

OPINIONS

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MBTI® European Conference 2006 preview Spotlight on case study sessions



The MBTI® European Conference 2006 is now just weeks away, but there is still time to reserve your place! The number of bookings received so far suggest that it will be a very exciting event, bringing together MBTI practitioners from throughout Europe. Here we bring you further details of four of the nine inspiring case study sessions that are available. These will be presented by some of Europe's leading organisations as they share their learning and experience in using the MBTI instrument to address strategic business needs effectively.

The personality of strategy – how leaders' biases shape strategy development

Presented by Dr Robert Galavan, Theme Leader, Executive Development, Senior Specialist, Strategic Leadership, Trinity-IMI Graduate School of Management



Dr Robert Galavan

Strategy is traditionally defined as a rational process of developing an organisational fit with the environment. It assumes among other things that strategy is the outcome of a robust and rational decision-making process. Dr Robert Galavan's experience of working as and with executives, is that this is rarely the case. Executives do not have time to wait for all relevant information before making a decision but must fill the void with whatever information they have available to them.

It is regularly assumed that this void is filled by past experience, but Dr Galavan's research and experience of watching executives in action indicates that personality preferences are at least, if not more, important. In this session, Dr Galavan will share his understanding of how the personality of senior executives directly influences the strategic development of organisations. He will also show how he uses the MBTI questionnaire with executives as a tool to reflect on their preferences as leaders, and how these preferences influence the organisation's performance.

For organisations with four or more colleagues wishing to attend, call 01865 404666.

The MBTI instrument – managing new talent and diversity

Presented by Katie Hertveldt, Learning & Development Manager, Ernst & Young – Continental and Western European Area (CWEA)



Katie Hertveldt

Ernst & Young has a Learning Agenda that has progressively been organised on an area basis over the last few years. The Agenda is part of its Global People Strategy. In order to integrate learning across areas, common instruments that can be used in different cultures are needed. By introducing the MBTI instrument, Ernst & Young CWEA has not only found a 'common language' to communicate on people's issues between more than 25 different countries, but has also found a starting point for cross-border reflection on personal development, training needs and leadership styles.

In this session, delegates will hear how Ernst & Young CWEA is using the MBTI instrument as the central element in a range of new-manager development programmes. They will hear how this has become a common internal language and has led to a valued appreciation of the power of diversity.

To read details of other conference sessions or to book your place at the MBTI European Conference, visit the conference website at: www.mbti2006.com or call 08701 632 804.

The Semiconductors' Leadership Journey: changing behaviour and organisational culture using the MBTI and FIRO-B® instruments

Presented by Angela Gunn, Senior Director, Global Learning and Development, Philips Semiconductors



Angela Gunn

Changing behaviour and thus organisational culture in a high-tech environment is not easy, but in Philips Semiconductors there is a clear need to do this to achieve business renewal and subsequently growth. Leaders therefore need to act and think differently, and be able to better balance task and people management competencies. The Leadership Journey at Philips Semiconductors has created the momentum for culture change, using the MBTI instrument combined with the FIRO-B® instrument as effective tools to underpin both the individual and organisational Journey. Working with senior managers across cultural boundaries and combining the Journey metaphor with the language of the MBTI and FIRO-B questionnaires in reflective and feedback processes, has resulted in Leadership becoming high on the business agenda, and, more importantly, has created a significant shift in leadership thinking and behaviour. This session outlines the Journey and describes how the MBTI and FIRO-B questionnaires have been part of the Travelling Backpack.

Case study sessions

The full line-up of case study sessions is:

- Credit Suisse
- eircom
- Ashridge
- Trinity-IMI Graduate School of Management
- ABN AMRO
- ACT
- Philips Semiconductors
- Ernst & Young CWEA (Continental West European Area)
- Cranfield School of Management with British Nuclear Group.

Building high-performance, high-reliability teams at British Nuclear Group

Presented by British Nuclear Group and Cranfield School of Management



Cora Lynn

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) recently faced a new challenge: a soon-to-be-created competitive environment for the decommissioning and decontamination of their 12 sites. The organisation recognised that just being better at what it currently did well was not enough. Revolution – not evolution – was required.

As a first step, BNFL formed British Nuclear Group Ltd and made it responsible for costs approximating £2bn. In order to be more competitive and to focus minds on this new commercial reality, the Group needed leaders and senior managers to win the hearts, minds and commitment of 15,000 employees. Towards the start of this transformational change, BNFL and British Nuclear Group commissioned a customised strategic development programme to build commercial leadership skills across the top managerial layers.

