 'sticky'?**

Well, another drawback of the paper-and-pencil days was that once portraits were completed, they were used only once, and then tucked away in a drawer. And it didn't get much better with PDFs! They just ended up sitting in the subject's inbox, or on their work server – so they never really had the chance to take off as living documents with the ability to generate constant conversations. Thanks to mobiles, though, candidates can now access their portraits whenever they want.

But the *real* benefits come in with the power of social media. In the old days, when two or more people wanted to compare their portraits, you would have to physically line up their PDFs or printouts and highlight where the differences were, and try to create discussion that way. But with the powerful algorithms of social media, candidates can share their splashes instantly via the app, and start conversations between themselves about why they have particular differences. So when it's used in a team – or even across a whole company – that can really intensify the value-added nature of psychometrics.

### **What can people find out about themselves with the app?**

As the app gives candidates the ability to swap scores and splashes, it can help them come up with coaching recommendations for improving the ways they work together. For example, by spotting common ground, areas where they think differently, areas where they may be able to complement each other, points of potential friction and so on. All of this is very useful. Particularly, I would say, if you have just started working with somebody. That's where it could save you a lot of time. You could ask that person to complete a Lumina questionnaire and then, with the app's help, find out a lot more about them – and at a far earlier stage – than if you'd simply waited till you'd been working with them for a while. That can really speed up the integration process for new members of staff.

We all, on a regular basis, do personality assessments – we just don't call it that. So, we'll say, "She's a social butterfly," or "he's chatty," or "he seems a bit tough," and that's essentially profiling people's personalities. However, we all use a different language for these things. What I mean by "tough", or extraversion, may be completely different from what *you* mean. It may be the same word we're using, but the meaning is different. Lumina provides us with a common language that puts us on the same page, in terms of pinning down those key dispositions.

In the app, you can explore what we *really mean* by saying that someone is "introverted", or "people focused". And someone may discover, perhaps, that they tend to be extraverted in the workplace when they're in the everyday process of getting stuff done, but when they're stressed, they may revert to a more introverted setting in order to regenerate. So the app is not only giving people a language they can use to understand themselves – it's providing them with

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coaching on the dynamic shifts that their personalities undergo, along with other, valuable guidance on *when* and *why* those shifts take place. That is conveyed in both written and graphical forms, making it easy to digest.

### **How does the app work alongside the more established parts of Lumina’s coaching journey, such as the full portrait?**

Lumina was designed to be flexible, for use with teams from all sorts of backgrounds, from sixth-form students all the way to C-suite staff. With that in mind, the app is a component that practitioners may want to put to varying degrees of use alongside the other visual aids included in the method, such as mats, cards and full portraits. Research increasingly indicates that the personality is more dynamic than we may have thought, and when you’re on the app and you switch between personas, you can see your splash morph, to show where you stand in relation to those core traits. Those dynamics are actually animated.

As such, I see the app as a really powerful tool for one-to-one coaching. One of my favourite questions in the coaching field has always been, “Which aspects of your personality do you consciously manage at work, and why do you feel it’s necessary to do so?” The app gives its users a very clear representation of the data required for exploring that question.

For example, if a client is particularly people focused in their everyday actions, but not as an underlying trait – well, it’s interesting to investigate why that is, and the app helps with that. When I’m working with a client one to one, I will ask them to download the app to their mobile device, so I can take them through it on their preferred handset and familiarise them with how it works. Then, once the app has opened up the exploration, I will also refer to the client’s full, PDF portrait for comparative purposes to pursue the point.

### **So the app’s role is essentially a holistic one?**

Yes. We haven’t just launched the app and left it alone to fend for itself – no, it’s going to be continuously developed over the years to come. Right now, I still need the portrait report to zoom in on the finer details of a personality’s dynamism. The app is great for opening up discussion around the *aspects* of a persona, but as a practitioner, for the real in-depth coaching and development work, I also need to be on top of the *qualities*. That’s how the app and report work together at present.

When I have used the app in teams, it has provided an exciting lift to our discussions. It’s great when team members have their own portraits and they can huddle up together and compare their splashes and word clouds – but when everyone in the team has the app, the coaching process truly catches fire. The team members can loop each other in on the app and share their readings, and that really brings a whole new level of interactivity to proceedings.

### **Which types of people are you hoping to reach with the app?**

The beauty of this app is that it makes a statement about the *democratisation* of psychometrics. It’s not trying to “reach” a specific segment of the public, as such – that’s not really the point. In the old days of psychometrics, usage of the available methods would be

restricted pretty much to senior management, with occasional involvement from middle management, and if they were *really* lucky, graduates might get a look in. The Splash App has been put on the App Store and Google Play for free so that *anyone* can download it, and start to think about and explore their personality.

It also has a Contact Us form that people can use for getting in touch with Lumina Learning, and we read every response. Very recently, in just a single day, we received messages from China, the US, Australia, Eastern Europe, and even a couple from Nigeria. So completely through word-of-mouth, this tool is getting to people all over the world – many of whom have never used psychometrics before. And because it's so new to them, we find the questions they send us very stimulating: they have helped to spark ideas about how we could develop our offerings, and about how psychometrics in general could be used.

**What kind of role do you think interactive tech will play in coaching as time goes on?**

A major one. When you think about the potential we've unlocked for harnessing computing power to social media, plus the valuable insights that can be gleaned from a well-considered personality questionnaire, there's every reason to suspect that we could be heading for a democratisation of coaching as a whole. There will still be room for professionals, but increasingly, interactive technology will empower people to *become their own coaches*.

This is particularly exciting in the light of how careers now look as if they're going out of the window, and the workforce is moving more and more towards self-employment and the "gig economy". As the Splash App and interactive technology become more sophisticated, they will promote self-management among this growing group of self-employed individuals, enabling them to become more efficient, effective and collaborative. That will help them enhance their reputations, and their ability to market themselves to clients.

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