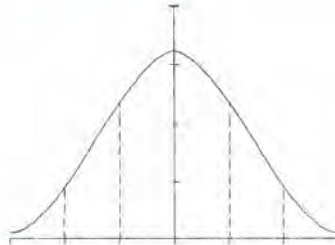


16 PF Newsletter

The Poppleton-Allen Sales Aptitude Test:

First of a 2-part series

A summary of the June Meeting



"Meetings of the 16PF User Group are really part of Continuous Professional Development," said a member recently. She was making the point that none of us, whether or not we have the BPS's Level B Certificate, can sit back and pretend that we have nothing more to learn about the richness and complexity of the 16PF. It is certainly true that almost every professional institute - certainly the IPD - now requires its members to keep up to date. How would we feel about a surgeon who had learned of no new developments in his field since qualifying in the 1960s, runs the argument. Exactly.

Following this line inevitably requires us to be less blinkered about the 16PF, whilst still retaining it as our main focus, and it was this thinking that resulted in the June meeting being addressed by Professor Steve Poppleton, author of the Poppleton-Allen Sales Aptitude Test (PASAT) and a long time admirer of the 16PF and of Cattell's work.

"Everyone lives by selling something," said Robert Louis Stevenson, and Steve's talk reminded us of the personality characteristics critical to successful selling. The PASAT had its origins in a Birkbeck College dissertation on sales effectiveness. This led to an invitation for Steve to talk to a group of life assurance managers on the selection of sales managers and - as they say - the rest is history. Steve embarked on a validation study which led to his producing a sales test, but his starting point was that of job analysis, trying to answer the question as to what salesmen *actually did*. This work was carried out in 1977 and was oriented towards the financial services industry. It became apparent that his test - which was factor-analytically based - was a better predictor of sales results than were the sales manager's ratings.

Steve made it clear that he has been heavily influenced by the Freudian and behaviourist framework provided by Cattell's 16PF and that the PASAT related very well to the 16PF dimensions and to four of the Big Five.

So: what does the PASAT actually measure? Steve identified four major dimensions: Social Effectiveness; Organisational Effectiveness; Emotional Strength;

Drive and Motivation. Each of these has a cluster of personality factors, all of which are relevant to selling, but some of which are more important than others, depending on the type of selling being undertaken. **Social Effectiveness** includes dynamism (defined as being lively, convincing, and successful), empathy (understanding others), and the ability to be entertaining (playing a role, being amusing, holding attention). These are all clearly integral to our acceptability to others. Good scores on social sophistication (relating well to others, being

persuasive, able to explain things clearly), verbal fluency (good in arguments and discussion) and organisational ability (organising others, taking the lead), are all factors likely to influence others in our favour. The key point to remember about Social Effectiveness, said Steve, is that it is about selling yourself rather than the product. Success at selling the product is related to Drive and Motivation. He reminded us that a salesman can be very likeable and therefore score well on Social Effectiveness, but he may lack sufficient determination or competitiveness to be successful. Conversely, we are all familiar with the hard-driving and determined salesman, who is light on social effectiveness, but will not leave your house until he has sold you the double glazing, or the twenty-six volume encyclopaedia you never knew you wanted.

Organisational Effectiveness is not to be confused with organisational ability, mentioned above. Here we are dealing with a cluster of three factors which relate to self-organisation - being organised and carrying out your plan. The first factor is administrative effectiveness (having good work habits, routines and plans, checking them and carrying them out, and getting things done). The second is work commitment (being work orientated and energetic for example), and the third is that of self sufficiency. This refers to the ability to work on one's own, seeing tasks through, and being "achievement oriented".

The next major dimension is that of **Emotional Strength**. This consists of a cluster of three factors: emotional resilience, emotional stability, and self confidence. Those who are not easily depressed, who like to be judged on results, and are emotionally well-

FUTURE MEETINGS AT IARC

- ① 23rd Sept 16PF5 New Developments
- ② 19th Nov Executive Coaching
- ③ 29th Jan To Be Finalised

adjusted will score highly on these factors. Emotional stability refers to a propensity to resist being easily upset, not moody, and being adaptable, for example. Self confidence refers to social self confidence, the ability to cope with rejection and to be entertaining.

