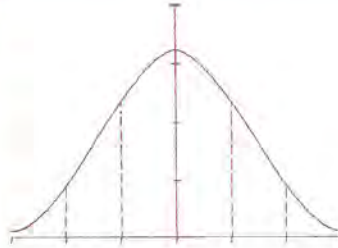


16 PF Newsletter

We have a new chairman. Or rather joint chairmen, Jane Wilkinson and Belinda Smith. Delighted that they are eschewing political correctness and using the word in its generic sense, and not to be taken literally. When the editor was last in London he took the opportunity to catch up with Jane and Belinda, to ask them a few questions:



- why people join the group and what they want to achieve by being members.
- how we can satisfy the needs of all our different sorts of members, from those who are highly experienced 16PF practitioners to our newest members who have just begun to work in the area of psychometrics.
- that we're on the right track with our programme of meetings and that you find them relevant and stimulating.

We'd also like to expand the membership and ensure that we are in touch with all newly trained 16PF users.

ME: *This is a good chance to introduce yourselves, so could you start by telling us something of your background?*

J: Yes, of course. Well, after graduating I worked for the NHS for 2 years in one of the first hospital Personnel Departments in the country. Then, in 1970 I moved to Rank Xerox where I spent 6 years working in what was, for that time, a very innovative central Occupational Psychology unit and during this period I gained a Masters Degree at Birkbeck College Occupational Psychology Department (when Alec Rodger was professor!). At Rank Xerox we made extensive use of psychometrics for selection and development. After a career break of 7 years to have my 2 children, I returned to work in more generalist HR roles with the FI Group and Softwright Systems. In 1992 I set up my consultancy, MJ Associates, specifically to provide HR services to small, entrepreneurial IT companies.

B: My career path has been similar to Jane's in many ways. My early career was with large employers. I started with the Airport Group, BAA and in 1990 I moved to Aberdeen where I worked in the oil and gas exploration industry. It was there that I was asked to train to use psychometric assessments and went to ASK to do just that where the trainer was none other than Wendy Lord. I came back to the South of England in 1994, by then a mother of 3 young children, and decided to have a change from the international corporate world and set up my own business, Brock House Associates, providing HR consultancy mostly to small businesses.

ME: *What are your main interests now?*

B: Over the last few years I have gradually migrated to

ME: *This is a novel idea taking on the chairmanship together, what prompted you to do it?*

B&J: We're very pleased to be taking on the chairmanship of the 16PF User Group together. We both have quite busy lives and so we felt that we could probably do a more effective job if we shared the responsibilities involved. We feel confident that we can work well together and hope that our combined ideas and energies will be beneficial for the group.

ME: *You've both been members of the group for some time. What has kept your interest?*

J&B: As members for the last seven years or more we have benefited enormously from listening to a wide variety of speakers, the chance to 'hear it here first', the quality of debate and, of great importance, the time to meet other people with similar professional interests. We want to keep that going. The link with ASE has also been important and we plan to continue to foster a close and effective working relationship with them.

ME: *The group has always been an enjoyable as well as informative forum and long may that continue, but you have probably got some new ideas for it. What are they?*

B&J: It is our intention to keep the same high standard of speakers and discussions that Brian has promoted, and we have some ideas for forthcoming meetings. For example, a session on the use of online psychometrics. However, as Brian has said consistently, this is 'your' group and we would very much like to hear what you want from it. We're conscious that, although attendance at meetings averages around 20, there are about 120 members so perhaps your needs could be met differently. As we won't know until we ask, we have decided to send out a short questionnaire to all members and we warmly invite you to respond with your thoughts and ideas for future meetings. For example we'd like to understand:

VENUE - The Naval Club, 38 Hill St Mayfair, W1

- ① 8th November. Cognitive Process Profile: One day workshop.
A groundbreaking new technique from ASE.
See back page for further detail.
- ② 7th February 2002 To Be Agreed

career management as the main focus of work and I'm just completing an MSc in Career Management and Counselling at Birkbeck College. I work with individual clients often as private individuals but also as part of corporate career management initiatives.

J: I continue to work with small companies but I also now try to achieve a better work/life balance and find more time to visit our house in France!

ME: *What's your particular interest in psychometrics and the 16PF?*

J: I find the 16PF and other instruments invaluable in helping my client companies improve the quality of their selection, development and career counselling processes, and continue to use them extensively.

B: I too use the 16PF and other assessments in selection situations with clients. I also use the 16PF particularly within career discussions as one way of helping individuals to gather together information about what they want to do next.

