

Stepping Stones



Sharing Experiences of The Highlands Company

MARCH 2003, ISSUE 2

News from Highlands

By Lazar Emanuel

Conversion of THAB to the Web. As we advised you in our last Newsletter, Highlands has signed an agreement with Montreal Media, a Canadian company specializing in Web development, to enable individuals to complete the Battery on the Web. The conversion will take several months. The Web-based Battery will have many advantages over the CD, at the same time as it will ensure the integrity of the worksamples and of the scoring algorithms.

Since our first announcement of this project, several Affiliates have asked whether they will still have control of their clients' access to the test site and of the income from their tests.

We want to assure you that protection of our Affiliates is and will be our prime concern. The e-commerce system utilized on the test Website will be built around the assignment of an electronic key to each Affiliate. Each Affiliate will be able to pay in advance for a given number of "hits," in the same way as he/she pays now for CDs. (A "hit" is one access to the site by one test-taker.) The Affiliate will then assign a password to his/her client. The client will be able to access the test by entering the Affiliate's key and the assigned password.

Many of you have expressed to me criticism of one or another feature of the CD Battery: "The vocabulary worksample is

too easy." "The worksample on Idea Productivity can be improved." "Some of the worksamples should be dropped." "The questionnaire at the end of the Battery is too long." "The questionnaire is in the wrong place."

Now is the time to convey your ideas about the Battery to me. If you have any comment on the way in which the CD functions, please send it to me now. I may be able to incorporate your suggestions in our planning.

Fall Retreat. We are continuing with our plans for a fall retreat by Highlands Affiliates. Our initial plans call for a meeting in Las Vegas in late September or early October, over a three-day period beginning Friday morning and ending at midday on Sunday. The retreat would include a dinner on Friday evening and brunch on Sunday.

We intend to conduct several classes and programs about the Battery and its significance. Many of you have expressed an interest in leading or participating in a program. Let me know personally if you are interested in presenting a program or lecture as part of the Retreat program.

Work on Training Manuals & Training Programs. During some of my talks with you, you have expressed to me the need to revise some of our Affiliate training material. I've asked a number of long-term Affiliates of the Company to review the current Affiliate training manual and to make suggestions for revisions, changes or modifications.

Obviously, a training manual cannot be created by a committee or out of consensus. But it will be helpful to get the comments of as many Affiliates as possible. At the end of the process, my hope is to publish a training manual that will serve us all for a long time. Once the manual is completed, we will go on to develop new training materials for group workshops and other Highlands programs.

If you have any thoughts about this process, please share them with me. ■

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My Role As A Highlands Corporate Facilitator

By Gail Ostrishko

For several years, I have acted as the facilitator of One to One programs conducted regularly by Highlands at Cisco Systems and GlaxoSmithKline in the Research Triangle Park in Raleigh-Durham, NC. I have enjoyed my participation in these programs immensely. The industries and cultures of the two companies are very different, as are the procedures used in conducting the programs.

At Cisco, my associate Chris Bard supervises the administration of the CD Battery. All the participants come together in one room on the day before my program and complete the Battery as a group. Each participant then receives an individual report and feedback that same afternoon. I receive bar charts and profiles showing the scores for each individual. The next day, I conduct a day-long workshop with the participants.

At Glaxo, each participant completes the Battery individually within a few days of the program. An individual feedback is scheduled for each participant by Kim Mumola of the Highlands NY office. Again, each participant receives an individual report and I get the corresponding bar chart and profile.

Both companies offer the Highlands program once a month, and the classes are filled months in advance. Word of mouth is our best advertisement. Most attendees report hearing of the program through a colleague and plan to recommend the experience to others as well. The common thread between the two companies is their sincere and consistent commitment to providing employees with the Highlands experience as a tool for maximizing performance, fulfillment and productivity in the work environment while reducing stress.

