Personality Profiling based on the DISC System

Often we find that businesses
“hire for skills and fire for behaviors.”

We, on the other hand, strongly recommend that you
“hire for behavior and train for the skills.”

In order to understand the importance of including behavioral analysis as part of the staffing process, it is important to understand personality profiling using the DISC methodology. There are many different personality profile assessments available today. We have researched and tested a vast majority of them, and have found the Thomas Personal Profile Analysis System to be our number one choice. The Thomas PPA System is based on the DISC methodology, which has proven to be extremely accurate, very user-friendly, and easy to interpret the results. A more important reason we highly recommend the Thomas PPA System is because it is continually tested for reliability and validity. It also works well within the overall intention of the USA’s Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines and the Canadian Human Rights Act which require that assessment instruments:

1. Must be administered by qualified administrators
2. Are reliable and valid
3. Are unbiased and culturally fair
4. Have a job component so as not to discriminate against candidates

Brief history of the psychology of Personal Profile Analysis

Early origins of the assessment theory stem from the work of Hippocrates (460 BC). His theory, known as Four Quadrant Behavior (4QB), emerged as a way of quantifying behavioral styles. Carl Gustav Jung (1920) used 4QB Theory to assess behavior in the workplace and the dimensions of Extraversion and Introversion to the 4QB Model. In 1928 Dr. William Moulton Marston, a Harvard Professor, published the book The Emotions of Normal People, in which he described behavior in the workplace on two axes: passive vs. active response, to a hostile or favorable environment. By placing these axes at right angels, four quadrants were formed with each circumscribing a behavioral pattern. He originally termed the four quadrants Dominance, Inducement, Submission and Compliance, or DISC Theory.

Dr. Marston’s work has had a profound influence on theories such as Allport’s Trait Measurement, Murray’s Need Theory and Jackson’s Personality Domains. The Five Factor Model (The Big Five) shows a renewal of interest in just how parsimoniously measurements of personality functions may be described by reducing large inventories to five within-subject, possibly bi-polar dimensions.

In 1950, five psychologists from Harvard University, one of whom was Dr. Thomas Hendrickson, developed a psychometric instrument called the Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) based on Dr. Marston’s theory. The PPA is a 24 item, ipsative instrument, which takes 10-15 minutes to complete. From the individual pattern of responses, a graphical representation of the degree of preferences for types of job behavior is given along four dimensions now called Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance. Written information as to the significance of the profile is contained in an individual report generated from an extensive set of ‘standard’ statements. These include commentary about likely work behavior, contexts for maximum job satisfaction and suggestions for questions to ask in the interview.

Read together with data about the person’s previous work experience, qualifications, training and ability, it can provide helpful understanding as to how this person copes with his/her environment and what his/her present attitudes are likely to be. It also provides insight into possible performance in a particular function. Because it is an instrument gathering self-reported data, it is positive in nature and, on the whole, the resulting analysis is acceptable to the individual concerned.

The Personal Profile is not a clinical instrument. It is not intended for the diagnosis of abnormal behavior. In North America we do not offer our services to individuals but only to business organizations who wish to utilize the system together with other instruments and data in order to make more informed decisions regarding the compatibility of an individual with a particular function.

The brief history of the Thomas Profile Analysis System cited above was drawn from the Thomas International Training Guide, “Increasing People Effectiveness.”

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Dr. Marston’s Model of Behavior Chart
Harvard University
“Emotions of Normal People” 1928

BEHAVIOR
Active (Externalizer)

DOMINANCE
An active behavior in a challenging environment with a desire to overcome, control, or change the environment.
Focus: Power/Results
Communication: Tell/Direct

INFLUENCE
An active behavior in a friendly environment with a desire to work with people, build relationships, create enthusiasm.
Focus: People
Communication: Sell/Persuade

COMPLIANCE
A passive behavior in a challenging environment with a desire to calm or control the environment with information.
Focus: Policy/Knowledge
Communication: Write

STEADINESS
A passive behavior in a friendly environment with a desire to provide support and service, work on a team, use a steady, procedural pace.
Focus: Pace/Team/Service
Communication: Listen

Passive (Internalizer)

BEHAVIOR

ENVIRONMENT
Unfriendly/Challenging

Friendly/Favorable

Thomas Personal Profile Analysis System

The Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) based on the DISC methodology identifies the human behavioral characteristics within a person. Validation and reliability studies have demonstrated the accuracy of the PPA when properly administered.

