

An Outline:

TEAM BUILDING WITH SELECTOR PA

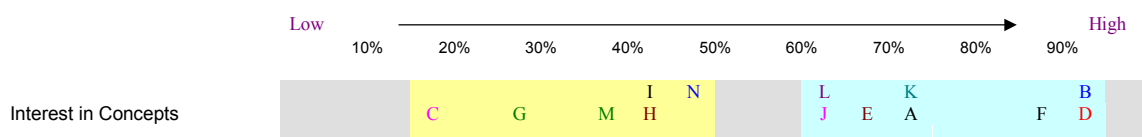
Teams are made up of people, and people come with a wide range of styles, baggage, attitudes, skills and knowledge. Not surprisingly, teams often do not function at an ideal level.

If a team is together long enough, the members will gradually get to know each other. Organisations frequently attempt to speed this process up by team building exercises, often in an outdoors pursuits center. An alternative way of increasing the level of understanding within the team, however, is the use of psychometric testing to construct a map of the different styles within the group. Because Selector PA is designed to assess individual styles regardless of the person's role, it can play a very useful part in team building and team design. An added bonus of this approach is that the participants are not required to scramble up cargo nets on a confidence course or plummet into muddy water at the end of a flying fox.

The advantages of using a psychometric test as a team building tool are numerous. First, it allows the whole team to be mapped on a common baseline, from which the different styles become immediately apparent. Second, it allows the team to discuss team functioning without the discussion becoming personal or acrimonious. Third, it provides a good inventory of the specific strengths that exist within a group. These, in turn, can be used to build project teams or identify those best suited to specific roles. Fourth, a psychometric team profile helps to identify individual and team development needs.

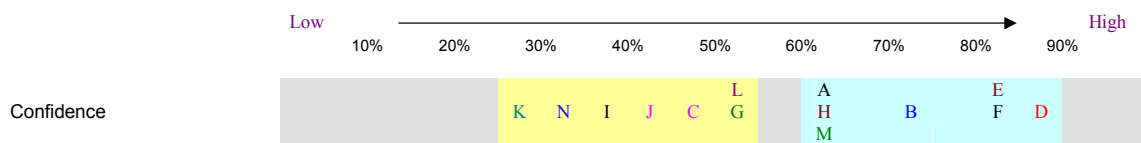
To illustrate some of these points a few scales have been taken from a team profile that was generated as part of a recent executive team building workshop. The individuals are represented by coded letters to preserve confidentiality. The normal practice is to focus on the Preference scales. The Stress Coping scales are not presented as part of a team profile as these are usually too personal to be discussed in a group situation.

On the scale measuring Interest in Conceptual Thinking, this group was split almost evenly above and below the midpoint. From a team perspective, this represents a potential source of frustration as those at the high end want to debate the possibilities while those at the low end just want to get on with the job. This became markedly evident when the team was divided into two groups on the basis of this scale and asked to develop a marketing plan. Those at the high end, who were nicknamed the 'Stratocogs' for Strategic Thinkers, came back an hour later with a single flip chart page of innovative ideas. Those at the low end, the 'Opocogs' (Operational Thinkers) came back with five pages of detailed plans backed up by numbers. When the two groups had previously been involved as one group in executive planning sessions the result had inevitably been a lack of clear outcomes.

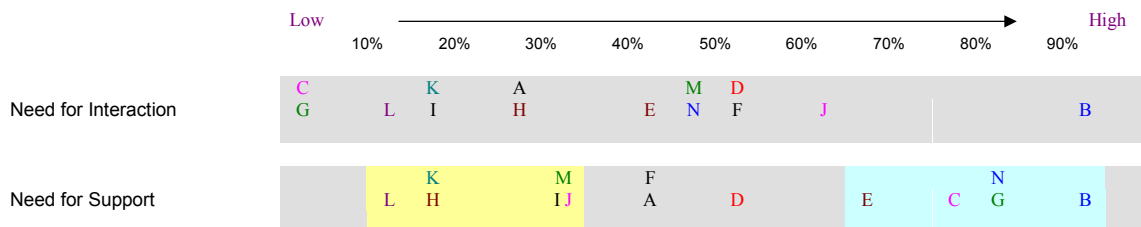


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Three scales from the Interpersonal Styles section gave a feel for interpersonal team dynamics. The group was again divided for a break out exercise, only this time it was on the basis of their Confidence scores. This scale is really a measure of verbal assertiveness and, not surprisingly, those at the high end had a very vocal discussion. They talked at each other, through each other, over each other and around each other, all without a great deal of listening. The low end group were pretty quiet and produced significantly more useful output than the high scorers. An interesting outcome of this session was the behaviour of 'K'. To the world at large 'K' was seen as outwardly vocal and dominant. His score seemed at odds with his observed behaviour. After the exercise, however, 'K' made a point of commenting how much he had enjoyed the exercise, particularly not having to compete to be heard. He said he had felt much more comfortable with the low assertiveness group.