Participants who attend the program tend to be in one of three places in their career development: Some are young in their careers and new to their organizations, and they are actively planning for growth within their field and within the organization. They are seeking information and experience. Some have been in their professions for some time and seek clarification and or understanding regarding career direction. Some are approaching the end of the work cycle, and may be facing restructuring within the organization or within their personal lives. These people often seek to honor their interests and share their wisdom with others. Wherever the individuals may be in the career cycle, the career timeline activity and the understanding of turning points and building stages

prove to be enlightening and enjoyable for all.

Components of the program include crafting career time lines, exploring personal style and problem solving styles, work types sort and development and delivery of a self-statement. The primary objectives are assimilation, integration and articulation of self knowledge, applied specifically to career development and work environment.

Individual profiles usually fall into one of three patterns:

- Natural abilities are well expressed in current work roles. These individuals are encouraged by confirmation of the match and realize why they enjoy their jobs.
- Natural abilities and individual work roles are weakly matched. These individuals get insight into why they do not enjoy some aspects of their jobs and why some tasks are more laborious than others. This tends to alarm those who do enjoy and feel adept at their jobs, and it is important to remind them that skills are just as effective as abilities — they simply take more energy.
- Natural abilities and work roles are mixed in good and weak matches. This helps to reveal strengths and challenges. These individuals are encouraged to tweak current roles to maximize abilities and delegate or re-assign tasks that are better suited to others.

Enthusiasm levels vary, but they remain high as a general rule. Evaluations are consistently positive, emphasizing that the experience as a whole is a valuable personal process. As I state in the class, this is not all new information...I believe participants already know most of what the ability battery reveals about them. The experience provides them with a structure for understanding and using that information currently and in the future. Most participants are excited about sharing this information with supervisors, colleagues and loved ones and often encourage them to take the ability battery and/or the class. The Highlands Company offers a discount to family members of corporate programs.

Participants at Cisco and Glaxo leave the Highlands experience with the language and the confidence to understand and describe themselves in a way that promotes personal and professional growth. They especially enjoy the interaction with one another, and they are encouraged to connect with at least one other participant in the group, and to network and stay in touch with that individual. I offer a complimentary follow-up coaching session to everyone, and offer myself as a personal resource, both now and in the future. I congratulate each individual for making a powerful and permanent investment in him/herself, and close the program by

asking everyone to write a letter to him/herself, thanking, reminding, congratulating or encouraging... The purpose is to elicit and confirm what he/she may need to hear 6 months later, when the letters are mailed and opened.

I have written a letter to myself at the end of each program I have facilitated. These letters are treasures on the day they arrive in the mail, and for many years thereafter. As my collection grows, it provides a living history of my Highlands experience, and my journey to honoring my calling.

It is hard to believe I have been collecting those letters for five years. And even harder to believe how my life has evolved over the course of that time. My workshop has changed a bit as well, and it continues to grow in popularity. Supporting and changing peoples' lives is a powerful profession, and one which carries with it great responsibility. And that is why I am sincere when I say it is my honor and my privilege to impact so many lives as a facilitator of the Highlands Program. ■

Gail Ostrishko is a Highlands Affiliate in Apex, NC. She has been leading the Highlands workshops at Cisco Systems and GlaxoSmithKlyne for many years.

Abilities, Shm-abilities! What Are You Talking About?

by Jill Richmond-Covey & Bob Covey

I'm sure you've noticed that there are tasks that are easy for you – so easy they feel like second nature to you – and others that are a struggle. My brother just seemed to know how to take things apart and put them back together again. I couldn't even imagine doing that, but when I was ten years old, I could sit and listen to the elderly lady down the street talk about herself for hours. I would put the pieces of her life together, see the whole and be fascinated by the journey she had taken.

Everyone has his/her own strengths. My doctor swiftly sees the connection between my seemingly unrelated symptoms and knows just the right remedy. I marvel at the passion and clarity my daughter, a reporter, has as she writes tightly organized and swiftly moving stories.

