

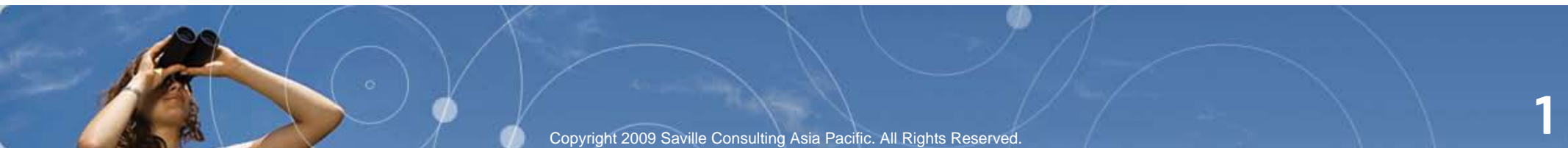
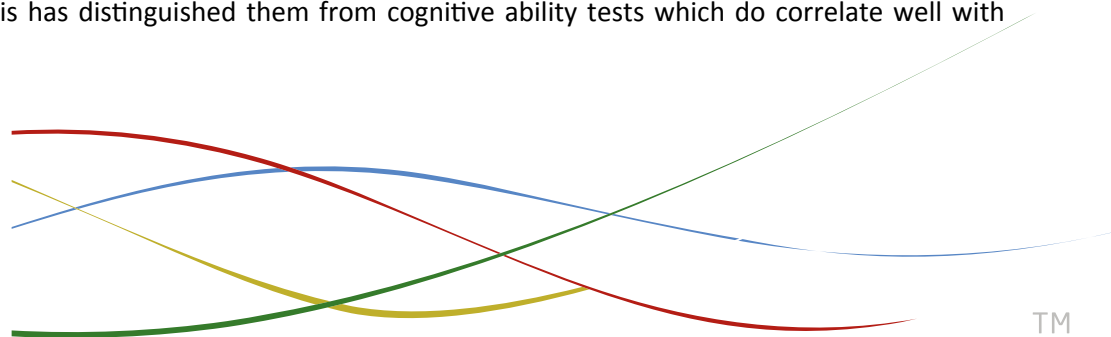
Introduction

Personality and its measurement is a complex and sometimes controversial topic. And yet most managers would agree that personality plays a significant role in the performance of people at work. Different jobs require different capabilities and behavioural style is a significant part of this mix. Personality questionnaires have come a long way since the early 90's when it was shown that instruments with high scale reliability and good content could predict job competencies quite well using the Big 5 of personality framework. Since then, it has been recognised that job performance is multidimensional and that different personality variants may be more relevant in the prediction of different performance criteria. Thus, narrower traits improve the prediction of performance. When Conscientiousness from the Big 5 was broken down into the facets of Achievement, Order, Conscientiousness and Dependability, significant incremental validity was found over global measures of Conscientiousness. Personality and jobs are complex. Questionnaires with a small number of scales are not up to the task. 11 out of 11 studies show that narrow measures like facets of behaviour used by Wave out-predict broad measures.

Similarly, the results of many questionnaires still read like horoscopes: 'You are someone who does not like to be told they are wrong'. It sounds very accurate at a personal level, until you realise no one likes to be told they are wrong!

Until now personality questionnaires have found respectability in their measurement of specific behavioural competencies rather than ratings of overall job performance. This has distinguished them from cognitive ability tests which do correlate well with overall performance.

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Seminar Summary

October 2009

Wave Questionnaires

In 2006, further advances were made with the development of Wave, a multi-dimensional behavioural style questionnaire⁴. Wave measures not just behavioural preferences, but talent and motive as well.. Unlike its predecessors, all 4000 trial items were independently validated against external ratings of job criteria. This was carried out on a large international sample, before the questionnaire was released⁵. The items are up-to-date reflecting current management practice and scales that work better. Prediction equations were cross-validated against a hold-out sample before claiming them as valid. This makes Wave robust against chance relationships which can be achieved with less rigorous techniques, common in other studies. It has ensured that Wave has exceptional validity on a scale by scale basis. Not only does Wave correlate better with competencies as a result of this approach, but it also correlates strongly with overall job performance criteria, putting it on a par with cognitive ability testing⁶.