In this session you will hear how the BNFL managerial leadership programme, designed by Cranfield School of Management, used the MBTI instrument with middle and senior managers to help them understand the drivers of behaviour, set clear goals, and engage people to achieve them.

Five great reasons to attend the MBTI European Conference:

- 1 Discover new and innovative practical skills, tips and advice to increase your effectiveness as an MBTI practitioner
- 2 Get an exclusive preview of future business trends and how HR and the MBTI instrument fit into this future
- 3 Learn from leading European organisations about how they are undertaking successful, large scale business projects with the MBTI instrument
- 4 Network, learn and share experiences with other HR professionals from across Europe
- 5 100% relevant to you – choose which sessions to attend and what you want to learn.



Client success stories

OPP regularly works with clients to design and deliver programmes that meet their particular organisational needs. Featured below are examples of two of these programmes, one with an investment bank, which focused on developing the leadership skills of its business managers, and one with a law firm, designed to support its growth plans.

An investment bank

Business challenge: to equip business managers with coaching-based principles of leadership, enabling them to engage with others more effectively.

Background

As an organisation with an established range of development opportunities for its employees, this investment bank recognised a need to update its current suite of leadership development programmes. It required a programme that incorporated elements of classic management and leadership theory but also included more modern approaches to leadership. It also wanted to challenge and engage its moderately experienced managers at whom the programme was aimed. This meant less 'chalk and talk' and much more in the way of hands-on, practical learning that could be immediately applied to the workplace.

The bank invited OPP® to design a programme that was practical, yet novel. It needed to raise awareness of how managers currently engage with others and enable them to develop a more authentic style of leadership and people management. In line with current leadership thinking, it was intended that by using this developmental approach, each participant would develop their individual leadership style, drawing on their own personal strengths.

Solution

OPP worked closely with the bank to meet these needs. Building on relevant management and leadership models, OPP designed a programme incorporating various exercises, coaching methods and practices. The programme particularly focused on raising individual self-awareness through the use of the MBTI® questionnaire and coaching individuals to use this knowledge to adapt their own leadership style. Participants on the two-day programme learnt through facilitator input, practice and peer feedback and the programme placed emphasis on action planning to ensure the skills learnt could be transferred back to the workplace.

Business benefits

A year after the launch of the bi-monthly programme, the bank ran a series of focus groups to capture the programme's impact on the business from the perspective of the participants. The innovative yet practical programme was memorable and well received by participants. They particularly valued the learning prompts activated by a series of follow-up email alerts from OPP after the event. Delegates reported that the events had raised awareness of their own styles and those of their direct reports, and had encouraged a more inclusive style of communication that had contributed to an increased effectiveness in people management.

A law firm

Business challenge: to enable the growth and development of the firm through more effective interactions with others.

Background

In a competitive market, the law firm recognised the importance of business development. A key part of the role of all fee earners was to both develop existing client relationships and grow new ones. The firm needed a practical programme that would have immediate application in the partners' and other fee earners' current roles. The programme also needed to develop people's skills in order to build their confidence in trying out new behaviours.

Solution

Partners initially attended a one-to-one session to receive MBTI feedback and explore their communication style, and the impact of this on others. They then attended a two-day programme with other partners and their teams, which included a variety of practical exercises.

The key focus of this programme was on business development and all forms of outbound communication were explored. Using the FLEXTalk® framework, delegates were encouraged to consider their own communication style in relationship to their MBTI preferences and the impact this might have when developing client relationships. They then explored how to adapt their communication style to appeal to different clients, thereby increasing the likelihood of winning business.

In order to put these newly learned skills into practice in a safe but realistic environment, a 'live' client event was included as part of the programme. This involved the use of actors playing the roles of clients with participants having to firstly identify their 'clients' preferred communication style and then adapt their own communication and behaviour in response. This approach enabled the participants to receive direct feedback as to how successful their new approach was and the impact it had on the client. Development plans were put in place to ensure continued learning in the workplace.

Business benefits

The programme has provided the partners and fee earners with a framework for understanding what works in developing client relationships. It has also given them greater understanding of how to approach clients with different personalities and tailor their approach accordingly. It has enabled them to build on their existing business development skills and learning from the programme has been applied to a variety of client situations, including networking events and face-to-face meetings.

© OPP designs and delivers programmes to meet a wide range of business needs, drawing on a variety of proven psychological approaches. To discuss your organisational needs and how OPP could work with you to meet them, please contact us on 01865 404636 or by email at: consult@opp.eu.com

The 16PF® questionnaire: frequently asked questions

By Rob Bailey



The 16PF® questionnaire is a powerful and comprehensive measure of personality. Learning how to make the best use of it is a process that continues well after initial training in the instrument. This article presents answers to a number of questions that OPP® often hears from practitioners using the 16PF questionnaire, in relation to the transition from the fourth to the fifth edition, and the interpretation of particular factors.

