Glowinkowski
International

GPI™
Glowinkowski Predisposition Indicator

Developing GPI

Introducing Another Product to a Crowded Market - What Justifies the Effort?

The market-place for personality measures is product-rich, quite mature and increasingly commoditised. It is not unreasonable to ask, therefore, "Why bother to develop a new measure of personality when there are so many already available?" Many of the mainstream instruments are very well known and have huge databases of users built up over a great many years. The majority are well respected. However, from our experience using these instruments during the course of consultancy and coaching engagements, we kept feeling something critical was absent from their concepts.

In many respects, we felt that most of the existing approaches to assessing personality at the time we were formulating our product development plans, i.e. the late 1990s, had been developed by occupational psychologists for consultants and line managers to use. At worst, some had been developed by academic psychologists for these groups to use. While all the instruments possessed sound reliability and validity foundations, they seemed to us to be divorced from practical application in real organisations. Our thinking centred around the following areas:

- We wanted to be able to clearly differentiate the idea of predisposition, i.e. our natural self or the 'real you', from delivered behaviour, i.e. 'what we actually do'.
- We wanted to be able to demonstrably link these two distinct concepts to the broader issues of the organisational environment and, most pertinently, to performance.
- We wanted a framework that possessed sound and consistent levels of reliability and validity. Any new product had to possess such statistical underpinning as the fundamental 'price of entry' to the market. However, taking note of the economist, Edward Learner's comment, that "… like elaborately plumed birds, we preen and strut and display our t-values", we wanted statistical resilience but something more as well.
- We wanted to be able to engage with our clients, who come from the widest social spectrum, using everyday language and not be limited by 'psycho-babble' terminology that, in our experience, reduced the practical usability of the measurement process.
- We wanted a measurement process that produced visually appealing outputs that in themselves provided easy to understand data for individuals and teams.
- We wanted to develop an engaging, enjoyable and stimulating feedback process from which the participant or participants could easily recognise immediate and longer-term behavioural development needs, which could be managed through an ongoing coaching programme.

In short, we wanted both validity and practicality. The instrument we subsequently developed can be regarded as having been developed by consultants and line managers for consultants and line managers to use, fully and properly founded on all the necessary strictures of rigorous academic psychological research. We wanted to have our cake and eat it! To this day, 'valid and practical' remains the cornerstone to all our product development, consultancy and coaching activity.

Our Early Research

Over the last 100 years and more, an immense array of literature about personality has been produced. Indeed, one can go back as far as ancient Greece and Hippocrates who spoke of four types of person, the Choleric, the Melancholic, the Sanguine and the Phlegmatic.

Given the shear volume of work that spans the subject, we decided to adopt a 'creatively incremental' approach rather than one of 'radical, start from scratch'.

In this context we focused on the trait approach to personality research, best exemplified by the work of Raymond Cattell and Hans Eysenck. This approach uses statistical methodology to identify the minimum number of traits that categorise, define and describe personality.

Disagreement about the exact number of separate traits or factors of personality prevailed until mid-way though the second half of the 20th century. More recent studies by McCrae and Costa (1987) have identified five core factors, which builds on work conducted by earlier researchers such as Thurstone (1934) and Fiske (1949). These five traits are:

- Openness
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeability
- Neuroticism

They are frequently referred to as the 'Big 5'.

The Big 5 distils a means by which individuals can be considered to be similar or different to each other. Charles Murray and Clyde Kluckholn put this rather elegantly, "Every person is in certain respects like all other people, like some other people, like no one else."

The Vital Distinction - Personality is Not the Same as Behaviour

From the outset, to achieve our aim of developing something practical, we felt it was extremely important to differentiate the idea of a trait or personality dimension from actual behaviour. Furthermore, with the growing increase in popularity of 360° measurement providing individuals with others' view of them, we considered it would be enormously helpful for individuals to gain a clear and distinct view about their natural selves. Thus, our Behavioural Coaches would be able to help individuals differentiate between 'who they are' and what they actually do, which is often imposed upon by organisational demands.

Our fundamental approach is to make a clear and unambiguous distinction between character and delivered behaviour. To achieve this, we coined the word 'Predisposition', which represents our term for trait, personality factor or character. Predisposition does not equate to actual behaviour.

Kurt Lewin put this distinction very powerfully with the following equation:

$$B = f\ (P \times S)$$

Behaviour is a function of (or product of the interaction between) the person (i.e. personality) and situation they find themselves in.

Much of the behaviour that occurs in social and organisational settings is driven by those situations. Sometimes, individuals find it easy to behave as expected; sometimes this is not the case. Our development of a Predisposition framework was designed to help individuals understand, as it were, their 'P', within the Lewin equation.