Most of us think of these simply as learned skills, honed by experience, fueled by our interests. The truth is, behind each of these activities there is an ability. My brother is wired so

he can see solid objects and space in three dimensions in his mind. I have a natural orientation to people and how they work. I also see the logical connections between ideas, I am drawn to concepts, and I am good at seeing how systems work. My doc moves right in with her diagnostic ability to put things together. She loves to solve problems and communicate the solutions. My daughter is fluent at organizing ideas into words, and generating ideas about how to tell the story.

All of these individual abilities can be measured. The Highlands Ability Battery uses worksamples - or mental tasks - designed to measure each of nineteen different abilities. Tight timing ensures that the worksample measures only the target ability. Scoring reveals the ease with which a person is able to do the worksample relative to the population on average. Over the past 75 years, a great deal of research and development has gone into the evolution of this instrument. We know that after age 15, a person's results will not change substantially despite subsequent education and experience. We know that when certain abilities are present they are so compelling that they demand to be used. Research has shown that some abilities are genetically linked. It has also shown several common ability patterns. These patterns are often associated with certain occupational groups or work roles, giving an indication of the type of work and type of work role that effectively uses these abilities.

When you take the battery, the greatest benefit comes when you understand the nature of each ability, how and where it is used, and what the advantages and disadvantages are of a specific score. In addition, we can teach you how your abilities relate to each other, creating a kind of abilities framework or profile. Your abilities framework dynamically interrelates with all of the major aspects of the self – body, personality, interests, attitudes and values, spirit – to create the whole you.

The more deeply you understand your ability profile, the more consciously you can make choices about studies, career and other life interests. You can evaluate potential college majors or career fields in terms of fit with your natural abilities. You can brainstorm ways to restructure your current job to maximize use of your ability profile. You can develop skills that further optimize use of your strong abilities. Nearing retirement, you can identify abilities you didn't utilize in your career and find new fulfillment in these important years. Clients refer to the Battery over and over, using it as a guide during life transitions, charting a career path, or working out on-the-job frustrations. ■

Jill Richmond-Covey & Bob Covey work in Niantic, CT as Affiliates of the Highlands Company

Notes from Academia— Figuring Out Your Talents

By Dr. Thomas N. Tavantzis

Over the past several years, a number of well-received books written by important, highly-regarded authorities have argued from different but overlapping perspectives for the importance of figuring out one's natural talent. Leading management guru Peter Drucker presents the case for a person's career development and productivity based on a model which seeks to identify roles in which one can excel and contribute most effectively. These roles are grounded in the discovery and development of natural strengths and talents. Additional ground-breaking research from Gallup's Buckingham and Coffman suggests that "great managers hire for talent and not skills or knowledge," because the latter can be trained while the former cannot. Buckingham et al. define talent in terms of an individual's hardwired problem-solving and thought processes and explore why talent is more important than experience, brainpower and willpower. It is equally important to consider the significant body of work on Emotional Intelligence, now referred to as Emotional Competence. The concept, popularized by psychological organizational consultant and author Daniel Goleman, documents the individual's contribution to teams and work settings through his/her higher level of interpersonal and intrapersonal competence. Contributors in this area are examining a person's hardwired emotional ability, as well as the possibility of building skills from these abilities to help create talents.

The Problem with Self Reports (Subjectivity vs. Objectivity)

The Highlands position on the importance of recognizing hard-wired talents is in line with all these authorities, but our path (or solution) to discovering information on hardwired strengths and talents takes us in a different direction from most other assessment tools – the issue always comes down to deciding which of the tools is the most thorough and effective. Typically, all of the other recommended assessment tools employ the use of self-report or multi-rater feedbacks. The vital question: do self-report and multi-rater feedbacks alone provide us with sufficient, reliable and objective data on our hard-wired abilities and talents?

Self-Reports and Multi-Rater Feedbacks

Often throughout our adult lives we are asked to evaluate ourselves through self-report. There are literally hundreds of self-report-type instruments being marketed and sold for an individual's evaluation. These are based on the questionnaire format. Some of the more popular instruments include MBTI, DiSC, Birkmen, Hermann Brain Dominance and Self-Directed

Report. Essentially, these self-reports require that we respond to questions based on our own memory of the associated behavior and our ability to quantify that behavior on a five-point scale or by simply answering "yes" or "no." These tools are worthwhile, but by themselves, they are insufficient because they really describe only one facet of an individual.