Finally, **Drive and Motivation** has a cluster of three factors: economic motivation, competitiveness, and determination. The first refers to a willingness to change jobs for a higher income, and to be able to persevere after a setback. Competitiveness means largely what you think it means, but also refers to persuasiveness. Determination refers to "not taking no for an answer", being enthusiastic, a good organiser and competitive. Having set the scene by outlining the major factors and their clusters, Steve then dealt in more detail with their relationships to 16PF dimensions and to the Big Five.

Social Effectiveness for example, correlates well with the 16PF Second Order Extraversion, but is a better predictor of sales ability than Introversion - Extraversion alone. Acceptability correlates with Factor F, and is about being able to "enthuse the customer". Dynamism correlates to F; empathy is about the immediate impact, and giving the impression you are interested and correlates with Factors A, F and H. Entertaining correlates with F and H. Social sophistication - adapting to other people, amongst other things - correlates with N, E, F and H. Verbal fluency - "the gift of the gab" - correlates to E and H, and organisational ability to E, F and H.

Work commitment is the most important factor contributing to **Organisational Effectiveness**, and correlates with G and Q₃. Those who score highly on work commitment will regard work as important, will perhaps become bored whilst on holiday, although they may not necessarily be workaholics. In the context of PASAT, self sufficiency is not measuring Q₂. It is not a "loner" factor, but is concerned with getting on with the job. As such, it relates to G and Q₃ on 16PF and to work commitment and administrative effectiveness on PASAT. Under **Emotional Strength**, emotional resilience correlates with C, O and Q₄. Emotional stability - which is about mood control - correlates to the same factors but more strongly. Self confidence correlates with emotional resilience and, as might be expected, with 16PF factors O, H, and F. PASAT **Drive and Motivation** can be defined as "sales hunger", and correlates least with 16PF, although the clusters of economic motivation, competitiveness, and determination, still correlate to Factor E. Steve Poppleton's view as to why this section should show the weakest correlation is simply that the 16PF was never designed to be a motivational questionnaire. **Drive and Motivation** is the opposite of Agreeableness (one of the Big Five). Those who score highly are likely to be more argumentative, their focus being on selling the product rather than themselves. (Konrad Adenauer, the former German Chancellor, probably had this characteristic in mind when he said, "A thick skin is a gift from God".)

One or two members of the audience wondered whether there was a difference between selling a product and selling a service. After all, selling a service implies a stronger need to build a relationship. Perhaps not, was Steve's response. After all, they are both selling a solution.

The audience was stimulated by Steve Poppleton's clear exposition of the PASAT, and intrigued by its close links with 16PF. A wide range of questions ensued, particularly regarding PASAT's correlation with 16PF. Some members had experience of using the PASAT,

and many more had heard of it, but had not used it in selection. It was clear Steve Poppleton's talk aroused - or maybe re-aroused - interest in the PASAT. This meeting was a classic example of Continuing Professional Development and our speaker was congratulated on making it both enjoyable and interesting.

David Roberts
Editor

The next edition of the Newsletter will include the editor's first-hand experience of using the PASAT in three differing selling organisations.

PASAT is available through The Test Agency

Assessment or therapy: locating the boundaries as Testers

by
Mani Winterstien

This is a very personal response to Chris Ridgeway's fascinating session at the April meeting. In introducing, or possibly re-introducing, the idea that there is a place for projective tests and in-depth history-taking in assessment, he raised some fundamental ethical issues which I think we sometimes ignore.

One of the most important is the extent to which we, as assessors, have the right to investigate behaviour and past history that does not relate directly to the workplace. This depends on how we see our role in an organisational setting. There was some discussion about the difference between placing candidates and developing staff, and some members felt that if the emphasis is on development then in-depth exploration of family histories, etc. is to be recommended. This distinction between assessment and development seems to fudge the basic issue of an employee's right to protect personal information from exposure at work. Although the boundaries may be broader in developmental situations, particularly as was pointed out at senior level, I feel that the issue is the same. If we recognise that the information we gain from tests and questionnaires is not to help someone reorder their lives, but to place them in a work situation in which they can thrive, then we will set very clear and defined boundaries.

"Boundaries" is a word that counsellors love to use, but although it is jargon, boundaries are important. They are a protection for clients, both from the intrusion of others and from inappropriate self-disclosure. As assessors we are responsible for setting these boundaries, and I would suggest that in the workplace we need to relate them very firmly to the work. Our contracts need to be clear to both the organisation and the individual.