Q: I have been using the fourth edition of the 16PF questionnaire for many years and really like it. Why should I switch to the fifth edition?

Although the fifth edition of the 16PF questionnaire has been available for over ten years, a number of people still use the fourth edition. The 16PF5 questionnaire does, however, offer some significant advantages over the earlier version:

- The questions are now shorter and less ambiguous. Questions which were unnecessarily complicated were rewritten or dropped. This makes the questionnaire clearer, fairer and more acceptable to those completing it.
- Some questions that could be challenged on the basis of gender, race, culture, religion or disability, or that showed statistical biases on these factors, have been removed.
- Some questions that were dated, or that were likely to become dated, were removed, giving the 16PF5 questionnaire a more contemporary feel.
- All the questions, other than those relating to Reasoning, now have the same consistent response format, with '?' as the middle response, making the questionnaire easier to complete.
- All of the Reasoning (Factor B) questions have now been moved to the end of the questionnaire. As a result, respondents find the questionnaire more straightforward to complete, and it is easier for administrators to ask respondents to omit these questions if desired.
- Questions that were seen as extremely socially desirable or undesirable have been removed, as have questions where there was a strong bias to a particular response. This means that the fifth edition is less prone to response biases than earlier versions of the questionnaire. The 16PF5 questionnaire also has three scales, or indices, to look at response biases: Impression Management, Acquiescence and Infrequency.
- Scale reliabilities have been improved, without significantly reducing the breadth of the factors. This means that 16PF users can have more confidence in the accuracy of their results and there is less likelihood that respondents will disagree with these results.
- The 16PF5 questionnaire has been standardised on a representative sample of the UK population, meaning that large and representative norm groups are available. British validity data is available and OPP has an ongoing programme of research. It is also happy to work with clients to develop their own norm tables.
- The 16PF5 questionnaire is available in a wide range of languages, including Danish, Dutch and French, which have also been standardised with local samples.
- New scale names have been developed, which are easier for people to understand and remember.
- An integrated profile chart and feedback sheet is available for the 16PF5 questionnaire.
- The 16PF5 questionnaire is available on PC-based software and in a large number of different languages via the Internet.
- The basic personality structure underlying the test remains the same, which means a transfer to 16PF5 will be easy.

Q: Somebody got a high score on Impression Management (IM). What does this mean?

A: A high score on IM indicates that the person has demonstrated traits or behaviours deemed desirable in society, or has denied undesirable characteristics. The tendency to portray oneself in an improbably positive light is sometimes seen in job placement settings. However, it may also reflect authentic responses. A high IM score also may reflect an idealised self-image rather than deliberate 'faking'.

Q: Somebody got a low score on Impression Management (IM). What does this mean?

A: A low IM score suggests that the person has presented themselves in an unfavourable light by selecting items that reflect or even exaggerate undesirable qualities. This may be because they are extremely self-critical or may reflect a need for support or attention.

Q: Somebody got a high score on Infrequency (INF). What does this mean?

A: A high score on the INF scale indicates that the person selected responses seldom chosen by others. This therefore suggests they selected their responses randomly. Alternatively, a high INF score may indicate an inability or unwillingness to make a commitment to specific response choices. In rare cases, a high INF score may reflect the accurate responses of an individual with an idiosyncratic profile.

Q: Somebody got a high score on Acquiescence (ACQ). What does this mean?

A: The purpose of the ACQ scale is to detect a person's tendency to answer a question positively, regardless of its content. An acquiescent response pattern can affect all the results. This may indicate a high need for acceptance, or may reflect 'test sabotage', where the respondent has deliberately chosen mostly or all 'a' responses.

Rob Bailey is a Managing Consultant in the OPP Research & Product Development Team. He manages the 16PF R&D team and is responsible for the worldwide development of the 16PF portfolio. This draws on his background in international R&D and consultancy.

☞ If you would like help to move smoothly from the fourth edition to the fifth edition of the 16PF questionnaire, please contact OPP on 07807 728727 or by email at: enquiry@opp.eu.com.

People who have attended 16PF training with OPP will find further detail on interpreting the factors in the 16PF User's Manual that they received on the training course.

Do psychometric tools have a place to play in executive coaching?

By Bernard Cooke



As the market for executive coaching continues to grow, business psychologists are taking an increasingly active part in its delivery, with many now describing themselves as 'Coaching Psychologists'.

One topic of debate within this community is the value and role of psychometric tools in the field of coaching, a subject on which OPP® coaches have a very clear view.