In our terminology, Predispositions are defined as:

> *'Underlying preferences or natural behaviours that people possess through their personality traits.'*

Knowing one's Predispositions provides valuable insight to an individual into how they prefer to approach situations, why they behave as they do and why they feel the way they do about certain activities.

Delivered behaviour that reflects underlying Predisposition is preferred and, therefore, feels more comfortable. Further to this concept, behaving in a non-preferred manner, i.e. out of line with Predisposition, often feels taxing and sometimes difficult.

Our Research

Armed with the basic idea of a Big 5, we determined to develop a questionnaire that would explore and measure the degree to which an individual's personality was constructed of a blend of these components. The first step was to build an initial questionnaire that could then be tested vigorously both through quantitative statistical interpretation and qualitative application.

We decided to avoid ipsative style questionnaires, i.e. forced choice questions composed of groups of statements from which one has to be selected as the most favoured and another as the least favoured. We concentrated upon developing a normative based approach, i.e. single statements scored using a five point Likert scale.

Studying other questionnaires, we recognised the risk arising from using statements that could draw 'socially desirable' responses, which then produce skewed data across a linear reporting scale, i.e. one configured 0 – 100 or Low to High. To reduce this risk, we decided that we would develop our questionnaire to report data on 'bi-polar' measurement scales, i.e. a continuum reflecting two positive, linked positions. The questions or items in the questionnaire investigating these positions would be couched in positive terms so that individuals would not be drawn to one or other.

Thus in considering whether someone is more naturally outgoing or reserved, items such as, "I enjoy talking through an idea with others" and "I enjoy thinking through an idea on my own" were included in the initial questionnaire. This seemed more preferable and practical to items such as "I would rather go to a party", or "I would rather be alone in the woods", that we had seen used in other instruments.

In our very practical orientation, this avoidance of causing socially desirable responses through using non-pejorative language was crucial. We believed this would be the means by which the data output would genuinely reflect an individual's underlying character, i.e. their preferred rather than their actual behaviours.

We recognised, too, that a questionnaire reporting across just five broad dimensions would be rather benign as it would be difficult for an individual to home in and understand any issues to a level of constructive detail. From the practical consultancy perspective, we wanted an individual to be able to identify development needs quickly and, thereafter, establish a programme of activity that would close the gap.

Equally, we wanted individuals to be able to appreciate natural strengths that they could exploit in the contributions they made to their organisations.

We developed an initial range of 22 component dimensions of the Big 5, which we considered together represented a broad yet sufficiently detailed means by which we could describe the fundamental personality traits that characterise individuals. Our initial questionnaire would test that each of these 'sub-dimensions' was discrete and additive and that each item in the questionnaire was only 'loading' to a single dimension. From our initial array of 352 items, we intended to drop those that our correlation analysis identified as loading on to more than one factor.

We appreciated that our initial driver to develop a new measurement instrument, i.e. that something was missing from those we used, could be unfounded by our statistical analysis. If so, as they say, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained", we would revert to existing methodologies. Over the next two years we pilot tested our 352 item questionnaire across both a statistically diverse 'normal population' and a group comprising organisational managers who would realistically form the population we would tend to work with in our consultancy and coaching work.

Each time we analysed our data we felt highly encouraged by the reported results, which showed alpha coefficients across the vast majority of sub-dimensions consistently being above .7. Following this initial testing process, our questionnaire was then used in conjunction with other instruments in a low-touch style for a further two years.

Following an extensive, iterative analysis process, the final item list was agreed, which amounted to 182 items. These items generated alpha coefficients for the five main scales of between .80 and .88. For the sub-dimensions, the vast majority reported coefficients of at least .7. Distribution curves for each of these sub-dimensions was well within acceptable levels of deviation.

This growing evidence base we were assembling provided confidence that we were building a 'valid and practical' personality measurement instrument. It was christened the 'Glowinkowski Predisposition Indicator' or GPI™ for short.

Ongoing research over the last 10 years has further confirmed GPI™'s statistical robustness.

Being More Than 'Elaborately Plumed Birds'

Without a sound statistical platform, any new personality measurement instrument will not succeed in gaining market acceptance. Having demonstrated such baseline requirements, successful application is not guaranteed because the 'user world' comprises a range of participants, e.g. line managers, HR professionals, coaching consultants etc., that want something else, namely something that relates to the real and actual world of organisational life. Across commercial enterprises, charities, public sector institutions including Universities, hospitals and schools, the focus is upon improving performance. Any worthwhile personality measurement instrument needs to be recognised as clearly contributing to that aim rather than causing obfuscation by delivering imprecise data, which cannot be easily connected and made relevant to the practicalities of organisational life, e.g. the cost-focused Finance Director!