Wave is designed to predict overall performance from a combination of 36 dimensions which factor to 12 sections and 4 clusters⁷. These map broadly to the Big 5 of personality, and the Great 8 Competencies⁸ and expand on both.

The Wave 4 Cluster Model (**Thought**, **Influence**, **Adapatability** and **Delivery**) has been shown to offer a better account of leadership functions than the Great 8 noted above.⁹ Using the classic People vs Task classification, Influencing and Adapting clusters align to People and Thinking and Delivery clusters align to Task. These offer a better understanding of Transformational and Transactional leadership.

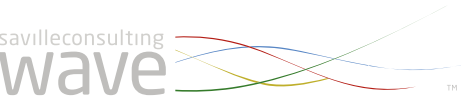
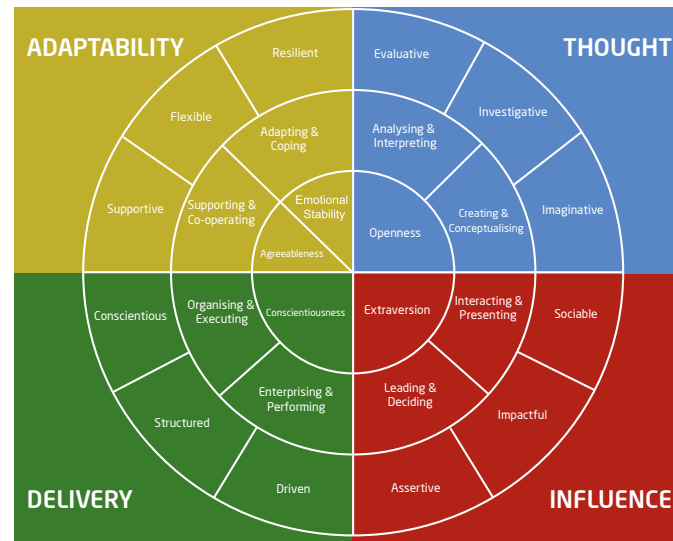
With this background of greater validity, Saville Consulting set out to test 16 outstanding achievers from the world of business, science, sport and the arts, in order to learn more about the contribution of personality to elite performance. Each participant completed Wave (or the shorter version Focus) as well as a performance drivers questionnaire developed especially for sport and the performing arts.

A number of Wave reports were used, including:

- The Styles (psychometric) profile, 4 clusters, 12 sections, 36 scales and 108 facets.
- The Competency Potential Profile with 36 generic competencies.
- The Performance Enhancers and Performance Inhibitors Report.
- The Entrepreneurial Report.

This was a unique chance to develop detailed case studies around a small number of famous elite performers. The following trends and key points emerged:

The Wave Wheel

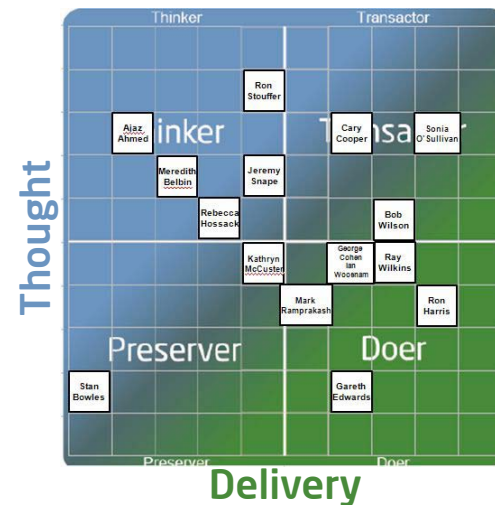
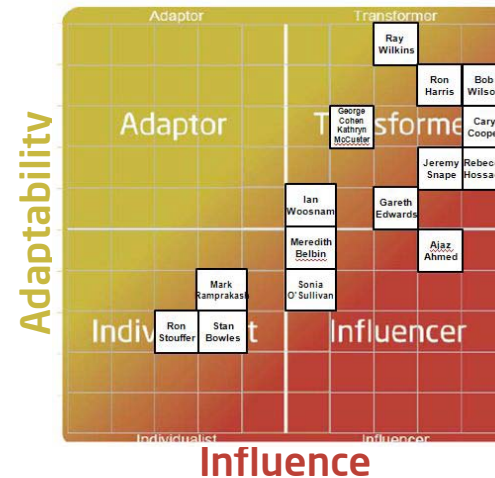


