

PSYCHE

The Newsletter of the
Psychometrics Forum

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Now read on:

Committee Member [Lynne Hindmarch](#), an experienced coach and psychometrician, has responded gallantly to the editor's call for contributions. Here she discusses self-efficacy, an essential attribute but one that is not frequently aired.

Self-efficacy and coaching

There may be a number of reasons why a client does not progress as well as expected on a coaching programme. They could lack motivation, or commitment to the goal, or application through overwork or disorganisation

They may not receive much support from their manager, or have other preoccupations in their lives which demand their attention. In the open, empathic and supportive relationship that ideally develops between the coach and the client, these issues can often be identified early in a coaching programme, discussed and successfully addressed. I am not suggesting that tackling any of the above is easy. But in my experience an even more difficult situation can arise in coaching if clients lack belief in their own self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in their capacity to achieve a desired outcome. The psychologist most widely associated with the concept is Albert Bandura, who described the role of self-efficacy in human functioning - that 'people's level of motivation, affective states and actions are based more on what they believe than what is objectively true' (Bandura,1997).

A high level of self-efficacy will help motivated clients to attain their goals. But other clients may be equally committed to the coaching programme and the agreed goals, and highly motivated to achieve them, but little progress is made because they do not believe they have the capacity to achieve the desired outcome.

Assessing self-efficacy

One of the difficulties for a coach is identifying that lack of self-efficacy is an issue. Bandura states that self-efficacy is situational, so assessment immediately becomes problematic, as it will not be possible to develop an assessment that is generalisable across different situations. Bandura has in fact developed a number of different scales for measuring self-efficacy in different domains, including exercising, eating habits, teaching and problem-solving, and in 2001 wrote a monograph that provides general guidance for people wanting to develop their own domain specific scales.

In coaching, this form of measurement is likely to be unrealistic or inappropriate, so other methods of identifying the client's self-efficacy may need to be considered. These may range from using carefully structured questioning to elicit the client's level of self-belief in achieving a specific goal, or even a simple question, such as suggested by Whitmore (2001), who suggests that the coach asks the client to rate on a scale of one-to-ten the degree of certainty that the client will carry out the actions agreed. He points out that this is not to rate the *certainty* of the outcome actually being achieved, but to rate the client's *intention* to carry out their part of the job. If the rating is less than ten, it is reasonable for the coach to ask what needs to happen to make the rating higher. In my experience, this simple technique can identify issues around the client's belief in their capability to achieve the goal, so that this can be addressed during the coaching session.

Developing self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) described what he called the sources of self-efficacy as: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physical and emotional states. I have used this as a framework to explore briefly different approaches to increasing self-efficacy.

Mastery experiences

Bandura believes that resilient self-efficacy develops from mastery experiences in which goals are achieved through perseverance and overcoming obstacles. This is likely to be an approach which will be used by most coaches. Setting appropriate goals, breaking them down into sub-goals so the client feels they are attainable but still provide a certain amount of 'stretch', the coach supporting the client through this process, this will be one of the most widely used methods of developing efficacy. I have used this approach in a career coaching context, for example, when the client's goal is a career change. The goal may be highly desirable, but the client may not believe that they have the capacity to achieve it. By working with the client to break the goal down into a number of small steps, starting with a sub-goal which is within the client's capability but slightly outside their comfort zone, a pathway can be created to help them achieve their ultimate goal.

Vicarious experience

An example of this source of self-efficacy is modelling. This involves identifying proficient models who exhibit the competencies the client aspires to develop, and who can transmit the knowledge to the client. This may be used less in the coaching sessions, but may be identified as a possible source of developing self-efficacy outside the sessions – for instance mentors can be a good source for developing self-efficacy. However, in certain forms of coaching (such as developing emotional intelligence competencies) inevitably the coach will need to exhibit the behaviours in which they are coaching, so an element of modelling will come into play during the sessions.

Social persuasion

The third method of developing self-efficacy that Bandura suggests is persuading a client verbally that they possess the capabilities to master a given activity, and giving them manageable challenges to confirm the coach's belief.

This might include challenging a client's limiting self-belief (What is the evidence for your view of your capability in this area? What alternative perspectives are there on this situation?). It might also involve an aspect of Appreciative Inquiry – using questions to call up strengths that have helped the client in the past in difficult situations, and lessons learned that might apply to the present challenge.

Physical and emotional states

Bandura also points out that reducing a person's stress reactions and altering their negative mood can enhance self-efficacy. One would hope that taking the actions identified above might help the client feel more in control of events, lower stress and help develop a more positive outlook.

However, Bandura (1994) also indicates that when people are asked to judge how much they expect to benefit from a given procedure, they may relate it to external sources (e.g. the expertise of the coach) rather than from their own resources. The coach needs to reinforce the client's own capability to emphasise that it is their own learning that has brought about a successful outcome.