Moreover, for many people, self-reports will vary from time to time, influenced by factors related to mood and setting. The task of self-reporting is much more difficult than it appears, because we are asked to reflect on ourselves. We are being asked to become objective observers of ourselves. Thus, while the self-report is usually described as "objective," the response is truly subjective.

Self reports are problematic also because human beings have the ability to adapt, distort, defend and self-deceive in an effort to influence the answers to self-report questions. Many individuals will give the answers they think you want – the answers that will present them in the best light. Self-report is a circuitous and relatively unreliable measure of our talents, because it allows us, consciously and unconsciously, to draw upon our own self-perceptions, as well as upon how others perceive us, and upon the demands of society around us. Self-reports may tell us a lot about ourselves, but they are not the most reliable and valid source for gaining insight into our hardwired talents and abilities.

A similar weakness exists in multi-rater feedbacks surveys. Relatively recent arrivals on the personal development scene, these surveys have become almost standard for the majority of Fortune 500 companies. The multi-rater survey combines self-reported information with commentary from others who have observed us in different roles. The feedback produced is a cumulative report which combines the self-report and the observer results, with each answering the same questions. The more severe critics of this approach describe multi-rater feedbacks as a type of "reputation polling." Similar to the stand-alone self-report tool, this psychological assessment tool may be useful for development purposes, but will not get to your hardwired elements in an objective way.

Work Samples – the Gold Standard

By now you know where this is going: figuring out your hardwired talents and abilities is best done by the performance of work samples, not by self- or third-person-reports. In fact, the academic originators of the work in Emotional Intelligence, Peter Salovey and John Myer, argue that a work sample approach to assessment is the gold standard for the field. THAB is aimed at identifying the unique sets of talents that each of us has within him/herself. At some level we

may intuitively sense our own hardwiring, but my personal and professional experience leads me to the opinion that a work-sample assessment can help to validate and sharpen our perceptions of our abilities, as well as provide insight into how some of our abilities combine to create a unique individual. THAB has a simple but powerful goal: enabling us to learn about our strengths through objective work sample assessments and to use the results as a guide for seeking roles that allow us to excel – learning to use more of ourselves in work and everyday life. Think of hardwired abilities as those productive assets we automatically utilize in solving the recurring problems we face each day.

Conclusion

This is not an argument for utilizing only one way (self-report vs. multi-rater vs. work samples) of assessing and developing people. Rather, it's my recommendation that the right combination of tools be used to find the answers you need about the individual or the group of individuals you're working with. Whether you're a manager, coach, HR professional or CEO, work-sample assessments like THAB should always be at least one of the tools for assisting individuals in the discovery and development of their hardwired natural abilities and talents. ■

Tom Tavantzis is Director, Organizational Psychology & Leadership Program, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia, PA.

with their driving abilities and work roles; they come also with their ideas for specific careers. By looking at their Highlands scores and their MBTI and Strong before we meet for a conference, I get many ideas which sometimes suggest additional research on programs. Knowing the Myers Briggs type helps with my ideas.

For example – Susan, a 23 year old woman who was in her first teaching job and had been there 6 months realized this was not her true calling. She had very high classification and concept organization. As we went through other career possibilities, her best matches as suggested by the Strong were in the health field—possibly EMT or physicians' assistant.

By using all 3 assessments, I find I have much more information as to career possibilities than I would have otherwise. People seem to like the information on their interests and personality. I have devised a nice booklet to put everything in—so I increase their perception of the value of the whole experience. I presently charge \$500 for all three assessments and am in the process of raising my rates. I am encouraged by using all three assessments and I know I am offering a great benefit to young people—a benefit not available at many other places.

I would be pleased to discuss my program with other Highlands affiliates. ■

Anne Angerman has been a Highlands Affiliate for several years. She maintains her practice in Denver, CO.

