



BUSINESS AS USUAL!

After a long absence, we are delighted to be able to resume publication of the 16PF® Newsletter. We are pleased to say that OPP® have agreed to sponsor four editions of the Newsletter per year, the same as previously.

However, four editions require plenty of input from members, so please send your contributions to The Editor. Subject matter is not strictly limited to 16PF, and indeed our meetings have for some years broadened to embrace other psychometric assessments and occupational psychology topics. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Gentle Art Of Feedback

Readers of this newsletter have heard much over the years about personality assessments on which visiting speakers have addressed the User Group.

But there is one topic that seems to have escaped attention, and that is the giving of feedback to candidates and to third parties.

I recall that it was mentioned briefly about four years ago but there was no time to do it justice. The responses were so varied that I made a mental note to instigate a discussion. So here it is. I don't always move this quickly, so please understand this is an exception.

Let me first regale you with one or two experiences of my own. Then it will be your turn – in the next Newsletter perhaps?

I suppose most of us carry on doing whatever we were trained to do in the first place, and I recall being advised to produce a report for the client or 'commissioning manager' and another one for the candidate. It was important that whilst the ground covered should be identical of course, the manner in which it was written should be different. "It's the way you tell 'em", as comedians like to say.

Generally, I have to say that I have found this to be satisfactory. For the successful candidate, I always give face-to-face feedback as well as a written report.

I talk through the written report with the commissioning manager. I avoid using any technical language. The few phrases that I know that might bedazzle the unknowing, are carefully locked away at the back of my mind.

My policy is always to give face-to-face feedback to all internal candidates. When external candidates have been unsuccessful, I send a written report, and suggest a telephone conversation if they wish to explore anything further. It seems to work OK. No one has ever telephoned me. Not even Mr X. You want to know who Mr X was? I'll tell you.

The assignment was to assess nine sales representatives for the vacant role of regional sales manager. I wanted to see them individually to give feedback. It was early September – four or five years ago - and the sales reps had travelled from all parts of the country to attend what was to be the last company sales meeting before their Christmas bash. But that was going to be a crowded day culminating in some merry-making with no opportunity to give individual feedback. At least, not to anyone that was still sober. So how should I give the feedback? I could hardly travel the length and breadth of the UK to do this.

"Send it out to 'em," said the sales director.

"OK," I said, "but there is one that really should be given careful feedback. Personally."

This salesman was clearly going to be unsuitable for the target job, and I was even surprised he had lasted very long as a rep with my client. He had the personality of someone who might sell paper doilies and knitted tea cosies to little old ladies in Devon.

"You're quite right," said the sales director. "He's not at all satisfactory. Just send him the report."

I protested. This was a face-to-face job.

He said, "But he's in Aberdeen. I'm not bringing him down here, having him off the road for what would be two days, for him to be told what I'm sure he knows anyway. And another thing, rumour has it that he might have something else lined up in the New Year anyway."

I lack the supreme gift of unswerving obedience, so I argued a little further as I recall, but he was adamant.

So I sent out a report that indicated a gaping hole in the market for selling paper doilies and tea cosies, and would he like to fill it? No, of course I didn't do any such thing. But I had to be honest with him. If he had a similar sales job in mind, it would be an act of Christian charity to dissuade him from pursuing it. So I wrote a report that indicated where his strengths might lie. And of course he could telephone me...

Shortly after, I followed matters up with the sales director. The successful candidate had been appointed, and the others were happy with their feedback. All except Mr X. I understood that he was incandescent at the report which indicated that selling might not be for him. Apparently he tore it up. To make matters worse, he *did* have another job lined up. It was a more senior sales position than the one he held with my client! He used this of course as 'proof' that none of us knew what we were talking about – least of all psychologists.

I was of course, very unhappy about the whole affair, and wondered what alternative course I might have taken. Travel to Aberdeen at my own expense to tell the chap he hadn't got the job? Suggest that he ring me, and I'd give him both barrels over the phone? Hardly, but perhaps it might have been the best of the lousy options available. I suppose I could have insisted on seeing him at the Christmas bash, but that was more than three months off and everyone else would have had their feedback anyway. And the appointment would have been made by then.