One issue had become apparent during our consultancy work before and during the period we developed GPI™.

Organisations are formed of multiplicities of teams, each one of which is a dynamic entity, constantly changing shape as individuals join or leave. As a result of these discontinuities, the team's performance is never fully optimised because they are in the state of flux caused by the need to get to know a new member. One of our key motivations for developing GPI™, therefore, was to help teams overcome this dysfunctional dynamic. Team data reported by GPI™ needed to be presented in a manner that would make it easy for the team members to grasp critical underlying signals, e.g. the team being widely or narrowly diverse, or made up of the same types of individual. The less time that needs to be spent explaining the psychology means more time can be spent discussing the realities spelt out by the data and establishing course of action that will drive up the team's performance. This is especially important with teams that consider they are important, e.g. Executives are often more circumspect of psychology.

There is No Good or Bad, No Right or Wrong - You Are What You Are

One of the key issues we found with feedback provided from existing instruments, concerned the underlying vocabulary. In some cases, the 'raw' psychological terms are used, which, in the case of Psychoticism and Neuroticism, are not particularly friendly. An instrument serves little use if its terminology is dismissed as being pejorative, i.e. the feedback recipient rejects the measurement because they don't like to be tagged with a particular 'label'.

Our aim with GPI™ was to create an instrument that was built around a non-pejorative lexicon as well as ensuring the feedback discussion highlighted both the upside and downside of a particular 'rating'. For example, put simplistically, the upside of an extravert might be their willingness to engage in conversation with people they do not know. The downside might be that they don't listen especially well. For the introvert, they may be less likely to strike up a conversation of their own accord but they could prove to be very attentive listeners. Of course, how these traits manifest themselves in actual behaviour is the crucial issue and that there are upsides or downsides depends entirely upon the situation. Keeping quiet may be what is required, for instance!

The GPI™ Feedback Process

The GPI™ feedback discussion describes a 'comfort zone' or 'discomfort zone' for behaviour at either end of each of the 22 sub-dimensions comprising the five main dimensions.

In our feedback processes we aim to:

1. Make the feedback process enjoyable, engaging and stimulating, be it with individuals or teams
2. Present the feedback in both conceptual, i.e. differentiating 'preferred' from 'actual' behaviours, and contextual, i.e. related to performance, formats, starting at a high level covering the 'Big 5' before moving to the detail of the sub-dimensions
3. Use non-pejorative language
4. Relate the data to the realities of the situation in which the individual or team operate

On this basis, our 'Big 5' are labelled in the table below.

These five dimensions (and their associated sub-dimensions from the 22 confirmed during the research process) are configured into three primary feedback models, as follows:

1. Problem-Solving and Implementation Style

This marries Cognition (Incremental / Radical) and Attainment (Focused / Flexible), and presents an indication of how individuals prefer to **think around a problem and get things done**.

2. Communication and Interpersonal Style

This marries Extraversion (Extraversion / Introversion) and Agreeableness (Collectivist / Individualist), and presents an indication of the **frequency and style in which an individual likes to interact with others**.

3. Feelings and Self Control

In this framework, the fifth and final main dimension of our Big 5 is configured to present an indication of how individuals **feel about themselves** and how this might be **projected to others**.

Each feedback model is presented as a simple two axis model creating a two by two matrix encapsulating four quadrants.

- Figure 1 shows the Problem Solving and Implementation Style Framework.
- Figure 2 shows the Communication and Interpersonal Awareness Style Framework
- Figure 3 shows the Feelings and Self-Control Framework

Each framework displays four Predispositional 'types' represented by each quadrant formed by the two main axes. Beneath each axis lies a varying number of sub-dimensions.

On the basis of feedback from clients, this visualisation style fulfils our goal to create an illustrative report that is easy to understand and provokes meaningful and purposeful discussion, whether with an individual or a team, because the three main frameworks can be populated with data for either an individual or all the members of a team. In the latter situation, the depiction provides what we call the team's 'portrait'.

Following presentation of the main frameworks, the various sub-dimensions can be explained and revealed to the client. In our experience, this style of top-down peeling back of the detail is highly effective, augmented significantly by asking the participant to self-assess their data position before being shown it. While this step-by-step process is highly informative, it is, of course, discussing the various linkages between all the components of the frameworks that is most beneficial in helping the participant to understand themselves more completely and appreciate why certain things they do feel less onerous than other things do.

