

How Belbin Profiling Differs from Psychometric Testing

This is an extract from an article written by Barrie Watson for Training & Competence News.

I wish I had a fiver for every time I've been asked "How does Belbin compare with other psychometric tests?" It is such a regular question that I am convinced the majority of people believe Belbin assessments are of a psychometric nature. Forgive me if you are not one of them therefore if I try to put right this common mis-understanding.

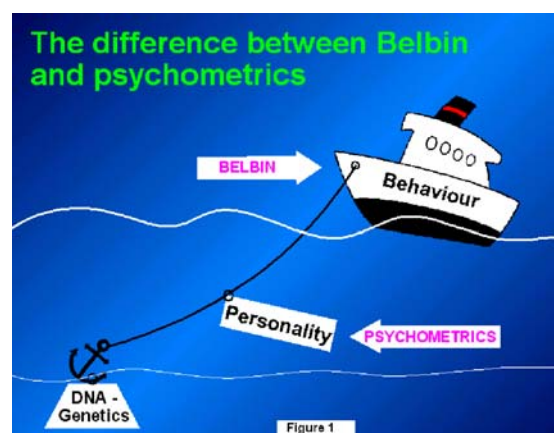
Belbin assessments measure behaviour - nine clusters of behaviour called Team Roles, whereas psychometric tests measure personality traits. "What's the difference?" I can imagine some of you saying, well, quite a lot actually.

Behaviour can be described as everything we say and do whereas personality, although having a big impact on how we behave, is something not so easily identified.

In fig.1 I have tried to illustrate the relationship between behaviour and personality and how both are influenced by what we are born with - our DNA and genetics.

If we look at the illustration you will see I have represented DNA and genetics by the anchor because of their permanent and static nature.

Some distance from the anchor is personality reflecting the fact that while it is closely linked to what we are - our *nature* it is also influenced by our experiences, *nurturing*.



Further along the anchor warp and floating above the surface, representing the fact that we can see it, is behaviour. (I hope you will forgive an addictive sailor for this fanciful model!) This model is also useful in illustrating the point that it is generally accepted that personality is of a more enduring nature than behaviour, thus the relatively short distance from the anchor. Behaviour on the other hand is more variable as we can modify it to some extent in response to such things as our current values, prevailing situations and the influence of those around us. This is depicted by the good ship behaviour swinging around at anchor, having some manoeuvrability but not unlimited scope because of the anchor.

So where does this leave us? Well, in short, Belbin is about measuring something we can see and observe and psychometrics are looking at what's underwater. It can be concluded therefore that the Belbin Self Perception Inventory (SPI) is much less complex because it is measuring something that it is visible. It must be accepted as a relatively broad measure however, and be regarded as representing a moment in time. Psychometric assessments on the other hand face a bigger challenge as they are trying to tell us what's going on under what at times may be quite murky water. The more reputable ones are very sophisticated however in the way that they deal with this.

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