ME: *Thank you both very much. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting in November.*

Well, there you have it. Joint chairmen who are keen to do the job, and already have ideas as to what they want to achieve. Their questionnaire will be out later in the year. Please respond when you receive it.

Also, a word of thanks from the committee to Brian Sullivan for his chairmanship over the last five years. His deep knowledge of psychometrics is always evident in his framing of questions to our speakers. In spite of business pressures, he assured us he would continue to be present at future meetings.

Editor

Quintax®

Typing The 16PF User Group!

The June meeting provided insights into Quintax, a new measure designed by Stuart Robertson & Associates. Stuart Robertson and Derek Wilkie, the co-authors, came to give us a chance to try out the measure, and to tell us about the type characteristics of the group as a whole!

The meeting started with an introduction from Stuart Robertson, in which he outlined briefly the purposes of the session and some of the origins and characteristics of *Quintax* before asking us all to complete the questionnaire. One of the purposes was to enable members to become qualified as authorised users of *Quintax*, and to this end the authors had provided each person with a pack of material sufficient to allow two administrations, one self-administration in the meeting and one subsequently. The member pack also included an offprint of the recent and positive BPS review of *Quintax* from the updated Level B Review of tests¹.

The process of self-administration was completed in less than 20 minutes by the entire group, with the modal completion time probably more like 15 minutes. The scoring was completed easily, with each member scoring their own carbonised answer sheet and incorporating the results into a profile chart using sten norms for the composite norm group provided by the authors. The composite norm is a large group (N = 681) of people drawn from varied backgrounds and age ranges and comprising roughly equal numbers of men and women. Given this, it provides a reasonable reflection of the general population.

BELBIN'S TEAM ROLES

Having got this far, Stuart demonstrated how to calculate Belbin's Team Roles using a PC based desktop utility program, and how to generate computer narrative. This was made easier because the presentation was projected from a PC, and allowed some on-screen demonstrations of the software. Stuart also showed how a normative *Quintax* Type designation can be generated from the profile, and gave each person a Type Descriptor Leaflet summarising the key aspects, development tips etc., for their type. Although *Quintax* is modelled on the Big Five with five factors, for simplicity Emotional Involvement was left out of the group Type Table that emerged. The other factors (Extraversion, Criticality, Organisation, and Intellectual Focus) gave rise to the following distribution of types among the group:

Quintax Type Table		Adaptable		Structured	
		Grounded	Theoretical	Grounded	Theoretical
Introvert	Personable	1	4	0	0
	Logical	0	4	0	4
Extravert	Personable	0	2	1	0
	Logical	1	3	0	1

Clearly, the group is made up predominantly of Theoreticals (18 vs. 3 Grounded!) with majorities also for Introverts (13), Logicals (13), and Adaptables (15).

The Type Table was used again in the afternoon session when we were split up into temperament groupings by Derek to complete a couple of exercises. Given the structure of the group we divided into two groups of Logical Strategists (LTs), one group of Passionate Idealists (PTs), and one group made up of our one Organiser and Doer (SG), and our two Troubleshooters (AG). One of the exercises, Alack Smith and Jones!, taxed our skills at solving a problem of conflict at work using the *Quintax* Type model. When we reported back we found that the various groups had analysed the problem correctly, although their solutions reflected their own type characteristics. One of the LT groups had built a model of the problem, while the Grounded group had come up with a short snappy list of things to do to resolve matters. The PTs had worked out carefully what advice to give the parties to the conflict so as to ensure mutual understanding and a better working relationship given each person's type as a starting point - quite a bravura showing in fact!

Along with the exploration of Type we were also taken through some of the reliability data (test-retest and internal consistency) and construct validation results for *Quintax* including some impressive and interesting correlations with 16PF5, and MBTI. As a measure with a range of applications and support material (e.g. in relation to learning style) that complements the use of 16PF in various ways, *Quintax* was warmly welcomed as a potential companion tool in the 16PF Users armoury.

¹In LINDLEY, P et al (Eds) *Review of Personality Assessment Instruments (Level B) for Use in Occupational Settings*, 2nd edition (pp 223-228). Leicester: BPS Books, The British Psychological Society.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 8th November 2001
 Thursday 7th February 2002
 Wednesday 10th April 2002
 Thursday 20th June 2002
 Tuesday 1st October 2002
 Thursday 28th November 2002

THIS AND THAT

This maybe what journalists call the silly season, but this ragbag of points does have a unifying theme: simply, the art and practice of psychometric testing.

