

Approaches to Developing People – A Perspective

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HOW WE THINK ABOUT DEVELOPING PEOPLE CAN BE INFLUENCED BY THE TYPE OF PSYCHOMETRIC THAT IS USED AS WELL AS BOTH THE GENERAL MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT THAT IS BEING APPLIED AND OUR BELIEFS ABOUT HOW PEOPLE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED.

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Here is a selection of popular models for development:

- Strengths models – “You are good at this so focus your efforts here. Build on your strengths and play to your advantages.”
- Remedial models – “You are not very good at this so here is where you should focus your efforts.”
- Requirement models – “This is a very important requirement to be successful in this job so you should focus efforts here.”
- Motivational models – “You are interested in/motivated by this so you may find it more rewarding to focus your effort on that which appeals to you most.”
- Derailment models – “This may limit/derail/cause problems for you and you should try to address this.”

When thinking about any type of development intervention, it can be useful to consider which of the above approaches are being favored and how successful they are likely to prove.

Conversations That Matter

For all of these models, it is important to understand how the characteristics assessed link to performance at work. Without this understanding the conversation is less likely to be focused on what really matters for improving performance. It is common for users of psychometrics in development to say that “psychometrics are good at starting important conversations”. True; starting a conversation does matter, but the development outcome is likely to be even more effective if the right conversation is had which results in improvements in performance at work. We would argue that it is not just a matter of understanding how a questionnaire scale links positively to predict a particular competency or other specific

outcome variable, but also how that scale links to other competencies (particularly the negative links to other scales; for example, a personality scale such as 'Competitiveness' correlates positively with achieving results at work but is a negative correlate of team working and interpersonal sensitivity).

Critically, it is also useful to understand how any scale (and the competency it is predicting) relates to overall performance and potential at work. It is particularly important to understand how a tool links to performance where the relationships are complex and high scores, for example, are likely to be associated with both positive and negative outcomes (e.g. as in the Hogan Development Survey). It is important that these links are not just hypothesized but empirically validated. Indeed, in the development of Wave, we have favored improving the validity of measures through a validation-based questionnaire construction approach.

Combining Development Approaches

Question: Which of the five development models above is best for enhancing the effectiveness of developmental activities?

Our Answer: All of them in combination.

A weakness or limitation (remedial model) may be hard to develop but it will be considerably easier if the individual is interested in this area (motivational model) and it matters for their job (requirements model). Trying to further develop or enhance a key strength or self-perceived talent is likely to be more difficult if there is no motivation or interest in that area. So, while we would generally advocate a strengths-based approach to development, we would also argue that this needs to be done in the context of the individual's motivations and how important developing that area is in the context of the job, organization or the individual's career.

If someone can understand not only the positive side of their profile but in the same breath understand why their strengths could be overplayed and have unwanted consequences, this can help them better understand the impact they have at work and use their strengths more wisely. Providing users with an improved perspective on the empirical validity is a particularly active component of Saville Assessments long-term research and development programme.

It is this broad appreciation of the factors underpinning effective development, but with a highly-targeted data-driven prediction of targeted outcomes, that is behind the development of Saville Assessment's new Wave Development Report. The new report allows for focused development across all 36 dimensions of the Wave performance model and ensures specific areas of development can be targeted to help individuals realise their full potential. Building on existing strengths, being aware of 'Watch Fors', specifically those areas of overplayed strengths, and development tips are integral to the success of development initiatives with psychometrics.

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