This article shows some of the applications and benefits of using psychometric instruments in executive coaching.

The role of psychometric instruments

Typically, personality instruments such as the MBTI® and 16PF® questionnaires and 360° feedback tools such as the Benchmarks® instrument, are used early on in the coaching process so that they can be used as a reference point in the continuing conversations. After the initial meeting, during which the objectives are defined and important contracting issues are agreed, a view can be taken by the coach as to whether such instruments would prove useful in helping the client achieve some new insight. This is not always the case and psychometric tools may best be avoided in some situations, such as when the client may be under unusual amounts of stress and not receptive to such a process.

Approaches to coaching

Some personality instruments may be complementary to the coaching approach adopted. Three widely used psychological bases for coaching are Cognitive-Behavioural, Gestalt and Psychodynamic. Applications of these are covered in the new OPP Course, 'Coaching Skills for Business' (see below).

The Cognitive-Behavioural approach provides some useful frameworks and techniques to help clients understand how their thinking patterns and feelings impact on performance. It also provides techniques for encouraging productive patterns of thinking and behaviour, which can be used to enhance both the performance and the well-being of the client. The Gestalt approach requires both the coach and the client to raise their awareness of how the coaching issue is manifested in their current interactions. As such, it stands apart from the more objective and analytical techniques. Psychodynamic approaches enable clients to see how their manifest behaviours relate to possible tensions between the different components of their personality.

Integrating psychometric instruments

Good use of the MBTI questionnaire can demonstrate how information is processed

and decisions are made and can be useful in a Cognitive-Behavioural context to help people identify some of their 'faulty thinking' patterns. For example, if someone adopts the thinking patterns that result from a desire to be perfectly competent at everything they do, they may find it difficult to cope with some demanding work situations. The MBTI questionnaire could provide insight into how personality preferences link to some of these thinking patterns and suggest some alternative strategies for dealing with the underlying motivation.

The 16PF questionnaire is a robust instrument that measures traits and provides a complete picture of a person's personality, including some of the dynamic forces associated with anxiety and self-control. These factors are frequently sources of interference that prevent people from realising their full potential at work. For coaches who use methods grounded in Psychodynamic theory, which examines how people's behaviours are rooted in the tensions between the Id, Ego and Superego, trait patterns can provide a useful picture of how these underlying tensions are manifested in surface behaviours. For example, by raising a client's awareness of how their unconscious defence mechanisms impinge upon interpersonal relationships at work, they can adopt some alternative strategies to improve personal effectiveness.

The Gestalt approach is less analytical, but some of its techniques for raising awareness in the client can be usefully cross-referenced with either of the personality instruments mentioned above. In coaching for leadership challenges, where the pressure of the role may cause someone to resort to preference by relying upon a style of decision-making that is inappropriate to the situation, the MBTI questionnaire can help such leaders identify how a better balance in the use of their preferences could enhance their performance. The 16PF questionnaire could also provide insight into the defensive coping strategies that they deploy

Coaching Skills for Business

This course is designed for experienced coaches who wish to gain a greater understanding of the psychological models and techniques that underpin many coaching methods. It offers a challenging combination of theoretical and practical sessions, which will enable coaches to develop an approach that applies psychological models to real business challenges.

Using the MBTI Instrument in Coaching & Management Development

This workshop is designed for any qualified MBTI practitioners who are involved in coaching. It outlines how the MBTI instrument can be used to help people identify how their preferences can impact their performance. Delegates will learn how to incorporate the MBTI instrument into a coaching model and development processes, and how to deliver effective development planning sessions. They will also learn how their preferences can impact on their coaching style and how the MBTI instrument can be used to help managers with challenges such as leadership, communication and managing transitions.

Some psychometric profiles can identify tensions within people's personalities that may be causing discomfort as they attempt to adapt to the varied demands of their working lives. Very often people gain a clearer perspective on who they are by examining who they are not! For example, the 'darker side' of someone's personality may contain aspects of themselves that may appear only fleetingly during times of great stress. The role of the coach in these situations is to enable the client to work with these polarities to see if a more comfortable balance can be established between these competing forces. The client can then begin to see other options in their selection of behaviours for differing situations rather than seeing themselves as rigid and fixed.

Coaching style

Another important contribution that the personality instrument can make is to provide the coach with an insight into their own preferred style of coaching and raise their awareness of how this may interact with their client's preferences for how they would like to be coached. For example, the ESTJ coach, with preferences for structure and well-defined outcomes, may view the coaching process very differently from the more counselling-oriented ENFP coach. Equally, the preferences of the client will have a bearing upon their own perception of the effectiveness of the coaching session. Differences in preferences between the coach and client might make for a more challenging session and similarities between the two may foster a form of collusion with insufficient challenge made by the coach. The effective coach finds a balance between challenge and support of their client. Having an appreciation of what each of these looks like from the perspective of that client can minimise the chances of awkward clashes.