Combining THAB With Other Assessments

By Anne Angerman

Lately, I have been targeting a group of people we call the Generation Xers—people ages 22-30. Most of these folks have bachelors degrees but are finding a hard reality as they get out into the world of work – they are unsure what they want to do with their careers. Many have been raised by Baby Boomer parents who showered them with many things and experiences. But many do not have a sense of purpose and have come to the workplace feeling entitled.

I am now offering a Career Sampler — offering THAB, the Strong and the Myers Briggs. I have them take all three on their own and then I sit down with them and go over the results of all 3 assessments. I find that it can be tricky to get all 3 completed in a timely fashion, as the Strong needs to be sent in and computer graded. This takes about 10 days.

The results are very encouraging. The people come not only

Young Woman Makes Life-Changing Discovery

By Jill Richmond-Covey

Meet Jessi, a vivacious and sunny 20 year old college student who faced a crisis in the middle of her sophomore year. She took 12 courses, and failed 5. Because she had enjoyed working with children in a community art program, she had been considering majoring in education and minoring in art. But she had a big problem: she failed her child development course two semesters in a row.

"I want to learn how to teach," she said. "I'm not at all interested in the theories or in who did what, when." Jessi enjoyed algebra, computer concepts, statistics, and music. She didn't succeed in English, poetry, or child development. The story was a repeat of high school where she did well in science (loved anatomy and physiology), mathematics, art and music. In general, she performed poorly in English and

social studies. Unfortunately, Jessi took her failures as evidence that that she wasn't smart and that she was lazy. She had always found it difficult to motivate herself; something else was always more fun than most school work. Because she thought of herself as "dumb and lazy," Jessi was afraid to take higher math and advanced sciences, despite the fact that she had done fine in the basic courses.

Jessi worked at the community arts organization, where she loved painting murals with the kids, just as she had always loved any art or craft project. She could spend hours on a project, decorating her room or watching "Trading Spaces" (a design and home-decorating program). She thought art was all about fun. That made it a hobby, not a potential career path.

With this picture, what to do? Continuing in college was an open question. Her mother was pushing for her to leave school, but Jessi was looking forward to two art classes, astronomy, and, even the challenge of political science, in spring semester. Still, she was feeling defeated and unsure of her future direction.

After listening to Jessi's academic history, I began to suspect that her ability profile might be "structural". When a person is structural, working with spatial relationships is more satisfying than working with abstract ideas and people relationships. It means the person can work mentally with solid objects in space (how they work) without actually needing to see all the dimensions involved. Examples of this work are: completing a surgical or dental procedure, fixing a mechanical problem in a car, wood carving, or flying an airliner. This would explain why three dimensional sciences, and art lit her up and were fun. Her ease with math suggested another related spatial relations ability: being able to understand complex hypothetical relationships in the mechanical world (the why of that world). These factors would also help explain why the courses in English literature and social studies, where words, ideas and people predominate, were boring to her.

After thinking about it, Jessi decided that the Battery might give her some insight into her natural abilities, help her sort out what educational program would make sense for her and what career areas to investigate.

It was a thrill to read Jessi's Highlands Battery report. Every area of success Jessi had described in her school experience jumped off the Battery bar chart. Her scores confirmed that she understands the how and why of mechanical systems, and needs to work in a way that satisfies her spatial relations talents. So, she needs to be thinking about 3-D projects/realities in her mind, working with her hands and producing

concrete results. For Jessi, the humanities and social studies are not naturally comfortable mental worlds. No wonder that poetry class was a trial!

Separate from her structural abilities, Jessi's scores indicated that she has lots of ideas flowing through her mind; that she takes in information through and remembers designs; that she is highly observant of things in her visual field, and she is aware of subtle nuances across all of her sensory channels. The results of the Battery also helped Jessi to make better use of newly discovered learning abilities. Now, new learning could proceed more smoothly.