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Seminar Summary

Key Points

- Although there is no single 'X' factor – there are different approaches to successful leadership in different contexts - there are commonalities.
- The situation as well as the personality plays a role, not either or.
- Leaders in this group have a Transformational People style (High Influence and High Adaptability) combining powerful social skills and networking ability.
- The Task area is more variable, but it is easy to see that it has something to do with the role. Thus, people like Ajaz Ahmed, the creative founder of Freeserve is a 'Thinker'. So is the Nobel Peace Prize winning climate change scientist, Ron Stouffer and the social scientist Meredith Belbin. Many sporting personalities on the other hand are 'Doers', people who have to get on with the job at hand.
- There is an emphasis on empowering and developing people as well as understanding their strengths and limitations. Empowering (inspiring, motivating and encouraging) has a more 'assertive' and cognitive quality - it is not necessarily the same as 'caring'.
- Elite performers have 'savvy', practical intelligence, if not educational qualifications. They can do poorly at school.



- Quick thinking is important.
- A strong technical understanding of their area is important. They have expertise and job knowledge – Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hour rule¹⁰.
- There is often an ability to hold two conflicting ideas at the same time.
- Action orientation and a desire to win are important.
- They tend to be good at channelling their emotions.
- Trial and error approaches are popular with them.
- They have less interest in coordinating people – it is more about social and inspirational aspects of leadership.
- Passion, self-motivation and focus are key components. They tend to work very hard at their specialism.
- They have strong self-belief if not social confidence.
- They tend to be multi-talented.
- They are likely to have been a leader and shown talent from a early age.

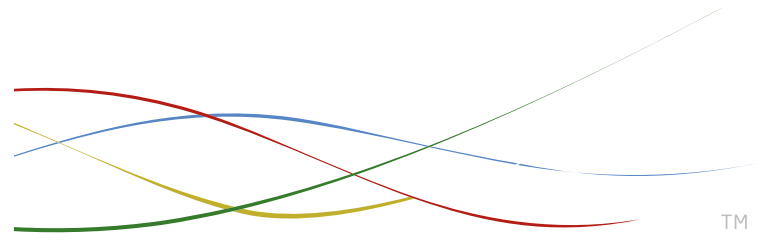


Conclusion

For a full account of the careers and Wave profiles of the people discussed at the seminar, or for any other information, please contact us for a copy of 'Talent: Psychologists Personality Test Elite People'.

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Endnotes & References

¹Barrick MR & Mount MK (1991) The Big Five personality dimensions and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 44, 1-25

²Nicole M Dudley, Karin A Orvis, Justin E Lebiecki & Jose M Cortina (2006).

³Rothstein & Goffin.

⁴Saville P, MacIver R & Kurz, R (2009) Handbook to Saville Consulting Wave[®] Professional Styles.

⁵MacIver, Saville, Kurz et al (2006) The Validation Centric Development of the Professional Styles Questionnaires. Presented at the BPS Occupational Psychology Conference, Glasgow UK.

⁶MacIver, Saville, Kurz et al (2006) Making Waves: Saville Consulting Wave Styles Questionnaires. *Selection and Development review*, 22(2), 17-23.

⁷Kurz R, Saville P, MacIver R et al (in press) The structure of work effectiveness as measured by the Saville Consulting Wave[®] Performance 360 B-A-G Model of Behaviour, Ability and Global Performance.

⁸Bartram D, Kurz R, & Baron H (2003) The Great Eight Competencies Paper presented at SIOP, Orlando.

⁹Kurz R (2005) Convivence, of Personality, Motivation, Interest & Ability Theories in Competency. Paper presented at EAWOP Congress Istanbul.

¹⁰Author of the best-selling *The Tipping Point* observes the greatest athletes, entrepreneurs, musicians and scientists emerge only after spending at least three hours a day for a decade mastering their chosen field.