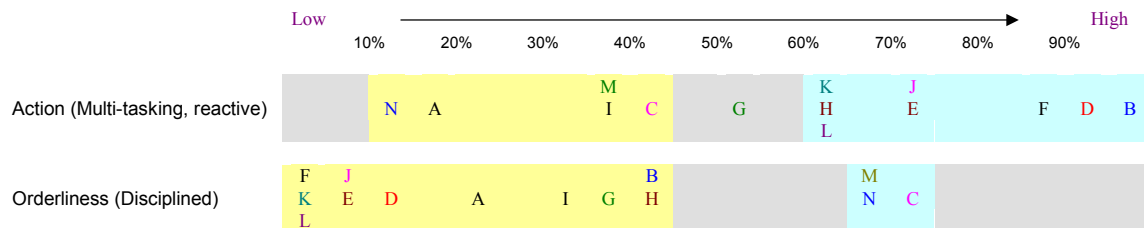
The Need for Interaction scores explained something that had been troubling the team for some time. The problem was that theirs wasn't really a 'fun' team. People seemed to have little interest in doing things together such as going out for a meal or attending social events. As the scale shows, 10 of the 14 members of the executive team scored at the 'reserved' end of the scale and simply did not have a strong need for social interaction. From a team building perspective, this pattern suggested that the team should focus on low key social events and team members should not be pushed into activities and events that they did not naturally enjoy.



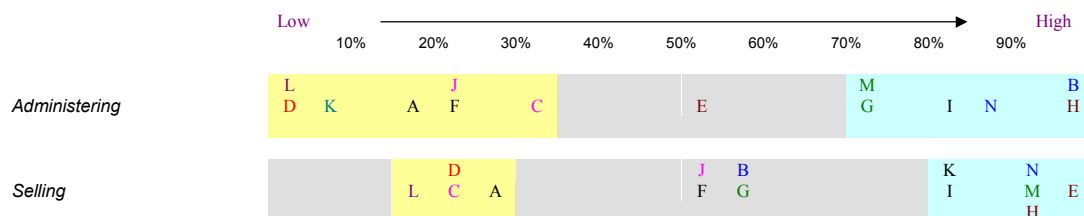
The Need for Support scale has been included as an illustration of some of the management indications contained in the profile. The managers in the light blue zone have an above average need to work in a team where they feel supported and understood. Those at the lower end, in the yellow zone, are much more self contained and need little in the way of external support. From a management perspective, those at the higher end are going to want a good deal more day-to-day attention than those at the lower end. Care would need to be taken, however, to ensure that support was not being provided for the sake of support.

From the Work Styles section two scales illustrate the impact of different approaches to work. On the Action scale, those at the lower end like to work on a single task at a time, finishing one before starting the next. Those at the high end like to have a lot of tasks on the go at once and operate in a dynamic style. Managers 'N' and 'B' saw this information as extremely useful as they often worked together on projects and were aware that they had experienced difficulties.

Exactly the same situation applied to the Orderliness scale. When this scale was presented to the group, 'C' made the comment that he now understood why he became so frustrated with other managers who failed to complete paperwork on time or follow the company procedures correctly. He had been starting to take their disorganisation quite personally, but once the results were up he was able to take a far more objective view of the problem. He decided that there was no way he was going to be able to change the others and began looking instead at ways to modify the procedures to make them more 'user friendly' to the rest of the team.



Finally, the Vocational Styles section illustrates how the profile can identify potential strengths. The Administering scale identifies those who enjoy carrying out administration tasks and those who do not. The Chief Executive immediately saw that the high scorers on this scale could play a useful role in a quality standards project he was planning. Again, the Selling scale, identifying those members of the team most likely to enjoy being placed in a sales role, was particularly important for this group as they were about to engage in some important selling of ideas and concepts.



These are just a few of the scales that make up a team building profile, but even from this small number it is easy to see how much information can be obtained from the scores.

Using psychometric tests for team building is not all plain sailing, however. Given people's general wariness of psychological tests, and their perceived ability to reveal things people may want to keep to themselves, great care must be taken when embarking on such an exercise. A full explanation must be provided focusing on what the tests are, what they measure, how the results will be presented and how confidentiality will be protected. Participation must be voluntary and assurances need to be provided on how the results will be used. A good practice is to give each participant a copy of their own profile and use only coded letters on the group profile. Individual interpretation should also be provided for team members who want a more in depth analysis of their profile. Experience has shown, however, that once participants can see how the results are being used they realise that the process is 'safe' and that open discussion of results is both useful and enjoyable.