The effectiveness of psychometric instruments in coaching will always depend upon the skills and abilities of the coach using them. Like all tools they are useless in themselves and potentially harmful in the wrong hands. Appropriate use in the right context, supported by an understanding of related psychological models and techniques, can enrich the coaching process and make it a mutually rewarding experience.

Bernard Cooke is a Principal Consultant with OPP. He has a background in HR development consulting and his specialist areas of expertise are organisational and management development. Bernard works as a coach and facilitator with managers at all levels of organisations, including directors, on both a team and individual basis.

without awareness and provide them with a range of more conscious control mechanisms.

Raising awareness

In coaching, the perspective provided by the psychometric instrument can be constantly re-visited, re-examined and explored for nuances. In this sense, the process is a much richer one than the one-off feedback process and far more rewarding for both client and coach.

One of the main objectives of coaching is to raise the client's awareness of their behaviour and thought patterns, helping them to gain new perspectives on their developmental challenges and to identify new courses of action. Galloway sees the coaching process as a series of 'conversations' that take place:

- a conversation for **awareness** to enable the client to gain a clearer insight into their current strengths and development needs
- a conversation for **choice** in order to get a clear picture of the options available to them and the desired outcome
- a conversation for **trust**, in which the client is encouraged to take responsibility for their developmental actions.

Psychometric tools can be invaluable in raising clients' awareness of their psychological predispositions and how these may differ from others around them. In addition, they can also raise the coach's awareness of how their own personality may differ from that of their client's. When coaches can demonstrate enhanced levels of awareness of their client's situation, they are more likely to engender a trusting relationship where both support and challenge can be effectively provided.

A simplistic approach?

Sceptics may say that psychometric instruments yield simplistic profiles of people that cannot do justice to the complex behaviours that they display in all areas of their lives, such as the different identity that they may have at work and at home. However, when used by a skilful practitioner, who makes every effort to validate the profile with the individual, they can provide clients with a useful perspective on their developmental challenges. For example, they may help the client describe their challenges in a language that they have previously not had available to them, such as the ways of perceiving information and making decisions offered by an interpretation of answers to the MBTI questionnaire.

For further information about any of these coaching courses, please contact the OPP Training Support team on 01865 404500 or by email at: training@opp.eu.com

Details of all these courses can also be found on the OPP website at www.opp.eu.com

To discuss how OPP can provide support for a coaching programme or how psychometric instruments can be used within a coaching programme, please contact us on 01865 404636 or by email at: consult@opp.eu.com

Advanced Coaching & Management Development using the MBTI Instrument

This workshop is designed for experienced practitioners of the MBTI instrument and covers methods in which coaches can work with clients' type dynamics in a constructive and engaging way. For example, a client may experience a tension between their decision-making and information-gathering processes (a dominant/auxiliary conflict in type dynamic terms), which results in some ineffective decision-making. By using techniques that engage the client in examining this tension, alternative strategies that achieve a better balance can be identified.

Using business simulations in leadership development

By Ameet Thakkar

Several research articles point to the fact that active development of managers within an organisation delivers tangible business benefits¹, including increased sales. Despite this, few organisations actively practise the development of managers, let alone possess an integrated talent management strategy! A recent CIPD survey revealed that 49% of organisations do not have a talent management strategy in place. This therefore leaves these organisations facing a number of issues, including the loss of high-calibre managers to competitors, and a lack of succession planning for senior managers who leave.

OPP® develops talent management strategies in partnership with organisations, which aid the delivery of effective, long-lasting and motivating personal development for participants. Business simulations are valuable during the initial stages of this process to identify needs and kick-start the development process.

What are business simulations?

Business simulations replicate relationships and decisions in a business environment and allow the collection of live information about a person's interpersonal style, intellect and drive. Participants are given a role as a senior manager in a complex but fictitious organisation and given information on realistic day-to-day operational and strategic business challenges. The fluid and dynamic operating environment of the simulation presents participants with a number of opportunities, threats and problems to be resolved in 'real time', working alongside other delegates over the course of a day.

This metaphor organisation directly mimics a real organisation's demands, in terms of a business model, strategy, culture, conflicts and other important issues. It is designed to elicit behaviours reflecting those that the individual would characteristically display in managing a given organisational situation, usually at a management level several steps above the current position.

Why use business simulations?

