

**EBOOK**

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT DRIVES US

**A DEEP DIVE ON PEOPLE'S MOTIVATION  
DRIVES AND BEHAVIORS**



# The Mystery of Human Behavior

If your workplace is anything like mine, it's likely full of people having wildly different personalities. (Mine is also full of scooters, but that's a story for another day.)

For example, you'll regularly observe some co-workers who are naturally talkative and social. You can frequently find them in the common areas of your office talking up other employees.

"How was your weekend? Mine was awesome! I saw this movie set in the future but on another planet that was kind of like Earth but not really. Let me spend the next 12 minutes telling you all about it."

Then there's the set of co-workers who seem quite content to keep to themselves. They offer a quick and courteous greeting near the office coffee machine before stealing away back to the sanctuary of their desks. It's not that they don't like going to movies, they just don't like talking to you about it. For literally 12 minutes.

Why do we behave as we do? That question has been the preoccupation of philosophers, psychologists, and researchers for millennia.

It turns out that knowing the specifics regarding key workplace-impacting drives can give us a sort of unfair competitive advantage. This all starts with understanding our own behavioral drives.

## Trait Theory

According to Trait Theory, a unique combination of genetic and environmental factors—think the classic Nature vs. Nurture debate—contribute to the development of our personalities. Traits are best-considered habits of behavior, thought patterns, and emotions. And a given trait produces a drive to behave in a certain way. These drives create a need, and we're duly motivated to behave in a way that satisfies the associated need.

Consider what happens when you're hungry; you find something to eat. Your survival drive creates a hunger need and thus the logical behavior of ordering a hoagie from your favorite sub shop.

It's not all that different when it comes to personality traits. Consider our office example above as it relates to a drive for social interaction known as extraversion. Our chatty co-workers' personalities have a great deal of this trait while our more reserved workmates' personalities only have trace amounts of it.

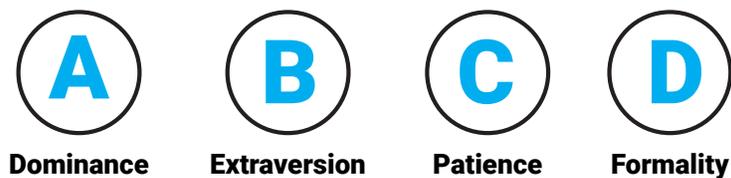
## We are What We Are (for the most part)

Our behavioral traits tend to be relatively stable over time. If you're in the social set, you'll likely be social across a range of situations, and you probably have been for quite some time. Knowing our "behavioral patterns" provides us with a predictable range of behaviors that we can expect you to exhibit.

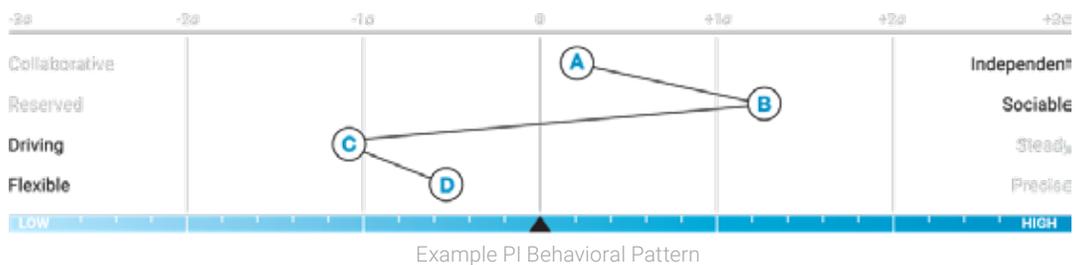
Trait theory goes on to posit that different configurations of these traits account for our unique personalities. Diverse personalities bumping into one another in a dynamic and complex work environment having millions of variables explains why human behavior can appear so mysterious at times. Like a co-worker who washes out a cereal bowl in the kitchen sink but not the spoon. Hmmm.

## The 4 Primary Factors

When it comes to decoding workplace behaviors, The Predictive Index Behavioral Assessment measures four Primary Factors.



**Bear in mind:** None of these are value judgments. High extraversion people are not better than low extraversion people. Low formality isn't better than high formality. Each person simply has a different personality configuration. Also, each of us has some factors that are relatively high and some factors that are relatively low. These all balance out to what's known as our average expression of drives. This configuration explains why people act differently in certain situations.



