

Reply to Colin Selby, SDR Volume 23, No.3, 2007

There is nothing new under the sun but there are lots of old things we don't know.

[Ambrose Bierce](#) *US author & satirist (1842 - 1914)*

Colin Selby takes me to task about the originality, the rationale and the scope of PROFILE:**MATCH**[®] (see SDR Volume 23, No.3, 2007).

Originality

Within the article I explicitly recognised that other business psychologists will also have been involved in presenting personality assessment data within the competency frameworks of their clients. In fact I would argue that this is inevitable, since the vast majority of assessments for staff selection start off in the competency domain (“*we need someone to do this*”), and end up in the competency domain (“*this personality profile suggests that this person would be good at it*”), with psychometric personality assessment sandwiched somewhere in between.

However rigorous, reliable, or valid personality assessment may be, results have somehow to be conveyed to interview panels and decision makers, potentially distorting the subtlety and focus of the psychometrics. The knowledge gap between the experienced assessment expert and the decision maker is, in most cases, unbridgeable without expressing findings in terms of competency. PROFILE:**MATCH**[®] addresses this issue head on by providing a client interface that is *entirely* in the competency domain.

Given the above, the question of originality hinges on the way that the problem is conceived and the nature of the solution devised. Quite obviously there are many aspects of PROFILE:**MATCH**[®] that build on past practices but I suggest that the following combination is quite unique:

1. Menu driven online system
2. Client interface entirely in the competency domain
3. Assessment tailored to the competencies selected
4. Algorithms that compute T score based competency potential ratings
5. Job Analysis Survey (JAS) assistance with competency selection

Rationale

The view that only five personality factors can be independently measured is supported by meta-analysis of personality data from a wide range of self-report questionnaires (McCrae and Costa, 1987; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993) and also by analyses based on observer ratings (Thurstone, 1934; Tupes and Christal, 1961; Norman, 1963). Our position is that factors of the FFM model are, in effect, the primary colours of personality (Trickey and Hogan, 1998; Bartram

and Brown, 2005), and as such may be recombined in various ways to recover the complexity of personality that we encounter in our daily lives. This 'mixing of the primary colours of personality' is the key idea driving competency metrics and PROFILE:**MATCH**[®].

If Colin's point is that competency involves more than the FFM (e.g. values, attitudes and preferences as well as knowledge, skills and abilities), then I completely agree, and this point is made clearly in every PROFILE:**MATCH**[®] report.

Scope

Finally, I also agree with Colin's points about scope and the user benefits of an underpinning taxonomic structure for competencies. My preference is for Dave Bartram's 'Great Eight'. At the core of the 24 competencies currently in the PROFILE:**MATCH**[®] system are 10 that are considered generic because of their ubiquitous inclusion in existing frameworks. Guidance enabling users to make appropriate selections from this pragmatic collection of competencies is available from the in-built Job Analysis Survey which is free to registered users. Competencies are also categorised under five headings: Achieving, Change facilitation, Engaging and Motivating, Evaluating, Organising and Personal. However, the scope of the competency library will continue to expand. We are currently researching further additions as well as creating bespoke PROFILE:**MATCH**^{PLUS} systems based on the client's own competency frameworks.

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PCL August 2007

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