

***The science behind the  
Thomas Behaviour  
assessment***

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## What is the Behaviour assessment?

The Thomas Behaviour assessment, also known as the Personal Profile Analysis (PPA), is a self-report measure that consists of 24-items which are designed to understand work-related behavioural preferences. The behaviour assessment measures four scales: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance.

The assessment provides insight into an individual's motivators, communication style, behavioural style and values. There are no right or wrong answers, but the assessment responses provide insight into a person's specific strengths and information that can help them to meet the demands of their environment.

Each item consists of four adjectives, in which the assessment taker chooses which adjective sounds the MOST like them and then chooses which adjective sounds the LEAST like them. This forced choice response format is used to create the individual's profile on each of the four factors.

## The four factors of Behaviour

### ***Dominance***

Dominance relates to a person's response to power. Individuals with high dominance are driven to achieve in the face of opposition. They are motivated by power and authority and strive to avoid failure. They are direct, competitive and innovative. Those scoring low in Dominance are more accommodating and hesitant.

### ***Influence***

Influence relates to an individual's response to people. Those that are high in Influence are able to persuade others to react positively or favourably. They are motivated by public praise and recognition and strive to avoid rejection. They are persuasive, positive and friendly. People scoring low in Influence are more reserved and serious.

### ***Steadiness***

Steadiness relates to someone's response to pace. Individuals that are high in steadiness tend to be motivated to complete tasks thoroughly to maintain the status quo. They are motivated by stability and strive to avoid insecurity. They are amiable, dependable and kind. People scoring low in Steadiness are more restless and demonstrative.

### ***Compliance***

Compliance relates to an individual's response to policy. Those high in compliance produce a high work standard to avoid conflict or error. They are motivated by standard operating procedures and strive to avoid mistakes. They

are careful, logical and perfectionistic. People scoring low in Compliance are more independent and stubborn.

### **What theory is the Behaviour assessment based on?**

The Behaviour assessment is based upon DISC theory that was proposed by Marston (1928). It is based upon an individual's preferences towards or away from four behavioural factors: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance. This can therefore provide a better understanding into a person's motivators, communication style, behavioural style and values.

Marston (1928) proposed a theory of human behaviour as a function of the environment (described along a continuum of antagonistic to favourable) and the individual's reaction (described along an actively - passivity continuum). These two general dimensions provided a matrix from which a person's typical pattern of interaction could be described along four characteristics:

1. Dominance – active, positive movement in an antagonistic environment.
2. Inducement (which is called Influence in the Behaviour assessment) – active, positive movement in a favourable environment.
3. Submission (which is called Steadiness in the Behaviour assessment) – passive agreeableness in a favourable environment.
4. Compliance- cautious, tentative response to an antagonistic environment, designed to reduce the degree of antagonism.

It is assumed that most people show all four of these dimensions at times; however, it is also assumed that an individual develops a stage of life which places emphasis on certain aspects and less on others. This forms a self- image, which a person will strive to maintain and to enunciate in overt behaviour, while also seeking roles and occupations which are aligned to this self- image. This results in a moderate degree of self- consistency for most people and provides a basis for the prediction of an individual's reactions.

The Behaviour assessment developed from Marston's (1928) model has a large range of evidence that supports the utility of self- report data around a two- axis model. The two-axis structure is consistent with Flanagan's (1935) factor analysis of the Bernreuter Inventory (Bernreuter, 1933). He found two relatively independent scales which he called "self- confidence" and "sociability" corresponding roughly with the dominance - compliance continuum and the inducement - submission continuum. Leary (1957) has developed a rather complex system of interpersonal

diagnosis around the axis of love - hostility (approximating Marston's dominance - submission). Borgatta, Cottrell and Mann (1958) found two major factors characteristic of individual interaction: individual assertiveness and sociability.

This finding is consistent with Carter's (1954) factor analysis of interactions in small groups where he found two individual factors (1. Individual prominence and achievement; 2. Sociability) and a group - oriented factor (aiding attainment by the group). These positions are in line with the current emphasis on the conflict between achievement motivation and affiliation motivation.

Overall, there appears to be a considerable research basis for measuring behaviour along the two axes (four dimensions) described by Martson (1928).

## **How is the Behaviour assessment predictive of positive work outcomes?**

### *Behavioural assessment and work performance*

#### **Study 1**

A study aimed to showcase the relationship between how closely participants' behavioural profiles matched the ideal behavioural profile for their role and their job performance in that role. Job fit predicted both task performance (a subcomponent of job performance) and contextual performance (another subcomponent of job performance). Participants with a closer behavioural match to the demands of the job performed better at the job.

#### **Study 2**

A Canadian banking company used Thomas' Behaviour Assessment to understand the behaviours needed to thrive within the company and how they explain performance over time. The overall findings showcase that Higher Dominance was associated with a range of positive outcomes, including performance, sales per call and quality monitoring. Having Dominance as a working strength would mean employees are more competitive, driven, inquisitive, and focused on getting results and solutions. This quality specifically applied to quality monitoring, one of the performance metrics used, as this measure represents a key aspect of how employees were rewarded and rated.

**Study 3**

Criterion-related validity concerns whether the scores / profile generated from an assessment predict / relate to individual and organisational outcomes in the workplace. Thomas compared the Behaviour profiles of participants with supervisor ratings on current performance using the Human Job Analysis (HJA) questionnaire (132 participants). All correlations were significant as follows: Dominance –  $r = .39$ ; Influence –  $r = .25$ ; Steadiness –  $r = .44$ ; Compliance –  $r = .14$ . A similar study with 79 participants who were initially matched to a predetermined HJA job description revealed correlations between Behaviour profile and employee performance as follows: Dominance –  $r = .48$ ; Influence –  $r = .25$ ; Steadiness –  $r = .44$ ; Compliance –  $r = .1$ .

**Study 4**

In 2015, 182 employees at a furniture manufacturing company in the UK participated in a benchmark to identify characteristics of successful employees. Having low Dominance, being accommodating and non-demanding, was found to be better for performance. Specifically, employees with the lowest Dominance had significantly fewer lost sales (mean = 41) than employees higher on Dominance (mean = 48,  $p < .05$ ). Analyses found that employees with high Steadiness had significantly lower conversion rates than employees without Steadiness (mean = 51.25%, mean = 56.61% respectively,  $p < .05$ ).

**Study 5**

179 employees in one organisation participated in this benchmark in which employees were compared to their manager ratings on key competencies to identify the key attributes of a successful leader. A significant difference was found in Dominance scores between overall survey performance groups. Specifically, top overall performers had higher Dominance scores than lower performers. This relationship was also found when looking at Dominance as a working strength. The odds of being a top overall performer was 2.78 times greater for employees with Dominance in their profile than for those with a preference away from Dominance. These findings suggest that the characteristics associated with a preference for Dominance, such as being assertive, driving and self-starters, will be beneficial for role models at the organisation, especially when considering the need to challenge the status quo and focus on the big picture to drive change.

## References

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