Jessi was stunned and relieved by what her scores were telling her. "So that's why I hated English and loved anatomy and physiology," she said. It took some hashing and rehashing to take in the meaning and implications of her scores. "I'm not stupid or lazy. My brain is wired to think in three dimensions and understand why the mechanical universe operates the way it does. But words and abstract ideas don't grab me." The fact that she can take her structural and artistic abilities as seriously as other people take their abstract problem-solving abilities floored Jessi. She had defined intelligence and success entirely in terms of abstract thinking. The implication that she could succeed in a creative artistic field was difficult for her to grasp. It required a major change in worldview and self-concept.

A year later, Jessi is loving her art classes and developing many skills. Her concept of herself has shifted from "I'm dumb and lazy," to "I'm smart in my structural way and as I apply myself, apprenticing to different art modalities, I can become a successful artist." Art is no longer a cute hobby. It's a whole world of marvelous work. She has found her home.

Jessi Responds

January 4, 2003

Dear Jill,

Thank you very much!!!! I feel that you clearly identified the things that I was dealing with in my life prior to and following the Highlands tests. I let my Mom read it too. We think that it's great. I got my grades back for this semester and I am soooooo excited! In Art history, my most difficult class of the semester, I finished with a B-!!!! In 3-D design I got an A-, in 2-D design I got an A, and in my Drawing I class I got a B. Pretty good huh? This is the best that I've ever done! I feel like I've found my niche. I have the confidence that I was lacking previously. I feel like since I understand myself and my abilities I can make further progress by using techniques that are unique to my learning style, instead of measuring myself against others who are very different than me. Although taking the Highlands test was very helpful, if I didn't have someone like you, Jill, to help me understand it and figure ways to incorporate what I learned into my school and

life, I wouldn't have grown as much as I did. I understand that for me, reading class material won't make me absorb the information. I need to make cards, put them in categories, and actually see and touch the material in front of me in a way that I, personally, can remember. I now understand that just because things are not naturally easy for me does not mean that I can't do them, nor that I should stay away from those kinds of subjects... I understand now that my success is not a gift, it is something that I work for. If I understand myself, I can succeed in many things whether they are presented in a way that I am comfortable with, or in a way that is difficult. Thank you for helping me understand that!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

LOVE, JESSI ■

The Power of Self-Knowledge

By Deirdre Dufour

Because I offer my services as a personal career coach (www.vip-coaching.com) my clients come to me looking for help with finding satisfaction in their careers. Many of them have "fallen" into certain industries or lines of work simply because this was what was available to them upon college graduation.

After they experience some level of success and work for 5-15 years, a spark within them awakens and they start to need more satisfaction from their work. At this point, they call me to help them uncover their true abilities and passions. I invariably recommend starting their personal search for self-knowledge with THAB. Let me share with you how I have passed along the power of THAB to two of my recent clients.

Deborah T. started her educational consulting firm several years ago. Business was going well for her but her level of satisfaction with the work was not. She came to me for help. Using the THAB, we were able to see clearly why Deborah had been feeling less enthusiastic about her work. Up until this point Deborah's day-to-day work was mainly hands-on, working directly with individual students and teachers in a classroom setting. Deborah's ability battery results showed a very high score in vocabulary as well as a long time frame orientation. She needed to be working at a higher level and developing longer term strategies! Armed with this new knowledge, Deborah was able to re-structure her services so that now she designs strategic long range programs with the principals and superintendents of educational institutions rather than engaging in on-the-spot assignments with the students and teachers. Needless to say, she is not only much happier with her work, but now that she is optimizing her-natural abilities, her business is booming!

The second client I helped recently is Anne B. When Anne called me seven months ago she had no idea where she was going with her career and her outlook was bleak. She was a software developer with a database company. She told me she felt as though "she had woken up and found herself somewhere she didn't want to be". She was very unhappy with her job and not sure if it was the environment she was in or that the job itself was not fulfilling.

I immediately suggested that Anne take THAB. She agreed readily. From her results it was clear that she needed work that was much more research-based. She was a strong specialist and introvert — yet her database programming work up to this point had been very generalized.