External research 'Big 5' Trait Theory: Thurstone, Fiske, Costa & McCrae	GIL GPI™ 'Big 5' Domains	Main 'bi-polar' Dimensions
Openness	Cognition	Incremental/Radical
Conscientiousness	Attainment	Focused/Flexible
Extraversion	Extraversion	Extraversion/Introversion
Agreeableness	Agreeableness	Collectivist/Individualist
Neuroticism	Emotionality	At Ease/Ill at Ease Disciplined/Impulsive

Table 1:

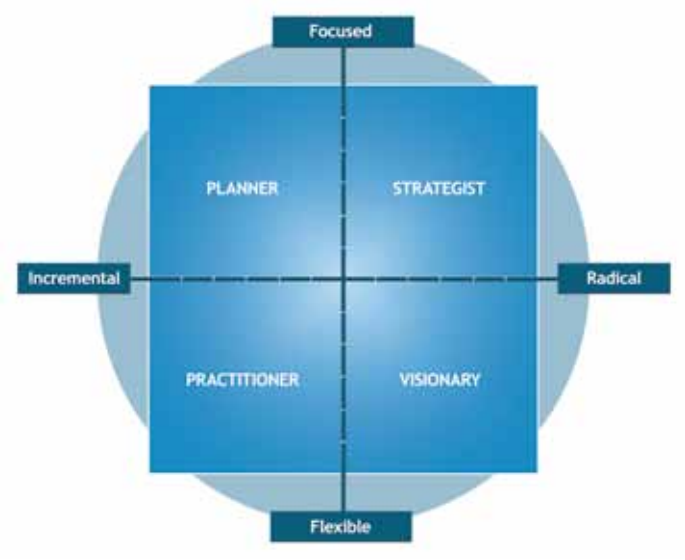

Figure 1: Problem Solving and Implementation Framework

Figure 2: Communication and Interpersonal Awareness Framework

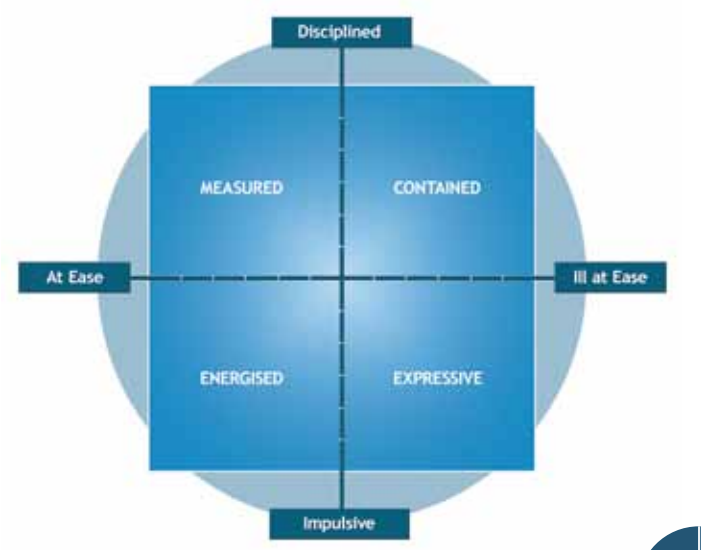

Figure 3: Feelings and Self-Control Framework

Going back to a point made earlier, the fundamental reliability and validity is only the 'entry ticket to the game'. It is the discussion generated by the feedback process incorporating the high-quality, relevant presentation of the data that makes the difference. It is this debate that is going to help 'light the blue touch paper' of an individual or a team starting on a programme of behavioural development pertinent to their role now and their future aims.

Management Development

Management development should relate to both the consolidation of individuals' strengths in terms of their 'natural behaviours' as well as considering how to become more effective through learning to 'act out of character' in a conscious and competent manner. Focused on one aspect but not the other is the downfall of many management development programmes we encounter in organisations.

The real secret in organisations is to be able to adapt one's natural behaviour to fit the environment and to do so more than by just coping. This is essential because organisations do not pay for Predispositions but for actual behaviours. It may well be, of course, that at times the remunerated behaviours reflect an individual's natural style. However, the paramount phrase in the preceding sentence is 'at times'!

Summary

In summary, our developing GPI™ has had two critical elements. The first was to develop a highly reliable and valid measurement technique of Predisposition and to ensure this concept was clearly understood to be different from actual behaviour. The second was to develop a feedback or communication process that enables GPI™ data to be utilised in a very practical way thus allowing even the most sceptical of psychometric clients to walk away and feel either that this is useful to them personally, their organisation, or both.

It's practical and valid.

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