Once you understand these factors, how they interact with one another, and how strong or weak each of these drives are in your co-workers, you're well on your way to becoming a Jedi master of working well with others.



## Dominance

The drive to have control over or make an impact on one's environment.

BEHAVIORAL DRIVE

### Understanding the High-Dominance Employee

A person with high dominance has many ideas and opinions, and he is eager to share them with those around him. They are hands-on and focused on producing results, valuing independence and autonomy above all. In most day-to-day situations, he will be competitive and will challenge himself and those around to put their ideas into action. He aggressively pursues his own goals.

The high-dominance employee is a “get-it-done” type of person, technically-oriented, preferring the world of things and facts rather than that of people and relationships. Naturally innovative and venturesome, he can be critical of the status quo and “the way it’s always been done.” This employee’s way is better. Just ask him.

In the extreme, a high-dominance worker will be fiercely individualistic. This may be exactly what’s needed in entrepreneurial, uncertain, or risky work roles. He is undaunted by criticism, although this can create a barrier to his accepting and acting on external feedback at times. His communication style can be sharp and direct.

### Common Traits of High-Dominance People

- Confident, independent and sure of the value of his or her own ideas, decisions, opinions and actions
- Primarily interested in the achievement of tangible results; competitive; determined to do more and do it better than others
- Innovative and venturesome; willing to make waves and take responsibility for the risks of change and innovation; able to tolerate the pressures of criticism or the possibility of failure
- Self-assured and a self-starter; likely to value own judgments over others.
- Primarily interested in facts, things, concepts, systems or strategies; technically oriented
- Direct, frank, factual and authoritative in style of expression; aggressive when he or she encounters resistance or opposition
- Resourceful and ingenious in problem-solving; responds positively and actively to the challenge of difficult or unfamiliar situations
- Take-charge; demanding of results of himself or herself as well as other people



## Dominance

### Understanding the Low-Dominance Employee

As the dominance drive is all about making an impact in one's own way, it's not surprising to learn that workers with a low amount of this drive are cooperative and accommodating by nature. Low-dominance co-workers are unselfish, and they're quite willing to allow those around them to set the agenda. They readily accept the authority of others, including situations when directives are set by company policies, procedures, or systems.

Low-dominance co-workers are typically more interested in the team or group win. A "we" before "I" sort of thing. They don't need the trappings of victories—public recognition or the best parking spot. What they do need is office harmony. Low-dominance workers are uncomfortable in the face of interpersonal conflict. They may attempt to defuse such a situation or try to bring balance in the pursuit of a general agreement.

Service-oriented, well-functioning, collaborative, and low-risk jobs are often a great match for low dominance employees. When taking up a leadership post, the low dominance supervisor will take extra care to make sure everybody is bought into the direction—not just because she says so.

#### Common Traits of Low-Dominance People

- Cooperative; comfortable working under the supervision of others or as a member of a team
- Unassuming and unselfish; willing to do things for others and deriving satisfaction from service-oriented activities
- Accepting of company policies, standards, systems and authority; less likely to originate or put forward ideas for change
- Agreeable; willing to accommodate the decisions, attitudes or leadership of others
- Seeking harmony rather than conflict in relations with others; able to get along well with most people
- More concerned with group or team achievement, recognition and association than with individual achievement and recognition
- Confident handling familiar work in which he or she has plenty of experience and training; uncertain and cautious about anything new and unfamiliar, looking to leadership for guidance
- Most secure in a stable and familiar work, organizational and social environment

# B

## Extraversion

The drive to have social interaction with other people.

BEHAVIORAL DRIVE

### Understanding the High-Extraversion Employee

An employee with high extraversion has a sincere interest in people. Interacting with others energizes the high-extraversion worker. She is approachable, smiles often, and is pleasant around others. She is usually cheerful and is a consummate team-first person.

Like the high-dominance employee, the high-extraversion employee is a doer. The difference is that the high-extraversion employee accomplishes her goals by influencing and persuading others along the way. If high dominance is about “telling,” then high extraversion is about “selling.” This is part of the reason that the high-dominance person’s language contains more “you” and “we” than “I” and “me.”