Combining Anne's THAB results with an investigation into her feelings on the other seven career decision factors (skills, interests, personal style, family, values, vision & goals, and career development cycle) gave us a whole new vision for Anne's future. Anne had a long standing personal interest in biology that she had not as yet applied to a career. When her THAB results coincided so nicely with a research career, Anne was thrilled. She re-embraced her natural interests and made a major career shift away from the software industry into bio-informatics.

Given her experience and renewed passion, she found a position right away. She has since reported back to me that she is now a much happier person. She told me that using the THAB was "quite a step in what I needed to know about myself." She went on to say "if it weren't for your recommendation that I take the THAB, I don't think I would have the great job that I have today. This job fits with my values and gives me the feeling that my work is important. I am extremely happy."

I am very grateful to have shared in my client's successes using THAB. I am honored to have the ability to offer this wonderful gift of self-knowledge to all of my clients! ■

Deirdre Dufour is a Highlands Affiliate with offices in Cambridge, MA.

S T E P P I N G S T O N E S

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SteppingStones is an independent newsletter, published by The Highlands Company at:
1328 Boston Post Road,
Larchmont, New York, 10538.

Editorial Questions: 914-834-0055.
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How Well Do You Know Yourself – Are THAB Results Predictable?

[More Notes from Saint Joseph's University Organizational Psychology and Leadership Program]

By Dr. Thomas N. Tavantzis (with Peter P. Marabella)

Exhortations to 'Know Thyself' emanate from a long line of distinguished thinkers – from the ancient Hellenic philosopher, Socrates, to modern day management guru Peter Drucker. As humans, we have been encouraged to know ourselves, but we've always been plagued by the question: how well do we in fact know ourselves and our hard wired nature? Social and psychological research over the past 50 years has documented the fallibility of our insights. Anyone who has delivered 100+ THAB feedbacks has heard more than one client comment, "This wasn't new information; it only validated what I already knew." Usually my response to this is to say, "Good, and that is how it should be" (But in my mind lingers the question; do they really know how they are hard-wired or is this more about cognitive labeling of an intuitive, vague sense of themselves?) What follows describes a small pilot survey that attempted to look at a small part of these global questions.

A graduate student of mine, Peter Marabella, was himself interested in looking at the related question of how well people can predict their own abilities. To look at this question, a pilot study was developed to examine the hypothesis of how easy or difficult it is to predict one's own abilities. And, if difficult, how much harder is it to understand how those abilities apply to one's career development.

The Participants

The pilot was conducted with graduate students from Saint Joseph's University's Training and Organizational Development Program, as well as some undergraduate students pursuing degrees in various other disciplines. The group of graduate students was identical to the group used by me in an informal survey conducted for the last THC newsletter. The average age of students in the class is 34 years and the group has an average of seven years of experience in a T&D or Human Resources role in the workplace.

Approximately one half of the students are currently in a management level position and three quarters are at least halfway through the part-time, evening Master's program. The under-

graduates – ranging in age from 21 to 50+ – were enrolled in a separate Personal and Career Development class.

After eliminating incomplete surveys, we ended up with a small, but intriguing, sample of 10 students. While we are aware that the sample size will need to grow beyond this small pilot study, we couldn't help but begin to draw some tentative conclusions.

The Survey

The survey asked participants to predict their scores on each of the THAB elements and sought to compare their predictions with actual, post-test scores. Each element was described as generically as possible with a one or two sentence description. Some included examples to further describe how you might go about predicting your score. While the research is still in a formative stage, the early results provide some interesting observations on how difficult it is for people to accurately predict these skills and abilities, as well as the importance of THAB as a crucial part of career development.

Participants received credit for a correct prediction if they were able to come within 5% of either side of the scale. Some participants chose to predict their scores as "low," "medium," or "high," rather than as a numbered percentage. These predictions were credited as correct only when they matched the actual score range. With the percentage of correct predictions ranging from a low of 14% to a high of 48%, the average of correct predictions was only 26.25%. Excluded in scoring were the highest and lowest results for statistical purposes.

