

Pros and Cons of using Psychological Profiling when Coaching



How to avoid creating problems for yourself and your client

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CONTENTS

USING PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING	3
GUIDELINES FOR USING PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING IN COACHING	3
WHEN TO USE A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING TOOL	4
A SIMPLE PROFILING TOOL	4
HOW TO “ADMINISTER” THE TOOL	5
OTHER PROFILING TOOLS	5
SUMMARY	6
THE PERSONALITY WHEEL	7
THE PERSONALITY WHEEL EXPLANATIONS	8



Using Psychological Profiling

Understanding who we are and how we relate to the world is fundamental to our personal growth. There are many tools available for the Coach to help accelerate this journey and psychological profiling is one of them. This document outlines the pros and cons of using Psychological Profiling and will help the Coach avoid problems which may impact on the client/coach relationship and the journey of the client.

I use the phrase “Psychological Profiling” to cover the plethora of tests, assessments, questionnaires, personality tools and quizzes available which purport to measure aspects of an individual’s personality, behaviour, traits or style. Many of you will be familiar with MBTI (Myers-Briggs), Saville and Holdsworth’s OPQ, etc.

I have been trained in and worked with many psychological profiling tools, and used them within organisations in a variety of settings. I found them very useful to help clarify decision-making for recruitment, promotion, planning and as a counselling tool. The most familiar tool to me is the OPQ and the MQ, as well as Saville and Holdsworth’s various ability tests. I received extensive training in these tools and am an accredited user. However, I choose NOT to use any of these resources in my coaching, preferring instead to make effective use of “Power Questions”¹

As the Profession of Coaching grows, and increases its profile, I have seen a corresponding increase in the number of psychological profiling providers presenting their wares for sale to the Coaching community.

Whilst I believe that Profiling tools can enhance the outcome of coaching, they can also be counter-productive to coaching, unless handled carefully. I recommend students of the NZ School of Coaching consider the extent to which a specific tool may contribute productively to the coaching relationship. They might look impressive, but beware of over-valuing them. Your skills of as a Coach lie in your ability to help a client go through a journey of self-discovery. There are many other ways of doing this. .

Guidelines for using Psychological Profiling in Coaching

1. Consider the learning style of the client
2. Provide a supportive and non-judgmental environment where the client can bring the results of profiling for joint discussion

¹ Power Questions are specifically designed to empower the client to self-discovery and are taught as part of the NZ School of Coaching curriculum



3. Avoid “giving” the client a “test” or “assessment”. Instead, empower the client to search out a relevant tool for themselves.
4. Empower the client through self-discovery and power questions vs telling and labeling
5. The Coach is not the “expert” and therefore needs to avoid giving the answers or diagnosing the client
6. Do not overstate your qualification to use a test or assessment – rather, refer the client to their own understanding and explore the tool from the basis that the client is the expert.
7. If a Profiling provider requires you become trained before using their tool, do so.
8. Beware of your over-reliance on Psychological Profiling vs the Coaching Conversation and power questioning to uncover learning with the client.
9. A Profiling tool does not replace sound Coaching skills
10. A Profiling tool is NOT essential to successful coaching
11. Ensure the client keeps the results
12. When using profiling in an organisational coaching setting, think through the trust/confidentiality implications of profiling

When to use a Psychological profiling tool

1. When gaining an understanding of who we are and how we differ from others is productive for the client
2. In understanding the personalities of those who impact our lives e.g. partners, friends, employers
3. Understanding conflict and how to manage it with different people
4. Understanding what sort of jobs our personality is suited to
5. Understanding scenarios which have prevented the client from moving forward
6. Discussing how to make choices in how we behave rather than reacting habitually

A simple Profiling tool

I came across the “The Personality Wheel” through Psychologist Steven Dromgool, *MCouns.*, *BLS*, *MNZAC* and attribute its development to him. Steven cleverly combines the Dove/Eagle/Peacock/Owl tool with the Task/Introvert/extrovert/Relationship tool and the Melancholic/Phlegmatic/Choleric/ Sanguine tool. You can find out more about Steven Dromgool on his website: www://rest.net.nz.

Many people are familiar with one of the above. I find clients remember the bird descriptions more readily than they do the others, and the descriptions come across as more user-friendly. As a Professional Coach, it is important that you recognise and give credit to the developer or author of any tool/idea.