Business simulations have objectives at two levels. At the individual level, they aim to develop current or future leaders in order to achieve a greater alignment between individual skills and organisational needs. At the organisational level, information from development events can be analysed to help identify future potential leaders and provide information on strengths and styles of a whole cohort of managers within an organisation. This strategic-level information can inform talent management strategies. For example, if a cohort of managers has a common development need for people management skills, group interventions can be used at this level, and also in the cohort below, to ensure these skills are fully developed in future generations of managers.

How do business simulations work?

Simulations can be either structured or free-flowing. The style used depends on the objectives for using the simulation and the competencies that are to be measured.

Structured simulations run in a similar way to assessment/development centres. Participants have a full timetable of group and individual activities and are observed while they carry these out. Activities may include group meetings, in-tray exercises, one-to-one meetings, presentations, and more. All of the activities are

based in the same fictitious organisation, and the delegates remain in the same role throughout the day.

Free-flowing simulations are much less structured, and the delegates are largely left to arrange their time and activity as they see fit. Generally there are a few key activities, such as meetings and presentations, which they are required to attend, but how they interact and what they decide to do is left to their own discretion.

OPP consultants observe the delegates' behaviours while they are adapting to these challenges. Afterwards, they provide in-depth feedback, incorporating evidence from psychometric tools, such as the MBTI® and 16PF® questionnaires, 360° questionnaires, such as the Benchmarks® questionnaire, peer feedback, self-evaluation and the simulation. Feedback sessions are interactive and the multiple sources of information provide delegates with a greater understanding of their own skills and development needs, helping them to plan their development. Candidates also receive in-depth reports, which they are encouraged to share with their managers.

This process forms the springboard for subsequent objective setting, ongoing coaching and different forms of action learning. This enables the individual to move into the next phase of their own development, as a leader in the organisation.

Benefits of business simulations

- The simulations usually last for a day, which makes them more realistic for participants and helps to elicit more authentic participant behaviour.
- The active participation in such a day provides participants with experiential learning of how they deal with large amounts of information, challenges from peers, making decisions and having to present information to senior managers.
- The simulations offer candidates a safe environment within which they can explore their own skills, abilities and personal styles.
- All OPP business simulations can be based within industries different from those the participants have worked in, allowing a 'level playing field' when performance comparisons are made.
- OPP consultants are experienced at observing complex simulations and can provide significant insights and observations.
- OPP feedback sessions provide a confidential setting in which to explore development needs and issues with confidence.
- Every 'run' of the simulation is different because of the choices participants make. This means the outcome cannot be predicted, so candidates cannot benefit from preparation or inside information about the content.

Ameet Thakkar is a Senior Consultant with OPP. He has expertise in assessment and selection, individual and organisational development, stress, and the application of psychometric instruments.

© OPP has a number off-the-shelf business simulations at senior management, middle management and junior management levels, enabling their benefits to be realised at all levels of an organisation. To discuss how OPP can help your organisation to use business simulations as part of a talent management strategy, please contact us on 01865 404636 or by email at: consult@opp.eu.com

¹ Naish, R. & Birdi, K. (2001) 'Evaluation of the Effects of a Management Development Centre Program on Development, Retention and Business Performance'. *The British Psychological Society 4-5 January 2001 Occupational Psychology Annual Conference, Winchester. Book of Proceedings, 24-25.*

The MBTI® questionnaire 30 years on

Professor Jim Maxon, Maxon Associates

Professor Jim Maxon has been using the MBTI® questionnaire for over 30 years. From initially discovering the instrument as a student, he has since used it for a range of business applications such as executive development programmes. Here he reflects on the benefits of using such a popular instrument and cautions against some common pitfalls.



Background

In 1976-77, as a postgraduate student at the University of London, I was introduced to various psychometric instruments, including the MBTI® questionnaire, which I've used ever since. In the late 70s and early 80s, the main MBTI form, Form G, launched in 1975, was in use, although Form F, created for research purposes in 1958 and standardised in 1975, was still available. MBTI materials and books were often sourced from CPP in California, as few UK suppliers existed! At that time OPP® did not exist, Step I, released in 1998, was still many years off and Step II, released in 2001 was, quite frankly, beyond our imagination.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mary McCauley, an early advocate of the MBTI questionnaire and founding President of the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), in Florida in the early 80s. I found her to be a very charming person and I will value forever the insights she shared with me about both the two remarkable women who created the MBTI questionnaire and the instrument itself.

I first met Robert McHenry and Betsy Kendall, now Chairman & CEO and Executive Director of Training & International Development at OPP respectively, when we were observing and giving feedback on a programme called 'Leadership through the Looking Glass'. OPP started in 1989, the same year I began my own organisation, Maxon Associates.