The high-extraversion employee likes others, and it’s also exceedingly important to her self-image that others like her. Approval and acceptance are paramount for her. In the extreme, the high-extraversion employee can be seen as superficial or even disingenuous.

### Common Traits of High-Extraversion People

- Outgoing and communicative; socially (rather than technically) oriented
- Pleasant, friendly, cheerful and optimistic in social contact; preferring to be liked.
- Articulate; capable of being stimulating, enthusiastic, and persuasive in expression.
- Capable of making social conversation (small talk) with just about anybody
- Empathetic, able to recognize and understand the other person’s point of view or concerns
- Effective working with and through other people—a team worker and a team builder.
- Able to meet new people easily; effective in groups; lively company, a good public speaker.
- Delegator of authority, actively interested in the development of people and organizations



## Extraversion



## Understanding the Low-Extraversion Employee

An employee with low extraversion is not driven by a need for social interaction. By contrast, he will be quiet, non-communicative, and serious. Just because his mouth is shut doesn't mean that his mind isn't open, however. He's introspective and enjoys private versus public spaces for thought. As he prioritizes tangible things over relationships, he is analytical and matter-of-fact in his interactions. When he does interact and communicate, he is thoughtful and sincere.

For the low-extraversion employee, social contact can be exhausting. PI Consultant Mike Neal shared the sentiment of an extremely low extraversion employee who once said, "The best part of my day is when I walk into my office and close the door." This isn't to say that low-extraversion employees shun any form of social interaction. They can become comfortable with a small group of close co-workers, particularly when mutual trust is earned over time.

Many jobs are well-suited for low-extraversion employees. According to Jennifer Tenfelde, HR director at Polysciences, "We're a science company filled with chemists and chemical engineers. [Low extraverted people] tend to thrive in our lab and other technical positions where they are typically working alone the majority of the time."

### Common Traits of Low-Extraversion People

- Serious and introspective; thinking things through before speaking or acting
- More interested in and more comfortable with work-related activities than activities of a primarily social nature
- More effective dealing with tangible, concrete and factual matters than with intangible matters of communication
- Relatively quiet, factual and sincere in style of expression
- Reserved; uncomfortable or awkward meeting new people or groups, but friendly and communicative with people he or she knows well
- Unsure or uneasy about placing trust in other people until experience over time provides a basis for trust; skeptical
- Comfortable working alone; stressed or tired from frequent social contact



## Patience

The drive for consistency and stability.

### Understanding the High-Patience Employee

A high-patience employee is calm, stable, and steady. He's unhurried in his work, and he's content to perform routine tasks over a long period of time. He's most comfortable with the familiar and accepts things exactly as they are. For this reason, consistency is key for the high-patience worker.

A high-patience employee will be methodical in his work. From a social perspective, his drive compels him to seek a type of familial relationship with co-workers. His are closely-knit bonds built over time and through regular interactions.

Change is of particular relevance—and consternation—to high-patience employees. In a business environment that can be tumultuous and chaotic at times, high-patience workers require special consideration. PI's own Megan Holsinger, director of client success, advises that for high-patience workers, "change can happen, but in digestible amounts over time."

### Common Traits of High Patience People

- Stable, with consistent, reliable and systematic behavior
- In harmony with the environment; inclined to accept things the way they are, rather than seeking change
- Relaxed in a physical sense; not tense
- At ease and secure in a familiar, unchanging environment and with familiar people
- Comfortable with familiar work done in a familiar place
- Amiable and easygoing with familiar people; easy to get along with, but slow to adjust to new people, new situations, or change in general
- Calm, deliberate and generally unhurried in activity



## Patience



## Understanding the Low-Patience Employee

A low-patience employee doesn't have a need for stability and consistency; rather, for a low-patience person, variety is the spice of life. She will be restless and driving. She has a bias for action. She can be impatient and even intense at times; in fact, she might be guilty of taking a "ready, fire, aim" approach to getting things done. She is uncomfortable with the idea of being comfortable. She'd rather things be dynamic and fluid than stagnant and unchanging.

Everything about her is fast-paced—her thought patterns, her talk, her willingness to throw herself into action. During times of change, she will adjust quickly and happily. Anything that brings a little variety into the picture is a welcome part of her work.