How to “administer” the tool

When this tool appears to be productive for the situation:

1. Seek permission to discuss the tool
2. Explain the purpose and origins of the Profile
3. Explain how to work through it (do for homework or in session):
 - Go through the four boxes with words in them and underline the words which describe you.
 - Total up the number of underlined words in each box.
 - The greatest total is your personality e.g. if your client underlines most words in box 1, they will have a tendency to be a “dove”. Take the next highest number and this becomes the secondary personality e.g. if box 4 is the next greatest number, your client is a Peacock
 - The client is a Dove/Peacock
 - Look up the Dove/Peacock in the Personality wheel explanations and discuss how much this reflects how they see themselves.
 - Sometimes a client underlines only the words in one box – e.g. Box 2 - in this case, their personality is Eagle
 - Discuss what the client has discovered about themselves – positives, negatives, productive, unproductive, impact on people around them etc.... Allow the client to explore and express their thinking. Go deep, using the coaching conversation and power questions
4. Use the coaching conversation to put in place actions if appropriate e.g. How to work with their colleague more effectively, search out jobs which are suited to a Peacock.....

Other Profiling tools

You may come across other Psychological Profiling tools. Referring the client to an on-line assessment is another alternative for you. There are a lot of good resources on the internet and the proactive Coach is wise to search out a few links. Try them first though!

Steven Dromgool recommends the following link: This takes you to a Jung Typology assessment based on the Myers-Briggs model. <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp>

The process of using an online assessment as a tool to open up areas for discussion is the same as a pencil and paper assessment they might do for homework, as referred to in the guidelines above.

Summary

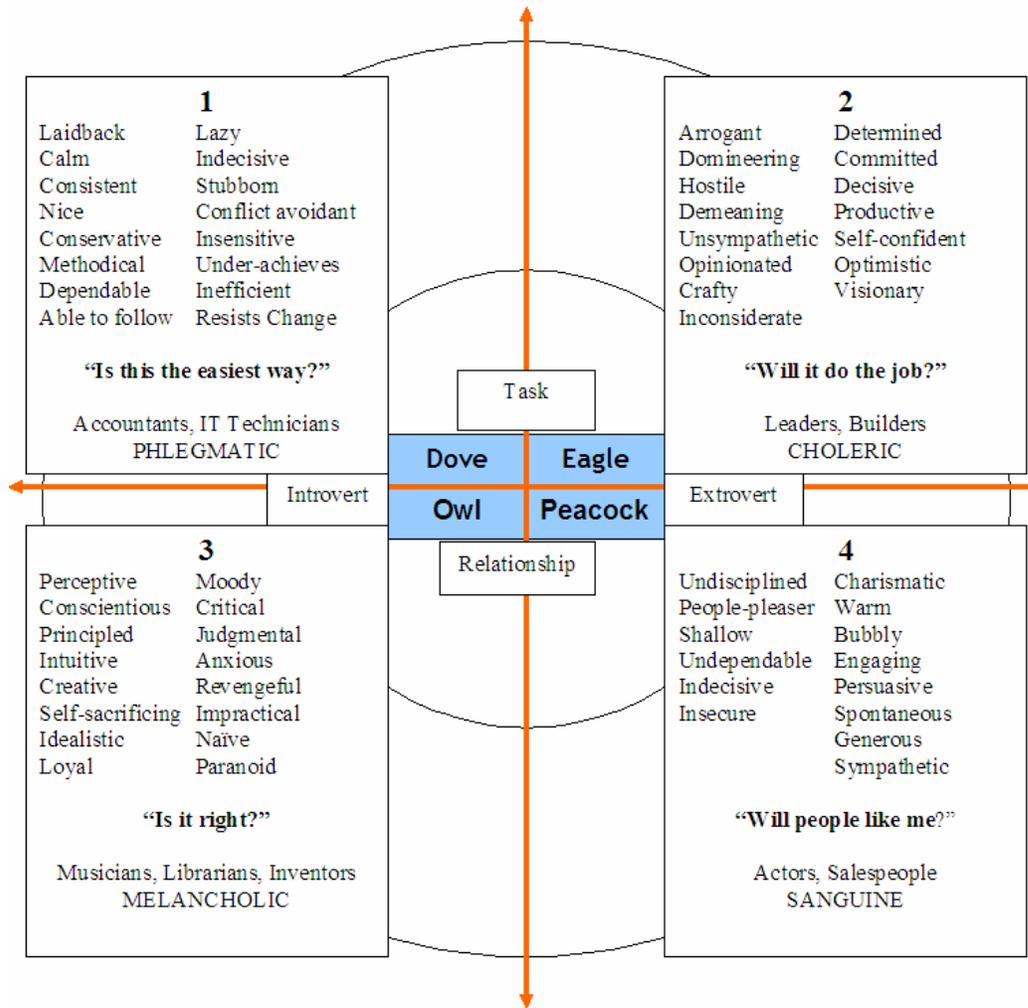
My Stance on Psychological Profiling within the coaching relationship is that they can be a helpful tool, but they can also be mishandled and therefore potentially damaging to the coaching relationship. Work with due caution and an eye to professionalism.