Another issue raised at the last meeting related to sensitive information and the extent to which such results should be passed on, and to whom. We all accept the need for good feedback to check our hypotheses, but we are still left with the problem of communicating disturbing low or high scores within limited feedback sessions. Of course, ideally we should have hours of pre-contracted, paid, on-going exploration and counselling time to help someone work through the implications of such data, but that isn't how it usually is in organisations, particularly if the person is not selected. Whatever we do we may raise issues for

an individual that trigger anxiety, and we have a responsibility to point them towards further help if appropriate, but with more restricted aims, I would suggest that some of this could be avoided.

Returning to the projective techniques Chris referred to, there is not only the issue of the 'right' anyone has to intrude into other aspects of someone's life in the name of assessment, but also the question of the level of expertise of the assessor. While I would be very happy for Chris to explore my past, my dreams, or my 'inner child', I am not at all sure I would be as happy for those without counselling or therapeutic training to do the same. John Toplis recently questioned the quality of interpretation reports provided by staff with only limited training in personality questionnaires. I cannot imagine what they would do with ink blots, however standardised the interpretation now is.

Assessors are in a very powerful position. In a therapeutic setting patients choose their level of disclosure, and a good therapist tries very hard to minimise the power he or she holds. I would contend that this is impossible in an occupational situation.

I think we have to ask serious questions about our right to delve into the non work-related areas of people's lives, and about the expertise of those we licence to do this.

Mani Winterstein

Mani Winterstein is with Waters and Winterstein

Book Review

Personality in Practice

by

Wendy Lord

Published by ASE pp190 Price £33.00

Reading Wendy Lord's book on the 16PF5 reminded me of the Ronseal television advertisement in which we are told that the contents do exactly what it says on the tin. In this case, the "tin" being the practicalities of assessment, the promise certainly holds good and the author's unvarnished - yet polished - approach to her subject will be welcomed by 16PF users.

This book is packed with common sense and helpful suggestions, but many may find the chapters on interpretation and feedback to be the most valuable aids in their day-to-day work.

Let's take interpretation first.

Those with a high Factor L might greet Chapter 4 - Interpretation made Simple - with their habitual scepticism, but they would be wrong to do so. We are reminded that the key to interpretation is to separate the source traits from the behaviour which they are likely to generate. If we concentrate on the source traits we are likely to obtain a richer understanding of the person because we will be dealing with what *underlies* the behaviour, rather than the observable behaviour itself.

I've tried it and it works.

Each of the Global Factors - Extraversion, Anxiety, Self Control, Independence and Tough-Mindedness - is discussed and the contributing Factors are identified. But how do you interpret a profile in which some of the contributing Factors go in the opposite direction to that expected? The author shows us how to do this, and reminds us also, that not all contributing Factors will carry the same weight in the Global score. She provides

several examples of possible interpretations for each of the Global Factors and these alone are valuable. We see that the same score for a Global Factor for each of two candidates say, may conceal real differences, and a sound knowledge of the contributory Factors will help to provide a more rich and accurate interpretation.

Feedback is dealt with comprehensively.

Let's imagine that you are preparing 16PF feedback for a candidate. It is not an easy profile to interpret and you need to collect your thoughts carefully. You look at the most critical factors and consider how you are going to present them. You believe some may be seen by the candidate as negative. So how are you going to handle that? Supposing the candidate disagrees with your hypothesis? Are you going to accept that she is "right" and you are "wrong"? And if you accept that the candidate is "right", will that damage your credibility as a test interpreter?

These are some of the issues addressed in the chapter offering guidelines for feedback. Your report should be regarded as a set of hypotheses which you test with the candidate. Only when you have established its accuracy, or made adjustments of emphasis perhaps, should you allow it to form part - and *only* a part - of a selection or decision-making process.

That's the theory, anyway. But there's nothing so practical as a good theory, somebody once said. Consultants, as well as in-company assessors, find it difficult to create the time needed to follow closely the guidelines for effective feedback. It's easier to write a report and feed it back as if it were tablets of stone, but Personality in Practice comments on the fallibility of all psychometric tests and of our own fallibility in particular. We ignore the guidelines at our peril. Wendy Lord not only reminds us of the general principles to be followed, but she helpfully suggests ways of presenting hypotheses and of phrasing exploratory questions on high, average and low scores.