### Common Traits of Low-Patience People

- Tense and driven to release that tension in action—now
- Impatient for results; able to work, think and function in general at a faster-than-average pace
- Motivated and pressured by a sense of urgency and communicative of that pressure to others
- Able to adjust quickly and often to change, variety and fast-paced action
- Restless and impatient with repetitive, routine activities, or work that involves staying in one confined place
- Intolerant of delays, driven to "cut through the red tape" and get on with things



## Formality

The drive to conform to rules and structure.

BEHAVIORAL DRIVE

## Understanding the High-Formality Employee

The high-formality employee takes a diligent and serious approach to her work. She is conscientious about getting things right, and this helps explain her emphasis on precision. She is well-organized and attentive to details.

In her view, whatever she does needs to be done right. She's supremely motivated to produce error-free work and not to receive criticism or blame if things go wrong. As a result, she's cautious and hesitant to take risks. She is a careful worker, and she has a strong reliance on conforming to whatever policies or rules have been established to govern how work should be done.

Reliable? Absolutely. A trailblazer? Not so much.

### Common Traits of High-Formality People

- Conscientious, thorough and careful that whatever he or she is responsible for is done correctly
- Particularly attentive to and accurate with details
- Respectful of established, proven rules, policies, standards and authority
- Knowledgeable and having expertise in a specialized field or skill
- Motivated by a strong sense of duty; disciplined with himself or herself (and others, if he or she is responsible for others) to do things right
- Conservative; confident in established, proven, accepted standards, policies, systems and instructions
- Skeptical and critical of anything or anybody new, unfamiliar or unproven or any suggestion of change
- Strongly motivated by the need to avoid the possibility of blame or punishment for having made a mistake or having done anything wrong



## Formality



## Understanding the Low-Formality Employee

A low-formality employee is informal, casual, and spontaneous. He will be inherently flexible in his approach to nearly every project. He's more concerned with the endgame—what results are achieved—rather than how the results are achieved. Those are concerns for somebody else, not him.

The low-formality worker isn't shackled or obliged to adhere to established systems or policies. He feels no need to stick to the script; he operates best unscripted. He's extremely tolerant of uncertainty. Not a worrier, he's fine to "go with the flow." He's non-conforming and is all too happy to forge his own path forward.

How loosely you can structure the work to be done for a low formality worker is paramount. According to Tenfelde, "Low formality people thrive when there is a lack of structure, where there is more freedom and a need to be creative in the approach. They aren't going to be bothered by it; they are going to like it.

### Common traits of Low-Formality People

- Informal and flexible in his or her approach to work
- More concerned with results than details or specifics of how those results are achieved
- Inclined to delegate details when positioning permits
- Independent in the sense of not feeling a strong obligation to do things strictly by the book
- Tolerant of risk and uncertainty; not a worrier
- Unimpressed by traditional, structured systems of rank, authority and seniority
- Open and receptive to new ideas and change, often preferring them over the traditional, established or conventional
- Frank and uninhibited in expressing himself or herself
- Most comfortable and effective in relatively unstructured situations and informal organizations.
- Persistent and determined in the face of criticism or rejection

# The Path to Behavioral Enlightenment



## The Path to Behavioral Enlightenment

Really understanding, internalizing and adapting how you interact with people based on these four key behavioral drives will be a massive advantage for you throughout your career. Whether dealing with your boss, your peers, your direct reports, teams of people or the executives at your company, understanding what makes them tick will help you deal with them effectively. Everyone marches to the beat of a different drummer, and when you're composing the music based on the beats they like most, you'll be in high demand. That puts you in an exceptional position for career growth.

If you think about understanding behavioral drives like a mountaineering summit for your career, the trailhead is self-awareness. Be sure you know what your behavioral drives are. Believe it or not, a lot of us don't fully understand our needs, which drive our behaviors.

And while social scientists have developed countless personality assessments for academic, clinical, and BuzzFeed entertainment purposes, The Predictive Index developed one of the first behavioral assessments specifically designed to measure and interpret behavioral preferences specific to the workplace.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Matt is the Senior Vice President of Product for The Predictive Index where he is responsible for overseeing the company's product portfolio and innovation roadmap.