The Results

Not surprisingly, students were able to predict some elements of the battery much better than others. However, most of the key elements for future career development and success appear to be difficult, if not impossible to predict. Even when students came close to predicting certain scores, follow-up questions proved that they had no real understanding of how or why these areas would be important to their future career choices.

Predicting Personal Style

In general, students did an adequate job of predicting the self-assessment (Generalist/Specialist, Introvert/Extrovert) portion of the test. Most were on the mark with regard to where they would fall in terms of being a generalist or specialist and whether or not they had a preference for introversion or extroversion. The surprise for this area came when

students found out exactly how high their preferences were for one or the other.

Time Frame proved difficult for them to predict, but those who came close were able to tie job-related activities to this score. During some post-test and survey discussion, participants with high time frame and a definite work-related requirement for this element of personal style were better able to predict this score.

Predicting Drivers

Classification and Concept Organization proved to be difficult to predict, as well. Less than 10% of participants were able to predict at least one of these scores. The biggest surprise here was with classification, as some really felt that they should have done better at seeing relationships between unrelated events, situations or information.

In Idea Productivity, only 12.5% gave a correct prediction. Post-test and survey discussion indicated that those that scored lower were proud not to be lumped in with their higher-scoring brethren, who were perceived to have less focus on quality ideas as described in the definition of this driving ability.

The results on Spatial Relations Theory and Visualization indicate that it may be easier to predict visualization. This may be related to the fact that the survey's description of visualization included a more detailed example of how to predict this element. 37.5% went on to predict their Visualization score after reading this example, while only 25% correctly predicted their Theory score.

Predicting Specialized Abilities

37.5% were also able to reasonably predict Design Memory and/or Observation, but for those who did not correctly predict these specialized abilities, the discrepancy between their predictions and actual scores was fairly significant. One student predicted his scores as in the 15th and 20th percentiles for Design and Observation, respectively, and he actually scored a very high 85 and 99. The revelation came when he realized that he is extremely aware of what goes on around him and has always been affected by his surroundings, but thought he just needed to concentrate more in order to get things done.

Verbal, Tonal, Rhythm and Pitch Discrimination yielded some mixed results and the data and post-survey discussion seemed to indicate that those having an existing outlet for one or another of these specialized abilities tended to score

higher and to be more adept at predicting the actual score. For example, one participant plays the cello. While she was surprised that her pitch score wasn't higher, she had no trouble predicting her high scores for Tonal and Rhythm and credits this prediction with her ability to play pieces she has heard before without too much effort.

25% were able to correctly predict Number Memory, but there does not seem to be a correlation here with work-related tasks. Only one student, a math tutor, was able to point to specific examples that helped him to predict this score. Another student, who has worked in banking and finance, predicted she would score much higher than her actual score of 25.

About 25% were able to predict Visual Speed and/or Accuracy, but again the others appeared shocked at their actual scores. Again, those with job-related requirements in these areas were certain that they had predicted correctly. In the area of vocabulary, only 12.5% predicted their scores correctly. This area continues to prove very unpredictable and causes tremendous angst for those who score lower.

Conclusions and After Thoughts

Again, while we are aware of the small sample in this pilot survey and plan to refine our methodology and increase the sample size, we cannot help but draw some tentative conclusions. Apparently, an assessment of one's own hard-wired abilities is a very complex task – and something we don't do very well. In contrast, we do better at knowing our Personal Styles. However, in the critical areas of Drivers, e.g. problem-solving/decision-making as well as with generating ideas, our subjects were woefully inaccurate in their self-appraisal.

Following Drucker's emphasis on knowing oneself and increasing productivity, an obvious implication for practical application to the world of personal development (business and career management) is the potential gain from purposefully aligning people with their driving abilities and work roles.

Perhaps, the next client feedback session which yields the statement, "this confirms what I think about myself," should alert us to the fact that the subject may have gotten so much THAB information that it is difficult to process it all and easier to fall back on the old, familiar and more confirmatory themes. ■

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