

Niche Update

Special points of interest:

- Effect of Warnings on Faking incidence
- Niche Premises in Auckland
- Motivation - is it as simple as a carrot and stick?
- Brief History of Personality Assessment

Spring is finally here !!!

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome." ~Anne Bradstreet



A Brief History of Personality Assessments



The first objective personality inventory developed was the Woodworth Personal Data Sheet (WPDS) in 1917 in response to a need in World War I to screen military recruits to ensure they were emotionally stable enough to cope with the terrible conditions of war. During the war many soldiers experienced long-lasting traumatic symptoms termed "shell shock" which made them unfit for duty. The military decided to commission a test that could be used to identify potential soldiers who would be emotionally unstable and therefore unfit for active duty in the US army (Gibby & Zickar, 2008).

Unfortunately the finished test was developed too late to assist in the recruitment for the war effort, however the developer saw an opportunity to adapt and market the test to other psychologists in industrial research and work settings. The test focused on the negative end of the emotional adjustment continuum measuring maladjustment, however not surprisingly this focus hindered efforts to find validity for these personality traits in the workplace. Never the less, managers found the tool useful to identify undesirable or unstable workers.

Prior to 1950, nearly all the personality inventories which followed the WPDS also focused on negative or maladjusted aspects of personality and most were one-dimensional tests measuring only this. The first multi-dimensional test of personality going beyond maladjustment was the Bernreuter Personality Inventory (1931), followed closely by the Humm-Wadsworth Temperament Scale (HWTS, 1934) which was one of the first extensively used in employment settings.

The HWTS was constructed after a disgruntled employee in a company killed his supervisor, as a way to screen out violent employees. This was a period of rapid industrialisation and in the post war era there were high levels of unionisation and fears of strikes. Management using the HWTS realised that the scale might also be useful to screen out applicants with unionisation sympathies—deemed "trouble-makers" and this unethical practice seems to have occurred (Zickar, 2001).



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Faking Assessments & Warnings About Faking



Faking is the deliberate attempt by a candidate to respond to a personality inventory in a way that makes them look good or better through their responding than an individual is in reality. Faking is a concern for psychologists and people using personality assessments to assist in making selection decisions as it erodes the predicative validity of the assessment tool and results, making them less useful (Tett & Christiansen, 2007). Rosse, Stechler, Miller, & Levin (1998) also found faking can have a significant impact on who is employed in a selection setting which means the real life selection outcomes can change when people fake.

One of the techniques that Niche uses and researchers recommend to reduce the amount of applicant faking on personality assessments is the use of warnings about faking. The

type of warning also is important to reduce faking as Dwight & Donovan (2003) showed in their study. These researchers gave subjects three types of warnings about faking that they compared to an unwarned control group:

1. Warning that a faked profile could be identified
2. Warning that there were consequences if a faked profile was identified
3. Warning both that a faked profile could be identified and that there were consequences of faking

What they found was that 21.5% of the unwarned group were most likely engaging in faking, yet less than 10% of warned participants in any of the warned group were identified to be engaging in faking. They also found the best and most effective warnings were (3) where both the identification and consequences of faking were outlined to individuals.

In line with this research Niche Consulting has been warning candidates about the identification and consequences of faking for years. Specifically we:

- ◆ Tell them over the phone about the faking scales in personality inventories and that they will need to resit the CPI if the faking scale is too elevated, which is a potential negative consequence for them
- ◆ They also read and sign a consent form outlining that there are fake scales that pick up faking and they will need to resit if this scale is too elevated
- ◆ They also agree and sign that they have agreed to answer honestly.

This approach seems to have impacted on the incidence of faking with only 6.5% of people faking their CPI434 profile out of all people that we have tested over the last 5 years.

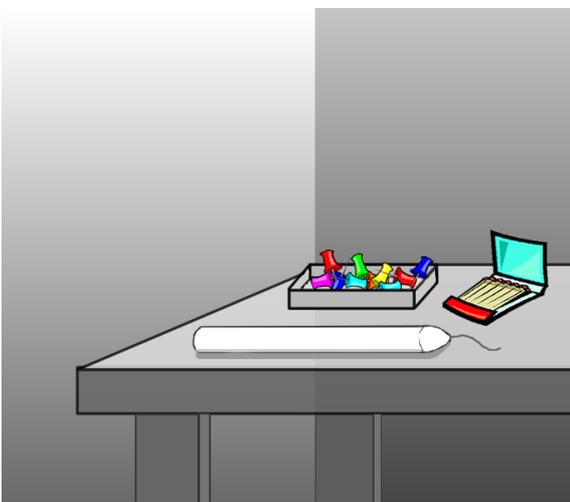


Niche Premises — 29 Nugent Street

Those of you in Auckland may have noticed a for sale sign outside our building and more recently a sold sign. The building has been sold to the owner of our neighbours (Ideal Electrical). This coincided with our lease being up for renewal, and fortunately the new owner wants us to stay on and we have signed another lease, so will remain at 29 Nugent Street for at least another couple of years.