THE D-I-Y APPROACH TO TESTING

A few months ago there was much publicity devoted to a B and Q employee who was sacked after completing a personality questionnaire. At least it seemed to be a personality questionnaire but press reports varied - some said it was a personality test and the Financial Times referred to both a personality test and a "ten-minute telephone quiz" - perhaps they were the same.

For those who may have forgotten the incident, an employee was hired by B and Q and dismissed five days later, when the results of his multiple-choice personality test came through. And this despite the fact that his boss complimented him on having made a good start - and even hinted at future promotion! According to the FT "although he shaped up promisingly in his brief 15 hours of employment, he failed to give the required answers in his ten minute telephone quiz". B and Q admitted that he should have been given the test before being taken on, but that having been taken on, he should not have been summarily dismissed.

The FT columnist was highly sceptical about psychometric testing but conceded that a large DIY store such as B and Q which receives 400,000 applications a year for 12,000 sales positions needs "a quick way of sieving applicants for jobs paying less than £5 an hour" and that individual interviews are not feasible. So it appears that the initial selection decision is made solely on test results and nothing else. That seems to go against everything that all of us have been taught and the principles that we espouse.

No doubt the test is of the ubiquitous DISC type. But maybe someone out there knows differently?

The media always pounces upon such incidents and this one featured in many daily newspapers as well as the 'Today' programme with John Humphries having great fun with it.

Sad. No publicity for the thousands of good selection decisions made daily using psychometrics as an aid. But that's not news, is it?

DEVISING A TEST

In winding up a feedback session with a candidate, I enquired about the company's recruitment policy. How did they select? What was the local labour market like etc? The company was keen to improve things. The candidate was also a senior manager, and his problem was that of recruiting applicants who had basic numeracy and literacy skills. He said that the company had very traditional attitudes to most things, and he sought ways in which to change this.

He had devised his own tests for hourly paid staff - the blue-collar workers. Just a straight forward numerical and verbal test, he said, with all the innocence of an electrical engineer who had never had to study a single thing within 5 stens of psychometric testing. All his studying had been of a technical nature, but when we discussed psychometrics and I pointed out some of the problems of devising a good test, he readily understood and appreciated the difficulties. He wanted to know more about the concepts of validity, reliability, and those other essentials, so dear to our hearts. It was rather like being asked for your views on the meaning of life at around midnight.

OK if you are a young student in the final year of a philosophy degree, not so if you are a consultant, keen not to miss the last plane back home and buy your wife a birthday card before the shops shut.

But there is a point here. We have all heard the stories of test material being used improperly, of managers devising their

own personality scales, and so on. But here was a manager who had no idea of the technical complexities of what he was trying to do. He was not trying to cheat anyone. He had no idea as to where to purchase test material and had never thought about the need for qualifications in that area. He was simply trying to recruit a better standard of worker for the maintenance department. Perhaps too much psychometric publicity is aimed at the HR market, which is swamped with it. But what about those small companies who have no HR function but who have to carry out the HR functions? How much ever reaches them?

LOOK BACK AT ANGER

Ever looked back at old test results? Unusual ones are worth retaining as a reminder of ... of what? Let me explain.

All HR managers will recognise the difficulty of trying to persuade a line manager to hold a vacancy open rather than fill it with someone who just might be OK. You have to put yourself in the position of a line manager who is often under pressure to fill a job with almost anyone, rather than leave it vacant for another week. That is when the HR manager can be a restraining influence - if he has some test results that prove the point.

I recall a department in the building materials industry being under pressure to fill the post of technical assistant. The job required knowledge of thermal insulation 'u' values, as they are known in the trade - and much else besides. A young lady applied for the post and impressed at the interview with her knowledge (she may have just uttered the words 'u' value for all I know). Anyway, it was enough for the manager to want to offer her the job, and a few days later I was asked to administer our test battery.

The sten scores on the Fourth Edition of 16PF were:

A6; B7; C7; E10; F8; G5; H10; I2; L9; M7; N1; O4; Q-8; Q-4; Q-1; Q-5

I hardly needed to wait to score the test, since her body language said it all. She was clearly infuriated at being asked to complete it. She threw her pencil down on the desk, folded her arms, and looked up at the ceiling in utter disbelief. She completed AH4 but after a few moments she obviously decided to guess the answers. She was going at such a speed I knew she was not thinking about the questions, but just marking them randomly. It was the only instance of 'sabotage' I have ever had. I should add that the manager was a rather weak individual - nice chap, but he had never had to manage difficult people. With her E10, H10, L9, N1, and Q-1, she would have had him for breakfast - 'u' values and all.

