Understanding and Assessing Work Styles to Predict Job Success

Adam Bradshaw
Katy Melcher
DeGarmo Group
Understanding and Assessing Work Styles to Predict Job Success

A unique, customizable approach to understanding and applying personality assessment to selection has recently surfaced! Through matching underlying work styles of an applicant to the work styles required for an occupation, HR/Talent Acquisition professionals can create a selection pipeline that aligns talent with the detailed work requirements of an occupation. In turn, the process predicts an applicant’s job success by understanding how an individual will go about striving for task completion. Ultimately, this approach provides a more detailed understanding of personality beyond the basic traditional notions of personality assessment reporting Big Five personality characteristics alone.

What are the Big Five personality characteristics?

The Big Five personality characteristics reference a common taxonomy or descriptive model of superordinate (i.e., higher-level) personality characteristics designed to create a common ground for researching and understanding personality.

The Big Five includes Openness/Intelligence, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Emotional Stability), commonly abbreviated as “OCEAN”. This taxonomy has surfaced from decades of research on personality, a survey of the natural language, and extensive statistical analyses. The taxonomy has been replicated and validated across numerous assessments, languages, and cultures. For more detailed information consult work by L.R. Goldberg, R.R. McCrae, P.T. Costa, Jr., and O.P. John.¹

Ultimately, the Big Five has provided a foundation for personality research and assessment in work-related contexts. Research indicates that leveraging the Big Five in pre-employment assessment contexts aids in the prediction of positive organizational outcomes including: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, withdrawal behavior and actual turnover.² Recent work has used this compilation of research to provide a unique solution to
personality assessment through the *Degarmo Personality Inventory (DPI)* that focuses on facets of the Big Five to provide more detailed information that is specific to an occupation – any occupation.

**From Big Five to Customized Work Style Personality Assessment**

A detailed evaluation of underlying facets of the Big Five superordinate personality traits provides information regarding an individual’s personality that can be combined in different ways to evaluate how an individual will go about engaging in various work activities - referred to as *work styles*. Work styles provide a more detailed level of understanding personality. Some common work styles include: Achievement, Adaptability, Concern for Others, Dependability, Initiative, Self-Control and Stress Tolerance.

Work styles highlight how individuals go about doing their job – a person’s characteristic work style can include their general way of interacting with people, the effort they are likely to exert in various strivings, their approach to performing various tasks, adherence to rules, reactions to stress, approaches to solving problems, and generally how they behaviorally navigate through a given work day - and therefore provide the opportunity to predict occupation-specific job success in pre-employment assessment contexts.

It is important to note that understanding the work styles of an individual is only half of the puzzle – the other half involves evaluating the occupation to identify which work styles are critical for job success.

**Identifying Work Styles within an Occupation**

By evaluating the occupation via job analysis techniques critical work styles required for successful job performance and completion of day-to-day tasks and demands can be identified. In turn a profile of the essential work styles for an occupation can be created and grouped according to their level of importance.

Recall that an individual’s personality can be assessed via pre-employment assessments to create a profile of individual work styles. Thus, it can be determined whether or not the individual-level profile maps onto the occupation-specific profile of needed work styles. If there is sufficient overlap between the two profiles, there will likely be job success.

More specifically, the U.S. Department of Labor’s O*Net database contains data regarding job requirements – including work style demands - that provide current, valid, and reliable information for over 900 different occupations. This data can be leveraged to provide custom work style profiles for the 900+ different occupations.
Additionally, the *DeGarmo Personality Requirements Form (DPRF)* is a short, job-analytic survey that can be used to create custom profiles based on organization-specific occupation data with just a few points-and-clicks. The DPRF is a web-delivered survey of job requirements containing 90 items that is completed by subject matter experts (SMEs) within an organization to measure the relative importance of the primary personality dimensions, as well as underlying work styles.

What makes this so unique from other approaches to personality assessment?

*The assessment doesn’t just tell you about a person. It tells you about a person relative to the unique work style demands of a specific occupation.*

This detailed level of analysis provides a more specific understanding of the types of behaviors one can expect to see out of new-hires, while also identifying where there may be weaknesses. By evaluating personality specific to an occupation, a deeper understanding can be achieved of how an individual will go about performing day-to-day tasks, and whether or not an individual’s particular work styles are a proper match for those required by a specific occupation.

Furthermore, this information can be leveraged to evaluate which occupation an individual matches with best (i.e., occupation gating). Thus, if a company has multiple job openings at once they can profile individuals against multiple jobs using data gained from a single test administration.
Summary and Conclusions

Using data from personality assessments to identify Work Styles in pre-employment contexts provides the opportunity to create a more unique and customizable approach to highlight how an individual goes about performing daily work activities. In turn, individual-level work styles can be mapped against the work styles required by a particular occupation to identify the degree of overlap or match between the individual and the occupation to predict job success!

The focus of DeGarmo Group’s research, product development, and service delivery is the application of psychological science in human resource (HR) and employment assessment and selection. We provide our clients with web-based HR testing and training services that support their talent acquisition and employee development processes.

For more information about the DeGarmo Personality Inventory (DPI), or any information or data relating to this report, please contact DeGarmo Group using the information below.

Toll-Free within the U.S.
(866) 4-DEGARMO
(866) 433-4276

Outside of the U.S:
1+ 309-828-4344

Email:
sales@degarmogroup.com

Citations in this report are available upon request.