Reaction to the MBTI questionnaire – then and now

By the time OPP began, there were already many people in the UK using the MBTI questionnaire, but for the most part it was relatively unknown, both to practitioners of psychometric instruments and, especially, to line managers. However, in my experience both were very enthusiastic when the benefits of using it were explained. Further, with the thousands of people I have since used the MBTI instrument with, I have only received negative reactions to results from a handful of people. The same cannot be said for other instruments I have used!

The MBTI questionnaire is now the world's most popular psychometric instrument. If you 'Google' it, you will be offered 1,470,000 websites. The popularity of the MBTI instrument and its widespread use means it is comparatively rare for no-one within a group to have heard of it. Practitioners can therefore build on existing knowledge and find out about people's experiences of the instrument and their reactions to their results.

There are, however, a few problems, despite the fact that there are over 13,000 registered users (through OPP) of the MBTI questionnaire in Europe, and the excellent training OPP provides.

There are practitioners and line managers who insist upon 'type-casting' people. For example, rather than saying someone seems to enjoy the world of people, places and activities, or appears to be very caring, they will say the person is an 'Extravert' or a 'Feeling type', or worse still will categorise them as a particular type such as ENFP or ISTJ. I always point out that whilst everyone is entitled to their opinion in terms of how someone is behaving, they are not entitled to type-cast people. I am not saying that using the four MBTI letters is wrong, but we must always keep in mind that the MBTI questionnaire measures preferences, not behaviours. Therefore, to type-cast the behaviour of someone and imply that it is the individual's MBTI type is inappropriate.

There are too many people, especially line managers, who have

been given the impression there is something 'wrong' with their team if it's not composed of the 'ideal' mix of types. In my experience, there is no such thing as an 'ideal' team, nor should the MBTI instrument be used as a recruiting tool to identify someone with the 'ideal' type to make the team 'perfect'. Indeed, it is not validated for use in selection and OPP is clear that it should not be used in this way as it does not relate to someone's ability to do a job. However, there are still people who call the MBTI instrument a 'test' rather than a psychometric instrument or questionnaire.

I have observed many dysfunctional teams and there is no doubt that the MBTI questionnaire is ideal for use in diagnostic and developmental processes with them. However, identification of type is only the first step in the process of enhancing strengths, identifying weaknesses and agreeing actions to improve team functionality.

Finally, I hear both practitioners and line managers talk about 16 'boxes'. In my view, there are 16 'platforms' from which people move, not boxes that restrict or define how people behave. During the course of a typical day most individuals spend a considerable amount of their time operating quite comfortably, and naturally, outside their preference areas. For example, an individual might prefer to spend all of their time in the outer world but even a person with the most extreme preference for Extraversion can spend time in their head and reflecting without causing them a

problem. It is my experience that individuals do need to spend time on their 'platform' at least some of the time, however, and will want to return to their platform if they are feeling under a great deal of pressure or stress and when they are feeling particularly pleased with themselves. We all seem to want to go 'home' at both the best and worst of times.

"I dream that long after I'm gone, my work will go on helping people."

Isabel Myers,
1979

Applications

Over the years I have used the MBTI questionnaire in various management and executive development programmes, including leadership, managing change, time management and developing personal effectiveness. Whilst I haven't used it in teaching per se, I find it extremely useful in identifying learning styles. I have also used the instrument in one-to-one contexts, usually as part of executive coaching with senior managers.

I have used the MBTI questionnaire in the UK, Europe and the Middle East. I tend to use Step I in groups, where a basic, general understanding of type is adequate, and Step II on a one-to-one basis or in teambuilding – I find that the richness of feedback provided by the extensive reports is invaluable.

Wherever I use the MBTI instrument, there are two associated concepts I find extremely useful: making constructive use of difference and there is no such thing as reality, only an individual's perception of their reality. The premise upon which the MBTI questionnaire is based is to make constructive use of difference. The world would certainly be a better place if that philosophy was universally applied! The second of these concepts gives people permission to be themselves and to express their perceptions without others saying that they are wrong. An individual's perception is unique to them and although it may be very different from others', it does not make their perception wrong.

To address the quote from Isabel Myers, I believe she can rest peacefully in the knowledge that the MBTI questionnaire continues to help people throughout the world. She could not have asked for more.



🔗 The MBTI questionnaire has many business applications including management and leadership development, team building and development and organisational change. For more information about the MBTI questionnaire or to discuss how it could be used within your organisation, please contact the OPP Client Support Team on 08708 728727 or by email at: enquiry@opp.eu.com

The Oxford Forum

Following the inspiring session of the Oxford Forum in June, in which Sir Matthew Pinsent, CBE, outlined his views about motivation and what he believed to be the key factors to attaining team results, OPP® is pleased to bring you details of the remaining two sessions of 2006:

On 21 September, Dr John Boudreau will present on 'The Coming HR Revolutions: A Decision Science for Talent.'