Finally.....

Bandura (1994) said that 'Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often.'

This would seem to indicate that as coaches, we need to pay attention to being 'efficacy builders', and that this approach needs to underpin how the coach works with the client. If self-efficacy is ignored or overlooked, the client may fail to achieve the goal, and opportunities to enhance their self-efficacy beliefs may be missed.

Lynne Hindmarch
www.obc.org.uk

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Whitmore, J. (2001). *Coaching for Performance*. London: Nicholas Brealey.

Further information

Information on self-efficacy: a community of scholars:
www.des.emory.edu/mfp/self-efficacy.html

Dear Colleagues

It is with a mixture of excitement and trepidation that I take up the challenge of working along-side our esteemed editor David Roberts. Having recently perused his collected works from his 15 years as Editor of the Newsletter - '*I Didn't Come Here to Argue*', it is plain that he has set a high, as well as long-standing, benchmark. I see it as an honour to have the opportunity to work with members of the committee to continue to build the profile and influence of the Psychometric Forum group in promoting best practice in the use of psychometrics.

A little bit about me - Prior to forming my own business in 2008 I built my career within some of the leading UK and US based assessment and development organisations, holding the dubious distinction of having worked for ASE, OPP & SHL as well as DDI (twice). I have in-depth practitioner experience in the majority of the most widely used assessment tools - 16PF, MBTI, FIRO-B, OPQ, Hogan & Saville Wave etc. and enjoy the study of 'comparative psychometrics'. My current interests include talent strategy consulting, individual assessment and coaching. I have a particular interest in the emerging applications of the field of neuropsychology to the world of work and can see considerable potential for future growth in this area.

During my career I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the 'great and the good' associated with the world of psychometrics and have developed quite an extensive network of colleagues within the industry. Over the coming months and years I look forward to collaborating both with members and the wider industry to further the interests of the Forum. My less lofty aspiration is to contribute to bringing you a consistently interesting, impartial and thought provoking read through 'Psyche'.

Adrian Starkey M.Sc., C.Psychol., AFBPsS.

As I am nearing the end of my stint as editor of Psyche, I am getting demob happy. Perhaps now is the time to write all those controversial pieces that good sense prevented me from penning.

"An editor is someone who separates the wheat from the chaff and then prints the chaff."

So here's some chaff:

Nice Guys Earn Less

(Yes, and probably come last as well)

Many of us must have thought that much academic research simply confirms what we think we know anyway. We have an implicit understanding of certain things, and when researchers publish their reports – perhaps after prolonged study, costing Heaven knows how much – and state that which we think was obvious, we are inclined to be somewhat self-satisfied. OK, it's just me then.

Have you ever wondered whether your work colleagues – those that have scant respect for authority, are over-assertive, over-competitive, and not very conscientious anyway – have you ever suspected that they may be better rewarded than you?

If so, you're right. They are. That is the finding of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Essex University.

Using the Five Factor Model, researchers have found that the nicer you are the worse you are likely to be paid. That's one conclusion from one of the most detailed studies ever undertaken into the relationship between personality and pay. It seems that the nicer people are on average, the more they are likely to suffer financially. And it appears that even being conscientious does not provide any statistically significant pay reward.

Using the British Household Panel Survey, Dr Cheti Nicoletti and Dr Alita Nandi's research looked at nearly 3000 men aged between 24 and 64 living and working in the UK. By using information from the Big Five (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism), they classified people into different personality groups (e.g., high agreeableness and low agreeableness, high extrovert and low extrovert).

The research showed that those people who were 'nice' earned approximately 6% less, which equated to an average of 72p less per hour. The same pay penalty applied to people with a high degree of emotional instability. Extroverts and those open to experience were paid the best, with those open to experience (high intellectual curiosity amongst other things) earning 9% more than those who were not open, a difference of £1.04 per hour.

All these pay differences except for Openness To Experience persist even after controlling for a large set of characteristics such as level of education, occupation, work experience, previous unemployment, training, and other personal and job characteristics.

Commenting on the findings, Chief Research Officer Cheti Nicoletti said:

“The results clearly show that agreeableness and neuroticism are penalized in the workplace while extroversion is rewarded. There seems to be a sticky floor effect for highly neurotic people and highly introvert people. Our findings also suggest that emotional stability and extroversion are personality traits better rewarded in low paid occupations. While it is generally considered fair that workers with better cognitive abilities or education be paid more, unequal pay across workers with different personality traits, but who are otherwise identical, could be considered unfair.”

The ISER team is cautious about making any policy prescriptions about encouraging the development of certain personality traits based on these results alone as these rewards and penalties pertain only to the labor market and not to other meaningful aspects of life. Dr Nandi explains:

“For example, while agreeableness is penalized in the labour market, it may make a person more socially acceptable, increase her social networks and finally lead to better mental health and well-being.”

