

TMS Four Measures of Work Preference: *'People Doing the Work'*

Margerison and McCann's work with the Types of Work Model resulted in a number of applications – planning, project management, debriefing frameworks and processes. Anecdotal data began to strongly suggest that there was a potential correlation between the Types of Work that high performing teams focus on and the individual work preferences of the team members. Margerison and McCann looked at a variety of existing preference models but found none that were focused specifically on work – a critical variable from both a research and application perspective.

The Measures of Work Preference

E	RELATIONSHIPS	I
P	INFORMATION	C
A	DECISION MAKING	B
S	ORGANIZATION	F

People Doing the Work

Development and research of a new questionnaire commenced based on the work of Carl Jung and Myers/Briggs. The resulting ***TMS Measures of Work Preference*** considers our preferences in four key aspects of work:

Relationships

How people prefer to relate to others at work

Extroversion

Introversion

Information

How people prefer to gather and use information at work

Practical

Creative

Decision Making

How people prefer to make decisions at work

Analytical

Beliefs Based

Organization

How people prefer to organize themselves and others at work

Structured

Flexible

Each of these measurements has attributes associated with where individuals may prefer to be. This does not mean that people cannot, or do not work effectively in the 'other' areas. In fact, it is likely that they do.

Effective communicators are aware of their preference as 'starting points' and conscious of when they need to access other 'non-preference' areas.

TMS Facilitator Resource Guide: The Team Management Profile

The following four pages outline each measure, describing the perspective and behaviors associated with that preference as well as the benefits of accessing both 'ends'.

Measures of Work Preference (cont'd)

Relationships: How you prefer to relate with others at work

This measure of work preference deals with the way you prefer to relate with others at work.

There is either an **Extroverted** preference or an **Introverted** preference to relationships:

***EXTROVERTED* Preference:**

- Will often think things out by talking them through
- Enjoy meeting other people and often seek social or group gatherings
- Stimulated by unanticipated interruptions
- When speaking publicly will often talk impromptu
- Likely to contribute a lot at meetings and may contradict themselves
- Can be impulsive

***INTROVERTED* Preference:**

- Prefer to think things out before speaking
- Do not have a high need to meet regularly with others
- Like to concentrate on a few tasks at a time
- Dislike unanticipated interruptions
- When speaking publicly will prepare in depth and speak to a plan
- May be more quiet at meetings
- More likely to consider things before acting

High performing individuals and teams achieve a balance between the two preferences

A strong bias toward an Extroverted preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Introvert preference risks ...

- A tendency for reactive, impulsive action
- Group think created by the energy of momentum
- Missing the contribution and thinking of others

A strong bias toward an Introverted preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Extrovert preference risks ...

- Difficulty accessing the thinking process and assumptions that may have been made
- The opportunity to build on each other's ideas spontaneously

If effective meetings include the best thinking of all participants, it is important to ensure the active participation of the Introvert preference by giving them time to prepare and think ahead – agendas, pre-reading, desired meeting outcomes. Ensuring the effective participation of the Extrovert preference includes allowing time for group interaction where 'interruptions' are the norm and understanding the need to 'think out loud' – even contradicting oneself in the process.

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TMS Four Measures of Work Preference (cont'd)

Information: How you prefer to gather and use information at work

This measure of work preference deals with the way we prefer to gather and use information at work. There is either a **Practical** preference or a **Creative** preference to information:

PRACTICAL Preference:

- Prefer defined problems
- Present oriented
- Like to work with tested ideas
- Down to earth
- Patient with routine work
- Prefer schedules and standard systems and procedures
- Pay attention to facts and details
- Search for the standard problem-solving approach
- Usually sound on details but may not always see the total picture

CREATIVE Preference:

- Enjoy ambiguous problems
- Future oriented
- Regularly float new ideas
- Head in the clouds
- Look for possibilities and implications
- Bored with routine work
- Always searching for the new way
- May get details wrong and jump beyond the facts
- Like complexity and search for creative approaches
- Often see the total picture but miss the details

High performing individuals and teams achieve a balance between the two preferences

A strong bias toward a Practical preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Creative preference risks ...

- A narrow focus on detail without considering the long term, big picture implications
- Missing out on the systemic connections
- Defaulting to 'it has always worked this way ...'

A strong bias toward a Creative preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Practical preference risks ...

- Not considering lessons learned from past experience
- Missing critical implementation factors associated with current reality

There can be significant conflict and/or misunderstanding between two individuals with strong preferences at the extremes. To influence an individual with a preference for a Practical approach to information, it is important to build a factual business case with ample support data. To influence an individual with a preference for a Creative approach, it is important to focus on the opportunities and possibilities of a specific idea or point of view.