The decisions that leaders make about their organisations' talent are critical. Yet many business leaders admit that they are far more confident in their decisions about money, technology and products, than their decisions about talent. Future leaders must be as adept at competing with, and for, talent as they are with capital, customers and technology. Those who want to lead teams, departments or businesses must understand the 'science of talent' to be effective.



John Boudreau

HR leaders can extend today's focus on delivering HR services, to a focus on enhancing talent decisions wherever they are made, using the same principles that underlie business decision frameworks such as finance and marketing.

The 'decision science' for talent has profound implications for HR strategic partnership, measurement, organisation design, and future HR competencies. This event will give HR leaders the opportunity to learn how to make this paradigm shift, and understand its implications for their organisations, and the future of the HR profession.

On 28 November Professor Renée Mauborgne will present on 'Building a Blue Ocean Organisation.'

Theoretically, HR is one of the most important roles in any business but in practice HR contributes less to strategic thinking in an organisation than it should. What does HR need to do in order to be truly strategic? How can HR contribute to strategic thinking and what do HR Directors need to change in order to add significant value?

Professor Mauborgne will urge participants to speak the same language as their Board. She will demonstrate to participants through practical exercises how to identify strategic issues and how to outline the ten strategic challenges that their organisation faces. She will show participants how to build a Blue Ocean organisation and how to reorganise in a practical way to make Blue Ocean happen. She will encourage participants to make this a way of thinking in their organisations so that strategy no longer becomes the sole prerogative of the Board.



Renée Mauborgne



© Oxford Forum seminars are free to members and available to non-members for £445 + VAT, subject to availability.

To enquire about membership or to book a place on either of these seminars, please contact us on 01865 404500 or by email at: oxfordforum@opp.eu.com

Further details about the Oxford Forum can also be found on the OPP website at: www.opp.eu.com/forum

To read a full review of the Matthew Pinsent seminar, visit the OPPCommunity at: <http://community.co.uk> If you are not already a member you can register for free and gain access to the latest news from OPP, articles, research findings and other useful resources.

The MBTI® Step II questionnaire on OPPAssessment



A new rule for dealing with unanswered questions on the MBTI® Step II instrument has been introduced to OPPAssessment. This change has been introduced to enable better quality information to be extracted from completed questionnaires, which will enable more productive feedback sessions. Previously, OPPAssessment could accept MBTI Step II questionnaires with a large number of omitted answers. This can create a high degree of error when calculating reported type, and the relevant feedback sessions need to be carried out with particular care. It is part of the ethos of the MBTI instrument that a small

number of questions (say, five) can be omitted if the respondent finds them particularly difficult to answer. However, a larger number introduces too much error.

Therefore, with immediate effect, the OPPAssessment system will no longer accept MBTI Step II questionnaires with six or more omitted questions. Questionnaires that do not meet this criterion will be returned to the sender, who can then arrange for more questions to be completed before resubmitting the questionnaire. OPPAssessment users will only be able to order reports for submitted questionnaires that meet this criterion.

Visit OPP® at the CIPD exhibition on Stand C72

We will be exhibiting at this year's CIPD exhibition which takes place on 24-26 October 2006 at the Harrogate International Centre. Why not visit our stand to find out our training dates for 2007, hear our latest news and have any of your questions answered?

We will also be presenting an exhibitor showcase which will take place on Wednesday 25 October from 4.15 - 4.45pm. The title of the showcase is 'Authentic Leadership - "How can I learn to be an effective leader but still be me?"' It will aim to assuage any fears people may have that being an effective leader means suppressing their natural behaviours and talents in order to be a 'prototype leader'.

© For more information about the CIPD conference and exhibition, visit the website at: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/cande/annual>



OPP training

OPP is pleased to offer two MBTI masterclasses being held this October in Denmark and The Netherlands:

- 9 October 2006 **MBTI Type and Change masterclass** presented by Nancy Barger and Linda Kirby in Denmark
- 10 October 2006 **MBTI Step II masterclass** presented by Jean Kummerow in The Netherlands

© For details of these masterclasses and the full range of OPP training courses and workshops, please contact the OPP Training Support team on 01865 404500 or by email at: training@opp.eu.com Full details are also available on the OPP website at: www.opp.eu.com

© Registers users of OPPAssessment will have already received an email confirming these changes. If you have any further questions, please contact the OPP Client Support Team on 08708 728727 or by email at: enquiry@opp.eu.com