If all that is true, then it confirms much of what your retiring editor has been saying on and off in these columns for the last fifteen years. *“Shapers are more likely to get to the top.”* (Yes, but look at the human problems they leave behind them.) *“You must have high interpersonal skills to get to the top.”* (Rubbish.)

So gut feelings are often right, and on this occasion borne out by research. I am only waiting now for the opposing view from a rival university. You know how the unrelenting flow of food-related research says one thing one day and something different the next. *“A glass of wine is good for you.”* Wine is bad for you. Likewise with beer, meat, vegetables, exercise, sex, and just about anything else that can be studied.

It won't be long before someone says that uncompetitiveness, unconscientiousness, instability, and introversion are the golden attributes for success.

I know I'll come good one day.

*David Roberts
Editor*

PLAY FOR TODAY

The scene:

Your Editor in a pub in Bucharest, trying to earn an honest crust.

The players:

A clutch of consultants. My business colleague and I (LDA International Ltd) have formed a partnership with Premier Global, a local consultancy.

Act 1

Your editor made what he thought was an innocuous statement. (Or perhaps he was trying to be controversial? Perish the thought!)

Anyway, the following response to my comments from [Sinclair Stevenson](#) came winging its way to my computer a few days later.

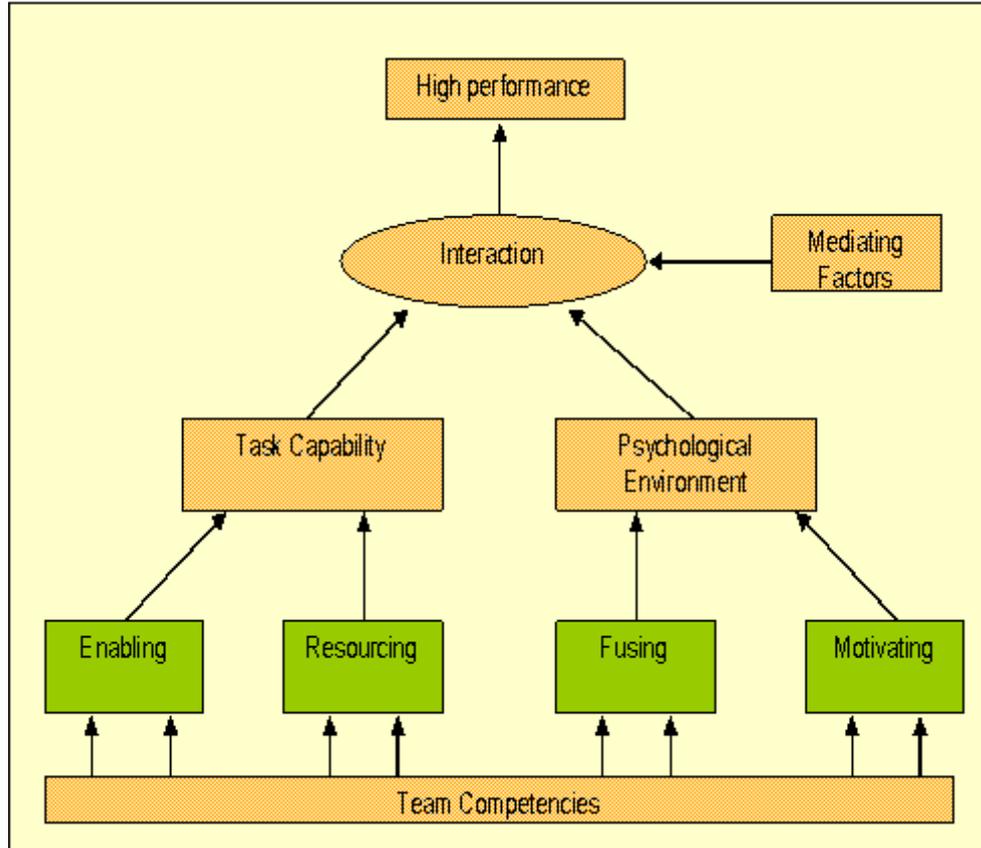
David Roberts - you are wrong! Teams do work. And - you can measure how good they are.... Read on!

David, lounging back in his chair, clutching his half filled pint of Romanian ale, said, what, to me, was a somewhat surprising thing. "Of course", he said, "teams never really work in organisations: people may think that they are working in teams but usually people are simply doing their own thing.... I wonder, sometimes, what the value is in team development".