Of course, we could have all been wrong. I could have made a mistake in interpretation. The sales director could be mistaken about his performance. Perhaps Mr X had poor insight into his attributes and this was reflected in his responses to the test. Perhaps he was too modest, and didn't do himself justice. Perhaps his selling skills were just not right for that particular company. After all, many successful people leave a company and fail elsewhere. And many failures are fired and become a roaring success in another organisation. We need a reminder that personality assessments have to be seen in the organisational context as well as the possibilities mentioned above.

But there is some good news for the test user giving feedback. Here it is: you have one incredible advantage. *You know a lot about his or her personality.* That means you can shape the feedback in a manner likely to be acceptable to the

candidate. Yes, it really is the way you tell 'em. If that person is, say, M minus, and I minus, you'll know not to beat about the bush. If he's C minus, L plus, O plus, and Q4 plus...well, hard luck. But someone's got to tell him.

Or have they? Some organisations have a policy of giving no feedback to test takers. Harsh? I think so, but they see it as a protection against possible litigation and accusations of unfair discrimination and general aggro.

Between these two extremes, some organisations... But there, I nearly spoilt it for you! Isn't that what you're going to tell us about in the next newsletter?

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This topic was popularised by Golman in 1995, although the subject was researched in the 70s and 80s, and even dates back to Thorndike's work in 1920. Earlier this year, Jo Maddox of JCA Occupational Psychologists addressed the User Group on E.I.

Many people appear sceptical about emotional intelligence. Some say it is nothing new. We've always known about it. Others say that it's only interpersonal skills under another name. Trust the management gurus, they say, to come out with something new every few years to make the rest of us feel an urgent need for their services if we are to remain competitive.

Jo Maddox set about addressing these (unvoiced) concerns.

Emotional intelligence differs from personality in as much that it is a state rather than a trait. Our 'make-up' comprises ability, personality, and motivation. The first two are fairly stable, but motivation is variable. It reflects our desires and interests of the moment. Rather than simply assessing behaviour, we have to see what is *driving* that behaviour.

Personality questionnaires have been used extensively in the last 20 years or so, but advocates of EI say that the problem is that most people do nothing with the information this provides. "I'm an introvert. So what?" Or, "I'm an extravert and somewhat garrulous. What's the problem?" (Extraverts *would* say that, wouldn't they?)

Leadership

All leadership posts require a mix of IQ and EI, and researchers have estimated that IQ accounts for only 20% of the requirement for success, and that EI represents the remainder.

JCA have correlated scales with Henley School of Management supra competencies (Dulewicz) and with Golman's Leadership scales.

Maddox argued that we all have an innate potential to grow and develop to meet the demands of our lives, but ingrained habits and attitudes often prevent us from fulfilling this potential. What we need is an instrument that is capable of diagnosing those barriers, making us aware of them, and helping us to remove them. JCA and CAEI (Centre for Applied Emotional Intelligence) have combined to offer their solution in the form of products that can assess individual effectiveness and team effectiveness.

The Organisational changes of recent years have resulted in flatter structures with those remaining needing to assume more responsibility and better self-management. Adaptability and teamwork have come to the fore. To meet these challenges successfully, one has to develop Feeling and Thinking attributes – not just behavioural ones. EI is using one's Thinking about Feeling, and using Feeling about Thinking.

The EI products that JCA offer are valuable for the coach, for HR professionals and for consultants.

For more details go to www.jca.biz

SHADES OF NUREMBURG

The torture and humiliation recently depicted in shameful photographs, have no connection with 16PF®, but they certainly have relevance to psychology, and therefore of legitimate interest to our readers.

The topicality of this subject has led us to reproduce a part of an article that first appeared in Newsletter No 26 in October 2000.

Few readers will have clear memories of the Nuremburg trials, but many will have been aware of echoes from the past in the frequent pleas from those accused of brutality, that they "were only carrying out orders." But it is a mantra that has been repeated many times – Cambodia, Vietnam, Rwanda, Angola, Serbia.

And now Iraq.

In the 1960s, Stanley Milgram, a young social psychologist at Yale, conducted experiments to see whether people would be prepared to carry out acts of cruelty when ordered to do so. These experiments were to become celebrated – infamous – and both made Milgram's name, and some might say, destroyed his academic career. He attracted volunteers who were told that they were taking part in experiments to see what effect pain might have on learning.

The experiment consisted of a 'learner' who was strapped to a chair, and a volunteer who was told to give increasingly powerful shocks to the learner each time he failed to answer a question correctly. The learner screamed in mock pain since the electrical apparatus was not connected to the chair at all.