I talked him through the profile and convinced him that it was best to leave the job open, if taking on that young lady was the price he had to pay for filling the job. He had had a lucky escape, since her arrogance had not been apparent to him at interview. He was just besotted with her 'u' values.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

My two internal candidates, in contention for the post of works manager, had already been interviewed and had made a presentation to top management on how the undertaking was to be run in the future.

Now it was my turn to come in with the psychometrics.

I should say at the outset, that one candidate was preferred over the other, although I did not know this at the time of testing, and would have tried to ignore it if I had.

Wendy Lord reminded us recently that the 16PF deals with source traits rather than observable behaviour. A useful reminder, although my experience is that quite often, behaviour demonstrated during a test session is to some degree often apparent in the test results. It was clear to me that one candidate seemed more suitable than did the other. Candidate A was personable, responsive to my questions, and relaxed. From our brief chat, it was obvious that he had ideas about the job on offer. By contrast, Candidate B was dour. A rather

unprepossessing man, I thought. Would he be the right man to revitalise the plant? It seemed doubtful.

The test results seemed to confirm this. OK so far?

When I reported to the Personnel Director, he confirmed that the report held no real surprises - "Much as I expected". (They always say that, don't they? Bloody irritating.) However, although the interviews had gone well for Candidate A, the preferred candidate, he had performed abysmally at the presentation. He was not being assessed on presentation skills, but on content - how he saw the future of the plant, what he would do to introduce fresh thinking, change, and so on.

16PF5 scores were:

	A	B	C	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O	Q ₁	Q ₂	Q ₃	Q ₄
CAND A	5	5	8	9	7	8	9	2	4	3	4	2	8	4	9	5
CAND B	3	8	5	9	4	6	6	7	6	4	5	4	8	3	6	7

I was puzzled about his lack of ideas. After all, he had been at the plant for some years, and must have had some views. And if he had expressed them poorly, it would not have mattered that much because it was the content that mattered. What was his abstract thinking like? Would this offer any clues? His thinking scores were as follows:

Watson - Glaser CTA.

Candidate A ('Preferred' candidate) 69 (84th Percentile)
Candidate B (OK but not the favourite) 60 (37th Percentile)

The preferred candidate admitted to me later, that at the presentation he had failed to take account of his audience. He had made bullet points and talked around them, but his audience consisted mainly of accountants or similarly numerate people, who were looking for hard facts, and more concrete evidence as to how proposed changes would affect the bottom line.

It would have been reasonable to assume that his I-score would have led him to produce a logical, fact-driven type of presentation. Candidate B's more intuitive side might have resulted in a less concrete type of presentation.

What do readers think? Any fact-driven thoughts of your own? Does any reader have a view on the value of Factor B *vis-à-vis* the CTA score? What is your experience?

E-mail the Editor at

david@davromc.demon.co.uk

Mouse it now! We will try to include your comments in the next Newsletter.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

We apologise that the May meeting on this subject was cancelled due to the unavailability of our speaker. Since most of us hear managers espousing the need for innovation and creativity (and then killing it whilst displaying the managerial attitudes for which they were selected in the first place) it promised to be an interesting session. No matter, we hope to include an article on this subject in the next edition.

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PSYCHOMETRICS ON-LINE

Whether we like it or not, it's coming. For many, it is already here. No doubt the commercial and other pressures will, in the end, be too much for test publishers to resist.

We have had no debate on this subject at User Group meetings and the Editor has received no articles on the matter. Yet it is a very live and controversial issue. We would welcome your views on this topical matter - either for or against.

Mouse me!

Editor

JUST A THOUGHT

Gresham was an adviser to Queen Elizabeth 1 and in economics we have Gresham's Law - that bad money drives out good. Does bad psychology drive out good?

NOVEMBER MEETING

This will be a one-day workshop on the CPP (Cognitive Process Profile), a groundbreaking new technique from ASE. The CPP provides organisations with a method of assessing thinking style including the ability to contribute to strategic decision-making. Designed by neuropsychologists, the CPP embraces the latest innovations in psychology, cross cultural assessment, and computer technology.

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 3 1/2" disk together with the printed copy. This saves re-typing and minimises the risk of mistakes.

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