A great deal of organisational work is in teams, as defined by a team being a group of more than two people working together to achieve a common goal. Whether it be the board deciding on a high level business strategy or an engineering supervisor trying to resolve a turbine breakdown, the processes and problems are similar: how do you get a group of people, with all the personality and circumstantial differences involved, to work together effectively to decide upon or resolve an issue. David is right in one sense, of course. There are many teams that are ineffective and quite an amount of effort has been spent by researchers trying to find out why this is and suggesting things that teams need to be aware of and do.

One of the most fascinating pieces of work for me was undertaken by Tim Mills of the Cranfield School of Management and Richard Finn of Penna Consulting in the field of team competencies. These are competencies that focus on the team as a whole and not the individual. Was it possible to say that, for effective performance, each team needed certain attributes? And would this be applicable across any type of team?

The research said a resounding "Yes"! Data was collected from senior managers, footballers, project managers, jazz musicians and even virtual team members. The model derived from the results is shown below:



Team Competency Model

Fig. 1

Typical competencies include:

Adapting

The capability of the team as a whole to find solutions to unexpected problems and to be able to make radical changes to plans where there are new demands

Team Wisdom

This represents the amount of knowledge that team members have about each other's capabilities. It includes knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of team members and what they have knowledge of.

Committing

This measures the level to which the team as a whole is committed to the task. It deals with the extent to which team members take responsibility for outcomes and the extent to which equal efforts are made by all.

There are 16 competencies in total, dealing with a variety of knowledge and capability, ranging from technical to the psychological.

By measuring each of these competencies through a questionnaire (a sort of team psychometric), it is possible to identify how effectively a team is performing, simply, in effect, by combining the scores on each competency. It

is also technically possible to make direct comparisons of the performance of completely different teams. You could find yourself saying that a jazz group is performing better as a team than the members of a board of a certain company.

The model also targets directly where a team is going wrong. Since the competencies have been defined explicitly, where a team scores at the lower end, this provides the objective to be achieved. For example, if the team does not score well in the Committing competency defined above, clearly, work needs to be done to persuade the team members of the importance of the task they are doing and how they themselves will benefit.

There is one caveat. As the model shows, the work that the team does and the circumstances in which they operate is going to make some competencies more important than others. Clearly, for a rowing team, creativity will be less important than it might be for an advertising agency. Nevertheless, overall, time and time again, the competencies shown in the model were the ones that were shown to be needed by teams in all walks of life.

Penna Consulting have already used this model highly effectively within a number of businesses, ranging from board members to sales teams and have found it invaluable in targeting precisely what needs to be done to improve team performance.

So, David, you can make a real difference to the teams in the organisations you work with. Yes, teams do not always work well together but research such as this shows that we can make a difference, both to productivity and well-being.

If you would like to know more about team competency and how it can be utilised within business, please contact my colleague, Chris Welford of Penna Consulting at Chris.Welford@Penna.com or myself at Premier Global in Romania at sinclair.stevenson@pgrom.com .

We would be delighted to hear from you.

*Sinclair Stevenson CEO
Premier Global
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New Frontiers in Psychometrics

10.00 am for 10.30 am
Thursday 3rd December 2009
Park Crescent Conference Centre
229 Great Portland Street
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This is the first of what we hope will become an annual review of innovations in the nature and use of psychometrics. It will be led by The Psychometrics Forum Vice Chair, Dr Hugh McCredie.

We shall be looking at two new forms of psychometrics:

SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TESTS (SJTs)

Wendy Lord, Chief Psychologist at Hogrefe Ltd will introduce an off-the-shelf SJT, *the Leadership Judgement Indicator*.

At an earlier stage of her career, Wendy facilitated the introduction of 16PF5 into the UK. Hogrefe are UK distributors of tests in the NEO series.

IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TESTS (IATs)

Pete Jones, Research Director at Shire Professional Business Consultants will outline the nature of IATs and talk about their use in exploring prejudice and to assess leaders

Dr Jones is the undoubted champion of Implicit Association Tests in the UK

We shall also look at fresh insights from the use of two well established tests:

PREDICTING LEADERSHIP STYLE

Dave Bartram, Research Director, SHL Group Limited will report on using a personality measure (OPQ32) to predict Transformational and Transactional leaders

Professor Bartram is probably the UK's most distinguished living contributor to the field of psychometrics having held the high offices in the British Psychological Society, academia and commercial test publishing

PREDICTING INTERPERSONAL STYLE

Hugh McCredie, independent practitioner/researcher in management assessment, developing and coaching will report on links found between 16PF4 and the contrasting interpersonal styles of *asking* and *telling*

Hugh is one of the earliest members of the Forum's predecessor group and is a frequent contributor to assessment and development journals.

All four contributors are Chartered Psychologists

Booking details

The cost of the meeting, including lunch and drinks, will be £50 (for members) and £75 (for non-members)..

Please contact our Administrator, Caro Leitzell on 01962

880920 or email her at admin@leitzell.com for a membership form

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