The importance of good feedback can hardly be over-estimated. Not only do our individual reputations depend on it, but the status of testing itself can be so easily undermined if feedback is poor or non-existent. I recall a job applicant, reluctant to undertake a test battery in spite of explanations and reassurances. "We all had to do these last year", he said. "Never heard another word."

Many 16PF users administer the test in the context of selection or development and the author devotes a

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chapter to the relevance of personality as a predictor of job success. Most importantly she refers to the need for a thorough job analysis, and I wondered when reading this how many are able to resist the commercial and managerial pressures to "just get on with it".

Wendy Lord has a remarkable gift for writing simple and clear prose, and for demystifying complex issues. I predict that her book will become as well-thumbed and indispensable to the practitioner as did Heather Birkett Cattell's *Personality in Depth* for the Fourth Edition. The implied promise behind *Personality in Practice* is completely fulfilled.

It does exactly what it says on the tin.

David Roberts
Editor

LIFE ACHIEVEMENT IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Ray Cattell has been awarded the Gold Medal for Life Achievement at a reception in his honour, hosted by the American Psychological Foundation. The ceremony was held at the APA's annual convention in Chicago on 16th August. Your committee sent its congratulations on behalf of all members.

In Your Dreams, Matey...

16PF viewers of the recent *Pie in the Sky* TV programme may have been bemused at some of the comments about the lifestyle of a man who "does psychological profiling and all that rubbish". As Inspector Crabbe neared a house, he implied that the luxury car parked outside was part of the ill-gotten gains of the man who carried on this sort of activity. Later the man admitted that he travelled the world and "chatted to people about their dreams" and then wrote a psychological profile, because companies like "something that seems scientific".

There's a bottle of Bolly for the first 16PF user who knows on whom this character is based. On second thoughts, if you mix in those circles, you can buy some Bolly for the rest of us. We'll all be at the September meeting . . .

FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 23rd September

This meeting is rather special. The fifth edition of 16PF has now been out for around 2½ years and many have been awaiting some literature on the subject. Apart from aspects of interpretation, and comparisons with the fourth edition, questions have been raised regarding the Belbin formulae. Are the old formulae still valid, for example? Wendy Lord, Chief Psychologist at ASE, will be dealing with these matters and will be supported by Terri Hunter, who has been replicating Belbin's original research. Wendy's new book - *Personality in Practice* - reviewed in this newsletter - will be available at the

meeting. Your invitation to this meeting gives details of the special discount available to all who attend. You can't afford to miss it . . .

Wednesday 19th November

Jenny Rogers on Executive Coaching. Barbara Tyler was originally scheduled for this date, but will now be talking to us at a future meeting.

Dates for 1998: Make a note in your diary now . . .

Thursday 29th January

Thursday 2nd April

Tuesday 23rd June

Thursday 24th September

Thursday 26th November

Letter to the Editor

As a fairly new user of the 16PF (about 2 years experience) I am puzzled when I find that the candidate does not seem to match the profile. I had an example recently in which an employee was regarded as "not performing" by his manager, in spite of having a good track record and qualifications.

I used 16PF, FIRO B, and the MBTI all of which seemed to highlight characteristics which I knew to be necessary for the job. I fed them back carefully to the employee who agreed with all the main findings. He also agreed that he wasn't producing the results in the job.

I am at a loss to know what more I could have done. As it was, I had to provide a report to the manager which indicated that the candidate was satisfactory when we both knew that he wasn't. I felt stupid. Although I explained that tests were not infallible, when three separate instruments fail to identify a root cause for below average performance, a client can be forgiven for being somewhat sceptical. I should just add that this person had at one stage been employed by a blue chip company, well known for its high standards.

I would like to know whether any other members have had similar problems, and how they overcame them. Did they for example, admit to the shortcomings of the tests, perhaps with apologies for not being able to offer more constructive help, whilst taking the fee and scarping?

(Name and address supplied)

Has any reader had a similar experience? If so, would it make a short article, a letter, or a talk at a User Group Meeting next year? Let's hear from you.

SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL

The Editor welcomes contributions from members either as letters or as articles on the use of the 16PF. Case histories, unusual assignments, as well as unusual profiles are welcome.

When submitting material, please enclose a 3½" disk together with the printed copy. This saves re-typing and minimises the risk of mistakes.