Milgram wanted to find out just how far an ordinary person would go to carry out the orders of another. The electrical apparatus had a line of around thirty switches ranging from 15 volts to 450 volts. Labelling read:

"SLIGHT SHOCK" at one end and "DANGER – SEVERE SHOCK" at the other. The learner was asked to memorise word pairs, and each mistake was punished. Milgram told the volunteer that if the learner were punished, he would start to pay more attention.

Thus, the real motive behind the experiment was concealed from the volunteer. When the "learner" groaned in simulated pain, the volunteer started to object, but the experimenter simply told him to carry on and ignore it. The volunteer was infuriated but he did as he was told. Eventually, he just blew up and said he could not continue. When the experiment was over, and the "victim" came into the room smiling, the volunteer was told that that he had inflicted no pain on the subject. Later, he realised that the experiment was about obedience.

High Shock Waves

Milgram was amazed at the results. He had expected it would be difficult to get compliance from the volunteers. In one form of the experiment, where the volunteer could hear thumping but no cries of pain, sixty-five percent of volunteers continued past the switches that read DANGER – SEVERE SHOCK. When the experiment was modified so that the volunteer could hear the learner demanding to be set free, sixty-two percent still obeyed all the way. In yet another variation, when the learner and victim were in the same room, forty percent were still fully compliant.

When Milgram had discussed his experiment with psychiatrists and asked them to guess the outcome, they imagined that only those with psychopathic tendencies would give the highest shocks. Milgram's experiments however, showed that a majority of Americans were willing to do so.

There were of course inevitable links with the Holocaust, and the timing of the experiments aided this comparison: in 1960 Adolf Eichmann was arrested and put on trial the following year.

Part of his defence was that he was only carrying out orders. Milgram's study showed that ordinary people were capable of obeying orders that were destructive; people obeying orders committed the Holocaust atrocities, and therefore those people might be considered as "ordinary". He was therefore equating ordinary Americans with Nazis.

Lack of Support

The experiments became well known and were quoted outside the world of academic psychology. Theology, medicine and law each used the findings to their own advantage, but the controversy surrounding Milgram's ethics in conducting the experiments affected his career. One psychologist described his work as vile, and later, his Harvard colleagues failed to support him.

His academic career never really recovered, yet his findings are still quoted world-wide. Perhaps never more so than now?

BACK PAGE WITH LUBBOCK

Bill Lubbock returns to these pages with a typically off-the-wall piece, called *Eccentricity and the 16PF*.

There is no 16 PF Factor or source trait that singly, or in combination, relates to eccentricity, and yet that can be a significant feature of some individuals' personalities. It may be a trait that manifests itself only occasionally, but the effect can be quite noticeable and other people remark on it. Surely any self-respecting personality test should measure it? I'm not eccentric myself so I have no special insights to offer, though my wife sometimes calls me eccentric for no real reason. She did that the other week when she caught me limping slowly across a pedestrian crossing when she knew that there was nothing the matter with me. I wasn't being eccentric. She didn't realise I was just being supportive to motorists.

In our town the delays between pressing the 'Crossing button' and the traffic's stopping are controlled by the local authority. Some of the crossings have it right. Press the button, the red traffic light comes on almost immediately, the traffic stops and you can cross the road.

After a short delay, one that suffices most Olympic sprinters, the lights turn a flashing yellow to indicate that cars can proceed but any pedestrian still has a right of way. They then very quickly turn green again. The traffic flow re-commences normally until the next person presses the button.

On one of our crossings our local authority has got the timing all wrong. You observe a car travelling towards you, you press the button, and the car flashes by. Nothing seems to happen to the traffic light, so when the cars have passed and the road is clear you cross the road anyway. Half a minute later, when you are almost out of sight, the lights turn red, and any car coming up to the crossing has to stop. There is no-one waiting to cross, they can see no reason why they have to stop, and tempers can flare. I think it all very unjust. I'm a motorist and I don't like to think of motorists getting worked up by having to stop when they feel there's no reason to.

So, when there is a stream of traffic, and I have to press the button, I like to think the motorists would feel more kindly towards pedestrians if they saw there was a real charitable reason why they had to stop. So I occasionally limp slowly across, smiling at them, doffing my cap or waving my hand in gratitude, and make them feel good about themselves for the rest of the day.

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