Because of the uniqueness of each person’s personality profile and the characteristics that make them suitable for specific job assignments, the Thomas Personal Profile Analysis System has become the logical tool for assisting in:
- Developing people
- Building teams
- Identifying strengths and limitations
- Recruiting and selecting the right person the first time
- Resolving conflict
- Performance appraisals
- Developing/coaching management skills
- Identifying training needs
- Succession planning
- Identifying leadership potential
- Benchmarking performance
- Mentoring
- Career mapping
- Motivating people

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This particular system provides results that are measurable in terms of reduced turnover, increased motivation and productivity, better customer service, and more cohesive teams.

The primary output of the DISC assessment is a graph which portrays the relative values of the DISC behavioral characteristics. The assessment addresses “soft skill” competencies which are the hardest to assess objectively and accurately. The PPA identifies the personality traits and preferences that characterize a person’s actions and reactions, and identifies each individual’s own special talents. Each personality has its own points of reference, its own value and behavior patterns.

Below you will find a chart which provides an overview of the behavioral characteristics. This chart can be used as a quick reference guide in reviewing the results of a completed personal profile.

### Behavioral Characteristics Overview Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMINANCE (D)</th>
<th>INFLUENCE (I)</th>
<th>STEADINESS (S)</th>
<th>COMPLIANCE (C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assertive</td>
<td>• Communicative</td>
<td>• Amiable</td>
<td>• Accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Competitive</td>
<td>• Friendly</td>
<td>• Deliberate</td>
<td>• Careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Direct</td>
<td>• Influential</td>
<td>• Dependable</td>
<td>• Compliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Driving</td>
<td>• Persuasive</td>
<td>• Good Listener</td>
<td>• Logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forceful</td>
<td>• Positive</td>
<td>• Kind</td>
<td>• Perfectionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inquisitive</td>
<td>• Verbal</td>
<td>• Persistent</td>
<td>• Precise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-starter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HIGH work strengths**

- Consultative
- Non-demanding
- Cautious
- Conservative
- Mild

- Probing
- Reflective
- Serious
- Factual
- Logical

- Active
- Alert
- Demonstrative
- Mobile
- Restless

- Firm
- Independent
- Persistent
- Strong-willed
- Stubborn

**LOW support factors**

- Tell
- Sell
- Listen
- Write

**Focus**

- Power
- People
- Pace
- Policy

**Communication Style**

- Tangible Goals
- Recognition
- Security
- Team Inclusion

- Policy and Information

**Motivators**

- Failure
- Rejection
- Insecurity
- Exclusion

- Conflict
- Chaos

**Fears**

- What
- Who
- Why
- How

**Question**

- Authoritarian
- Democratic
- Procedural
- Knowledge based

**Leadership Style**

- Based on high characteristics

**Human Job Analysis**

Once it became apparent that behavioral fit was dependent on both the specific demands of the job and also the culture within the team, it was only logical that the DISC methodology needed a tool to help hiring managers predict the right behaviors that their team needed. The outcome of that need was the Human Job Analysis (HJA), the tool we recommend to use in Sept 2: Define the Person.

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The Human Job Analysis (HJA) adds structure to the selection process and ensures that candidates are assessed against job criteria. The HJA identifies the “ideal” human behavioral characteristics within a function. The creation of the HJA is a critical early step in the hiring process.

Just as individuals have different characteristics, so each position requires individuals with unique characteristics to best accomplish the tasks and ensure greater success. In a series of 24 questions, at least two to four people who are familiar with the function should reach consensus in evaluating each competency for its relevance in a particular position. The more people involved in the creation, the more objective it will be. There should be considerable discussion about each of the questions to make sure that there is, in fact, agreement on the results.

Once a job has been rated and the results have been validated by comparison to successful performers, a benchmark of success criteria is established. The end result of this process is a profile graph, which is related to the same four DISC characteristics. This benchmark becomes the objective standard against which people currently in the role, or future candidates interested in the role, can be compared.

The completed graph should have factors above and below the midline.

But this is not always the way it turns out. When all of the factors are above the midline, the evaluation of the job has been overloaded.

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When the factors are all below the midline, then the evaluation of the job has been underestimated.

In either case the midline must be adjusted to weight the graph correctly. Move the midline so that it intersects the graph midway between the highest and the lowest factors. Now you are ready to proceed.

Shown below are several examples profiles of proven top performers in key roles within a business or organization. It is important to note that although these examples are of top performers, they may not work as well in your culture or with your team. That is why it is recommended that an HJA be completed specifically for your particular function and that the predominant ideal behavioral characteristics be defined for any position that needs to be filled.

Once both the job description and the Human Job Analysis are completed, you have defined the optimal combination of skills, experience, education and personality. Now you are ready to begin the search for your top performer!