Have you figured out the reasons I have chosen not to use my formal training in Psychological Testing in my coaching? Coaching is very much about NOT putting people into categories and making assumptions about them. I wanted to use my coaching skills to help people gain a greater understanding of who they are and how they relate to the world. The extent of my familiarity with these tools in a decision-making setting and the habits formed through years of using Profiling for this purpose may have tripped me up in seeking to help the individual find out about themselves.

With a significant “gap” between now and then, I have probably thawed out enough to trust myself! The Personality Wheel is a very sound alternative for me and therefore is something I recommend to Coaches. There are many excellent tools available. Use them, but do not let them replace your excellent coaching skills, your intuition, insights and inquisitiveness about people.



The Personality Wheel





The Personality Wheel Explanations

<p>Eagle</p>  <p>Fast, confident, assertive, decisive and controlling. Likes to be the boss in any situation. Tells people what to do. Hates inaction. Highly competitive.</p> <p>Impatient with non-performers. Can have a low tolerance for the feelings, attitudes and advice of others. Often puts work before pleasure. Achievement and results are everything. They love their way. They influence others through their fast pace, directness, and the ability to get what they set out to get.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Impatience</p>	<p>Owl</p>  <p>Practical, serious, analytical, quiet and reserved. Cautious and conservative in most things. They can appear to some as distant and aloof. They are dependable, reliable, analytical and exacting with a no-nonsense approach to almost everything they do. They are diligent, patient, precise, practical, logical and systematic, preferring to “go by the book”. Structure, habit and accepted procedures are the order of the day. They influence through others through their dependability, accuracy and systematic approach.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Overuses rules and procedures</p>
<p>Eagle/Peacock</p>   <p>Confident, enthusiastic and adventurous. Can be warm and charming. Hates monotony. They are result-getters and work in high spurts of creative energy. Accomplishment is important to them. Imaginative, optimistic and highly competitive with good verbal skills, their natural talents often lead them into positions of leadership, politics and the performing arts. They influence others through their self-motivation, persistence and pace.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Over-forceful</p>	<p>Owl/Peacock</p>   <p>Individualistic, self-dependant, sociable, analytical and creative. They make up only a minute percentage of the population. They have high personal ambitions and are supremely confident in their ability to match or excel others in personal effort or in an area of expertise that is familiar to them. They don't brag about this. They are just quietly confident. They influence others through their confidence and ability in their given areas of expertise and their reliability and loyalty.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Overuses feeling of superiority</p>