TMS Four Measures of Work Preference (cont'd)

Decision-Making: How you prefer to make decisions at work

This measure of work preference deals with the way you prefer to make decisions at work. There is either an **Analytical** preference or a **Beliefs-based** preference to decision-making:

ANALYTICAL Preference:

- Try to establish objective decision-making criteria
- Measure decisions against payoffs
- Can sometimes be seen as detached and cold
- Will emphasize deciding according to the situation
- Open to change depending on the situation
- Negotiate on the evidence
- Concern for fairness based on the rules
- Like analysis and clarity
- Set objectives and beliefs follow
- Task-oriented

BELIEFS-BASED Preference:

- Have personal, subjective decision-making criteria
- Measure decisions against belief
- May be over-committed to a point of view
- Believe in deciding on personal considerations
- Will resist change if it opposes beliefs
- Like harmony based on common values
- Objectives emerge from beliefs
- Principle-oriented

High performing individuals and teams achieve a balance between the two preferences

A strong bias toward an Analytical preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Beliefs-based preference risks ...

- Missing an understanding of the beliefs-based or values implications of a particular decision
- Ignoring critical implementation or communication needs around a particular decision
- Not anticipating 'show stopping' conflict

A strong bias toward a Beliefs-based preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Analytical preference risks ...

- Insufficient attention to discussion and development around business (external environment) based criteria
- Perceived inconsistency regarding fairness of people decisions

This dimension presents significant challenges from a communication and conflict management perspective. Organizations with a strong bias toward the analytical such as, for example, professional services firms, need to work on both understanding and appreciating the decision making process of the beliefs-based individual or organization. This may be particularly important if you are working with a client with a beliefs-based perspective.

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TMS Four Measures of Work Preference (cont'd)

Organization: How you prefer to organize yourself and others at work

This measure of work preference deals with the way you prefer to organize yourself and others at work. There is either a **Structured** preference or a **Flexible** preference to organizing yourself or others at work.

STRUCTURED Preference:

- Like clarity and order
- Action-oriented, concerned with resolving issues
- Will develop and stick to a plan
- May rush to quick decisions without sufficient information
- Time-conscious and will keep to deadlines
- Reluctant to change once judgment is made
- Dislike ambiguity
- Emphasize concluding and resolving over diagnosing

FLEXIBLE Preference:

- May appear disorganized
- Information-oriented, may delay action in search of even better information
- A daily plan or schedule is considered a guideline rather than a firm structure.
- Prone to 'information overload' which can delay decisions
- May re-negotiate deadlines
- Open-minded and curious and will change mind according to data at hand
- Emphasize diagnosing over concluding and resolving
- Tolerate ambiguity

High performing individuals and teams achieve a balance between the two

A strong bias toward a Structured preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Flexible preference risks ...

- Not paying attention to crucial new information or environmental shifts – losing a competitive edge
- Becoming entrenched or defending decisions that have been made at any cost vs. being open to re-visit decisions (change your mind)
- Creating rigid systems or policies that hamper the ability of the team or organization to respond to new data

A strong bias toward a Flexible preference at the expense of the skills and attributes associated with the Structured preference risks ...

- Delaying critical decisions – beyond the point where new or 'missing' information adds significant value
- Immobilization due to sense of 'not enough data' with which to move on
- Too much time second guessing decisions made

Achieving balance in this dimension can be particularly critical and the basis of competitive edge within the context of complex work environments. Adaptability and the ability (both behaviorally and systemically) to respond to environmental shifts – coupled with decisiveness and implementing innovative decisions quickly – is a powerful combination.

Facilitator Tips:

- *It is important to think through the various measures and have a good understanding of the differences between the opposite ends of each continuum.*
- *For those of you who are familiar with, or accredited in, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), you will have noticed the parallel 'four measure' structure. Please note that the TMP is more narrowly focused on work. In your first few sessions, it will be important to consciously develop the discipline to use only work examples when working with these constructs. While there are overlaps – work (TMP) is part of life (MBTI) – Margerison & McCann's research demonstrated that individuals may have different preferences for their work activities.*
- *We strongly recommend the use of the Human Continuum exercise in your TMS workshops. It is a very powerful way to work with the Four Measures of Work Preference. You will find a full description on the website in the Network Member Resources section.*
- *There is one 'watch out for' when working with the Four Measures of Work Preference: when describing the differences between a preference for a Practical approach to information and a preference for a Creative approach to information, it is important to point out that you are not talking about 'Creativity'. Creativity plays out in a variety of ways with every preference. For example, an individual with a preference for a Practical approach to information and a Structured approach to organization is likely to apply their creativity to looking for solutions to very tangible and immediate challenges. A systems engineer, software/hardware designers, etc.*
- *You may be asked if preferences can change over time. From a research perspective, it is important to have an acceptable level of temporal stability and the TMP certainly meets this criteria. However, we are influenced by a number of variables in our work environments: job expectations, training & development, coaches & mentors, project work. Any of these may take us out of our comfort zone and, once we have some experience and develop competence in something a bit different, we may indeed begin to prefer it. So, short answer to that question is that "Yes, preferences can change. More importantly, people are able to develop both competence and confidence when working outside their preference."*

Your notes and questions regarding the TMP Four Measures of Work Preference:
