

high performance
Your link to
relationships for
business results.



Experiment of One

I am regularly asked what I think of many standardized personality and “type” assessments. I am often asked if they are accurate or if they are more like horoscopes. Consultants, team building experts, trainers, personnel gurus and scads of managers flock to standardized tests of various sorts in efforts to categorize their people. And, yes, I use assessments as well.

Think about these assessments and the results they produce. Most produce some type of a label. Are you a Detail-Procedures person? ENTP? Purple? Dominant-Cautious? Accommodating-Fact Finder? Are you this “type” situationally or is it engrained in you?

All these labels are efforts to categorize people. This is called typology. Why categorize people? Because it’s easier to handle all those ENTPs and Dominant-Cautious people the same. Attempting to handle people as unique beings is difficult.

So, I ask you, do you believe that the 6.3 billion people of the world fall into only 4, 6 or even 16 categories of behavior? I personally do not. And here are my prime reasons as well as some questions for you to contemplate.

- An assessment that forces a choice, does not allow for personal variability. They treat the world as “either-or”. How much of life is truly that black-and-white?
- The vast majority of assessments rely on semantics – the differences in the meanings of words. Does everyone have the same language mastery to make accurate word differentiation? Do we have common meanings to words? Are there only single meanings to words?
- Forced choice word selection infers that they are mutually exclusive. We face a word preference choice between pairs of words such as: introverted and competitive. Does this mean you cannot be



Individual assessments can be used for self-exploration, weakness and strength identification, personal values identification and alignment and more.

Team assessments can lead to communication breakthroughs, enhance team dynamics, enhance productivity, identify areas for improvement and reduce stress.

Remember, the assessment is only a tool. The process is the key!

If you think you or your team could benefit from the insights that assessments could lend, contact me for an entertaining and productive experience. Why continue struggling with the same old problems? Only you know the answer.

introverted and competitive or are all competitive people extroverted?

- A label assumes no individual variation. Are all extroverts equally extroverted? Are all extroverts extroverted in all situations?
- Most assessments do not allow for multiple answers. Only one answer is allowed per item, question or statement. Does that mean we respond only one way to the posed item? Does it mean that we are incapable of functioning situationally and that we are simply hard-wired to always respond only one way?

People are infinitely complex. We are all “experiments of one.” We learn from others and apply what we learn. But, nothing you do will be exactly the same as the person you are learning from. Every situation, though there may be commonalities, is infinitely variable.

It is for these reasons that the most challenging responsibility you will ever have supervising others and managing teams. Self-knowledge and flexibility is the key to your success in dealing with other people. The most successful people understand everyone can't be like themselves and capitalize on that difference instead of fight to control it.

This is where there can be some usefulness of assessments. They are tools. Just like a hammer, it is only as good as the user. And if it is the only tool you have, everything will look like a nail. Right? I do not condemn the use of assessments. It is the improper use of them by consultants, trainers and supervisors that should be addressed. As a tool, the assessment needs to lead to dialogue, give-and-take and self-exploration. It is through these processes that you will make great gains in team and interpersonal development – not in taking an assessment and sharing your labels.