<p>Eagle/Dove</p>  <p>Energetic, loyal, friendly, analytical and tactful. Idealists. They Have a deep sense of loyalty towards the people and organisations they care about. Conscientious and diligent, they have a high opinion of their personal worth and strong commitments to personal and traditional values. Initiators and achievers with a definite sense of mission and direction, they immerse themselves “boots and all” in jobs and interests that challenge them. They influence others through their initiative to act alone to get results.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Overuses self-reliance</p>	<p>Owl/Dove</p>  <p>Steady, dependable, stable, quiet and modest. They are supportive, agreeable and tactful and avoid any hint of conflict. They like harmony, structure and things to stay the same, both at home and at work. They are excellent team members. Moderate and adaptable, they like to do one thing at a time and do it well. They don't like to be rushed. Loyal partners and conscientious workers, they can be the perfect “friend in need”. They influence others through their steadiness, reliability and loyalty.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Over-cautious</p>
<p>Eagle/Owl</p>  <p>Individualistic, confident, decisive and determined. Socialising is not a preferred activity, yet they can be quite outgoing and charming. Systematic and objective, they are interested in the unusual and creative. Excellent problem-solvers, they strive for results with accuracy, sometimes bordering on perfectionism. They have definite and unbending opinions of right and wrong in their personal and professional lives. They influence others through their no-nonsense approach to problems and challenges.</p> <p>Shortcoming: Overuses perfectionism</p>	<p>Owl/Eagle</p>  <p>Independent, logical, conscientious, determined and efficient. They are precise, accurate and systematic and hate incompetence. Disciplinarians, both at home and at work. They can be seen by some as cool, blunt, stubborn and critical when things aren't going their way. They have self-discipline, decisiveness and determination. They influence others through their ability to plan and achieve results in a pre-determined pattern.</p> <p>Shortcomings: Overuses criticism</p>



Peacock



Confident, talkative, enthusiastic, imaginative, energetic and optimistic. Good at dealing with people. Quick in actions and decisions, sometimes

dramatically so. Rather talk than listen. Likes to be where the action is. Hates routine. They are innovative risk takers and ideas people who are motivated by admiration, praise, approval and popularity. They are non-conformists who constantly seek new challenges. They influence others with their optimism, confidence, friendliness and verbal skills

Shortcoming: Exaggerates

Dove



Warm, friendly, gentle, patient and tolerant, they make loyal, sympathetic, reliable and

dependable friends, co-workers and partners with a willing ear for problems. They like the company of other people and find a sense of security in dealing with people and situations they are familiar with. They are practical and good at supportive roles and performing tasks in accepted patters. They influence others through their warmth, flexibility, sincerity and dependability

Shortcoming: Over-sensitive

Peacock/Dove



Warm, witty, open-minded and good fun to be with. They are sympathetic, easy going, friendly and tactful, with a keen

interest in other people and a willing ear for other people's problems. They make excellent counselors and helpers. They seek to maintain friendly relationships and pleasant atmospheres



where people are happy. They avoid conflict and admire people who look for and see the good in other people. They influence others through their warmth and caring attitude.

Shortcoming: Over-tolerant

Dove/Peacock



Friendly, warm, kind and considerate. Optimistic and witty, they are good fun to be



with. They enjoy life and the company of others. They seek the approval and acceptance of those they care about and will avoid conflict and

aggressive people at all cost. They can be fiercely independent and stubborn when something they believe in is threatened. They make excellent team members. They influence others through their warmth, kindness, friendship, understanding and loyalty.

Shortcoming: Overtrusting



Peacock/Eagle

Optimistic, energetic, open and enthusiastic with an ability to gain the respect and confidence if all types of people. Trusting and self-assured, they inspire enthusiasm and goodwill. They are actively dominant and assertive and because of this, they tend to win positions of authority, prestige and status, which is an important driving force to them. They love a challenge and the recognition that goes with accomplishment. They influence others through their openness, warmth, charm and persuasive manner.



Shortcoming: Over-optimistic

Dove/Eagle

Charming, pragmatic, practical and impulsive. They are curious and idealistic with strong powers of analytical reasoning. They hate routine and are excellent problem solvers. They often display an image of detachment, but they are far from detached. Rather, they are pre-occupied with their thoughts. They have rare skills and comprise only a small percentage of the population. They influence others with their knowledge and skills in a specialised area.



Shortcoming: Over-conservative

Peacock/Owl

Socially adept, quietly confident and self-competitive assured individualists. Optimistic and calculated risk takers, they have an ability to involve those around them to help them achieve their goals. Creative as well as logical and practical, they possess a high drive factor to win at whatever they take on. They like a challenge and like to strive for and get results. They influence others through their ability to use persuasive skills with logic and tact and achieve goals through other people.



Shortcoming: Overuses authority and position

Dove/Owl

Conservative, dependable, realistic and modest. Patient, logical and adaptable, they are good with both their head and their hands and can be very artistic and creative. They are intense about causes they care about. Moderate in their dealings with other people, they build close relationships with only a small group of trusted friends. To these people they are open, trusting and generous. They influence others through their steadiness, consistency of mood and specialised skills in a given field.



Shortcomings: Over-cautious



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