

## “Know Thyself”

Socrates

Most of us have taken at least one, if not many, personality assessments at some point in our careers.

These can be critical management tools on many levels. They help us measure attitude, cultural fit, potential, capacity and many other areas of our strengths and areas of challenge. For example, assessments can be invaluable in helping us make good hiring decisions, as well as helping to identify emerging leaders within our organizations.

It's important, however, to be sure you are choosing the assessment tool or tools that best suit your needs and objectives for both the short and long run.

The tools should be aligned to your culture, vision, structure and environment. And the results *applied to your organizational, team and individual goals*. Goals and action plans are critical to get the most out of the assessment results – for both individual and team success. You can administer the best assessments in the world, but if the information isn't appropriate to your situation - or *applied* in a meaningful way – it is just a waste of time, money and energy.

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“Self-knowledge is the beginning of self-improvement.”

Baltasar Gracián

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### Do You Have the *Right Big Five Traits*?

According to Pierce J. Howard, PhD, and Jane Mitchell Howard, MBA, authors of, *The Owner's Manual for Personality at Work* (Bard Press, 2001), there are the *Right Big Five Traits* that differentiate leadership personalities. They are:

**N = Negativity**  
**E = Extraversion**  
**O = Originality**  
**A = Accommodation**  
**C = Consolidation**

How well you understand and apply the balance, strengths and weaknesses of these basic personality differences can go a long way towards creating the kind of culture and environment you want for your organization.

### Negativity

Depending upon the strength of an individual's negative emotions, this trait can swing between those with short “triggers”; those with slower burning fuses; or those that are particularly resilient.

- Those with short triggers can't take much stress. They are reactive and tend to respond to most situations in an alert, sensitive, concerned, attentive, excitable or expressive way. Under stress, they may appear anxious, tense, restless, depressed, easily discouraged, temperamental or worried.
- The slower burning fuses respond in a much calmer way and tend to be secure and steady under normal circumstances with a moderate threshold for handling workplace stress.
- And the more resilient among us tend to respond to stressful situations in a calm, secure and rational way. Typically, these folks are stress-free, guilt-free and urge-resistant. They may appear to others to be too laid back and relaxed, or even uncaring, lethargic, insensitive or unaware of problems.

### Extraversion

Howard and Howard explain that this factor describes comfort levels with external stimuli.

- *Introvert* If you're an introvert, you prefer working alone. Typically, you are a serious, quiet, private person who may opt to write or email instead of talking to others.
- *Ambivert* You tend to move easily from working with others to working alone. You have a moderate threshold for sensory stimulation and may tire of it after a while.
- *Extravert* You prefer to be around other people and are talkative, enthusiastic, sociable and fun-loving. You often become the formal or informal leader. You may not be a good listener because you tend to dominate the conversation.

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“It is wisdom to know others.  
It is enlightenment  
to know one's self.”

Lao-Tzu



*“Sometimes questions are more important than answers.”*

Nancy Willard

### Originality

This factor reflects your curiosity, openness or originality—your level of curiosity versus comfort with familiar territory.

- Again, there are varying degrees of this trait within each one of us. Some of us are practical and down to earth, approaching work with efficiency and comfortable with repetitive activities.
- Then there are those who are down to earth, but will consider a new way of doing something if convinced. This person is not known for their creativity or curiosity, but they appreciate innovation and efficiency.
- And finally we have those with many broad interests and who like to be cutting-edge. They are curious, introspective and reflective, seeking new experiences and thinking about the future.

### Accommodation

This is the negotiation factor and our ability to ‘play well with others’.

- Some of us relate to authority by being skeptical, tough, guarded, persistent and competitive; and may come across as being hostile, rude, self-centered or combative.
- Or, there are those of us that shift between competitive and cooperative situations and usually push for a win-win strategy.
- And finally, some of us tend to relate to authority by being tolerant, humble and accepting; running the risk of coming across as naïve, submissive, conflict-averse and even unprincipled due to yielding of position.

### Consolidation

This is all about focus and your capacity to focus attention on sustained, repetitive, goal-focused behavior.

- Some of us tend to approach goals in a relaxed, spontaneous, open-ended way.

- Or, some tend to keep work demands and personal needs in balance, switching from focused activities to spontaneous diversions.
- And then are those who are disciplined, dependable, proceeding in a linear, sequential manner, with a strong will to achieve.

### Portrait of a “Natural Leader”

There has been substantial research over the last two decades on the Big Five profile. Simply put, the natural leader defined in Big Five terms is:

- resilient with very low levels of negativity;
- energetic, outgoing, persuasive and extroverted;
- a visionary with high levels of curiosity;
- competitive; and dedicated to a goal and/or goals.

*“A leader leads by example, whether he intends to or not.”*

### The Noble Cause

Learning more about yourself, staff and teams through assessments can be a critical piece in creating and driving successful businesses and lives. It’s a noble cause to become the best we can be and to strive to develop the most desirable leadership traits in ourselves and others.

If you would like to discuss your assessment needs, please give us a call. We use several excellent assessment tools including; *DIALOG*; *Attribute Index*; *DISC*; *Values*; *The Leadership Practices Inventory 360*, among others. Whether using our tools or others, we would be delighted to help you choose the assessments that best meet your needs and drive your results.



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