Motivating People - Do Carrots and Sticks Work?

Every leadership development course we have ever facilitated on the topic of employee motivation has always had several managers on it who are adamant that the key to motivating people is paying them more money or bonuses for achieving certain things. No matter how much evidence is presented on intrinsic motivators or hygiene factors it does not seem easy to change some people's ideas on the matter. So let us look at some interesting research summarised by Daniel Pink (2009) in his book called "Drive—The surprising truth about what motivates us". He puts a compelling story together on the research and why monetary incentives can in many cases actually demotivate people rather than motivate. While carrots and sticks can work for highly routine or algorithmic tasks, they seem to interfere with tasks that are novel, creative or heuristic.



A problem solving experiment designed by Karl Duncker, was repeated by Sam Glucksberg with monetary incentives. The picture to the left shows the scenario and the subjects were given matches, tacks and a candle and told to attach the candle to the wall so that the wax does not drip on the table. The key to solving the problem is overcoming "functional fixedness" and seeing the tack box not just as a container but as a potential platform for the candle. Two groups were timed on how fast they solved the problem, one was offered a monetary incentive for being the quickest, the other were told they were being timed to establish norms for how long people typical took to solve the problem. The incentivised group took nearly 3.5 minutes longer

to solve the puzzle than the no incentive group. The incentive instead of making their thinking quicker and clearer actually clouded thinking and dulled creativity.

Daniel Pink believes there are seven serious flaws to a carrot and stick approach as they can:

1. Extinguish intrinsic motivation
2. Diminish performance
3. Crush creativity
4. Crowd out good behaviour
5. Encourage cheating, unethical behaviour and taking short cuts
6. Become addictive
7. Foster short-term thinking



While he does suggest you pay enough to take the subject of money off the table, researchers have clearly shown extrinsic motivators that are framed in a "if you do X then you will get Y" are most often de-motivating effect performance on creative, right brain tasks. An example of this is shown in a series of experiments from four economists, who conducted experiments that measured motor skills, creativity and concentration. They broke the subjects into 3 groups based on the size of incentive 1) small [one days pay], 2) medium [2 weeks pay] and 3) large [5 months pay] as monetary incentives. They found the following "In eight of the nine tasks we examined across the three experiments, higher incentives led to *worse* performance". Pink puts forward a convincing case that motivation is more complex than the old carrot and stick model. There is a cute video clip on the web illustrating this research - go to: <http://www.wimp.com/surprisingmotivation/>

A Brief History of Personality Assessments — Continued....

Although the HWTS was popular with managers it had poor validity data for predicting any criteria other than “employee desirability” and involuntary turnover, which is not surprising given its focus mainly on seven traits that were prevalent in psychopathology literature at the time. Even though there was considerable concern over this period about the validity of these early tests their use in industry increased and more tests were developed.

The test makers of the HWTS were strong marketers who sold the test both to industry for personnel selection of adjusted employees and worked hard to have the test used to screen out neurotic and psychotic soldiers in World War II. Personality testing changed between the 1940s and 1950s when some thorough personality inventories were developed which expanded the number of personality traits measured. In 1943 the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was developed to make the process of clinical diagnosis more standardised and efficient. In 1949, Cattell developed the Sixteen Personality Factor (16PF) and others followed the trend to measure more than just maladjustment, although measures of maladjustment were not dropped out of these inventories.



In the 1950s Gough publishes the first multivariate inventory of normal personality, called the California Psychological Inventory which was based in part on parts of the MMPI. Where the CPI was ground breaking is in that it was designed to predict outcomes rather than measure traits. The CPI was later revised and modernised but still remains one of the most robust and long standing personality inventories, with many validity studies and longitudinal studies to its credit.

Guion & Gottier (1965) reviewed validity studies across many different personality inventories between 1952 and 1963 and concluded that “there is not generalizable evidence that personality measures can be recommended as good or practical tools for employee selection”. This finding that personality was not a good predictor of job performance was a setback to the use of personality assessments for selection for over 2 decades.

It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s when other researchers such as Barrick and Mount (1991) using meta-analysis techniques found that there were significant relationships between some of the Big Five personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) and various job performance criteria. Around this time other researchers produced tools such as the HPI, NEO-PIR and the OPQ. Many of the test publishers at the time modified to get their tools to fit the big five taxonomy to be in line with the emerging research of the time.



More recently researchers have questioned the usefulness of big five models of personality to be able to accurately predict individual’s behaviours. Rothstein & Goffin (1996) found from the multiple studies published “all have shown that narrow traits are either better predictors of job performance than broad dimensions of personality and/or add significant incremental validity over broad dimension”. So finally the academics have worked out what practitioners have known when using the tools, while the big 5 model of personality may be useful for researchers to do things like combining many studies into a meta analyses, personality inventories like the CPI which cover more narrow traits are much more useful than the big 5 when trying to predict people’s behaviour and likely job performance from personality inventories.