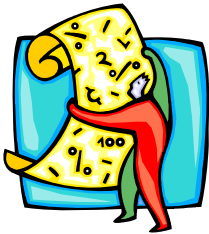


Your Birkman® Express Report

An Introductory Guide

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This step-by-step guide will take you through your Birkman® Express Report. Read through the guide and, when directed, refer to your report.

IMPORTANT: DON'T READ THIS GUIDE UNTIL AFTER YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR OWN BIRKMAN QUESTIONNAIRE.

(Reading the Guide first won't help you skew the results in a particular direction, but it might make them less accurate – and that won't help you at all!)

Introduction

Your Birkman® Express Report comprises four sections, titled: Areas of Interest (*1 page*), Life Style Grid (*10 pages*), Organiz. Focus Overview (*2 pages*) and Job Families/Job Titles (*5 or 6 pages*). This Guide will explain the significance of each section of the report and a little on how you might use this information.

Areas of Interest: Motivation

What gets you out of bed in the morning?

This first section of your report is about your motivation. When the word “motivation” is used, you might think of pay and benefits, or whether you have high energy levels or even whether you are good at getting *other* people moving.

That isn’t what we are looking at here. Rather you have an objective measure of ten fundamental areas of interest. These areas of interest will engage different people more or less powerfully. Understanding your relationship to these ten Areas of Interest will help you manage your activities in such a way as to keep yourself more motivated and your energy levels high.

Each of these Areas of Interest is scaled from 1-99. In general scores above 50 indicate that engaging this interest will increase your energy levels, and scores below 50 will drain your energy. Imagine a car, driving along the road. As long as the alternator is working, as the car drives along, its battery is continually being topped up. However, if the alternator fails, driving along will drain the battery. Carry on for long enough with a broken alternator and the car will stop – even if it has plenty of fuel in the tank. So Areas of Interest scores above 50 keep charging your battery; scores below 50 run it down.

The further a score is from 50, the more powerful that effect will tend to be. A score of 1 indicates that you would much rather not engage in activities focussed around this area of interest. A score of 99 indicates

that engaging in activities which satisfy this area of interest will be an immensely powerful motivator for you.

Birkman Express looks at ten specific but broad areas of interest, which between them impact most areas of activity, both at work and outside work. Let us look at them now.

Read the first page of your report (the one labelled Areas of Interest). Note both the order of the 10 Areas of Interest, and the score for each.

The order tells you which are your most powerful motivators. Whether or not your top score is high in absolute terms, for *you* it represents your most powerful motivator. You may have a top score which is lower than someone else's third or fourth highest score. That means that to you, this Area of Interest is probably more important than it is to them – even though they have a higher score for it.

The score tells you how you relate to the rest of the population. For example, a score of 99 tells you that your preference for, or relationship to, this Area of Interest puts you in the top percentile of the population. A score of 1 puts you in the bottom percentile, and so on. Remember: this isn't a judgement upon you or your skills; it is an objective measure of how motivating you find this Area of Interest.

You might also want to draw a horizontal line at 50, to remind you that activities engaging the interests above the line will tend to keep you motivated, and those below the line may tend to dent your motivation over time.



If you haven't already, read the definitions on the report, and then these further notes on each one.

Ten powerful Areas of Interest

Artistic

Working with “how things look” and the visual impact of things; creative activities with a strong visual element.

In the leisure hours, this interest plays out in some obvious ways – painting and drawing or photography as a pastime for example – but others can include other activities with a strong visual component like gardening, amateur dramatics, and visiting museums.

Clerical

Working with systems and the management of data; “keeping the show on the road”.

In leisure time, people with a high score for this interest may keep and arrange collections (music / butterflies / stamps / vintage car parts / etc) or act as secretary or record-keeper for clubs and societies to which they belong.

Literary

Working with words and the communication of abstract ideas; creative activities with a strong verbal element.

In leisure time, this interest can express itself in reading for pleasure (of any kind – history, poetry, novels) or listening to radio plays and other serialisations; or in writing (stories, guidebooks, diaries, etc).

Mechanical

Working with technology and “how things work”; getting hands-on with problem-solving.

Leisure activities for people with a high score on this interest will tend to be active and hands-on; there are some obvious candidates (knitting and sewing, sailing, repairing old cars or other machinery, working with the local Steam Preservation Society or National Trust Mill or Forge, flying model aircraft, etc) but essentially any activity using equipment or technology may engage this interest.

Musical

Working with “how things sound” and the auditory impact of things; creative activities involving speech and/or music.

Typical leisure activities for this interest are as you would expect! Remember that a high score has no correlation to musical skill or aptitude; simply that music and sound matters to you a lot.

Numerical

Working with figures and the analysis of data; “making it all add up”.

Leisure activities for people with a high Numerical score can include statistical analysis relating to hobbies and sports (e.g. bird migration counts, player stats, etc) , stock market investments, keeping household accounts and so on.

Outdoors

Working outside in all weathers or at least working away from a desk; work and leisure activities involving the outdoors.

Typical leisure activities for high scores on this interest will all involve being outdoors regardless of the weather, and tend to be active. What more can we say!

Persuasive

Using sophisticated selling methods to engage and persuade others; selling ideas as well as things.

In leisure time, people with a high score for this interest may get involved in public speaking or debating, political activism (e.g. grass roots party worker), running a business on eBay - or simply spending plenty of time with stimulating people (friends or strangers – e.g. networking events).

Scientific

Engaging in scientific activities involving theory and/or experimentation; understanding “why”.

Leisure activities for this interest can include amateur science (e.g. studying flora, fauna and ecology), involvement in environmental issues, reading technical journals and scientific books for pleasure, research (any subject, using books, online resources etc) and so on.

Social Service

Working to bring about benefit for others, whether practical, financial, emotional or spiritual.

Typical leisure activities for people with a high score on this interest will tend to involve working with or spending time with others and for the benefit of others.

Here's the really important bit:

Managing yourself by your Areas of Interest

A score below 50 – even a score of 3 or 4 – doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't be doing this activity. For one thing, this part of the report is not about skill (actually none of the report is about skill; it is about how you are wired and what will make you happy and successful).

So, for example, you could be working as a very successful (and happy) accountant with a Numerical score of 1. (You would be unusual, but it is possible). What we could say for certain, though, would be that it wasn't working with Numbers that kept you motivated in this job.

By looking at your highest scores and at your specific role, we would almost certainly find that you were engaging a different Area of Interest.

For example, I have worked with very successful (and happy) accountants whose Numerical score was low and whose Social Service score was in the high 90's. What kept them motivated? Not working with numbers – but rather, working to make the client's business better for all those involved in it as employees, owners or customers.

See how this works?

What about the job that engages none of your high scores? Are you in the wrong job? Should you leave?

Possibly – why do a job that ticks none of your boxes?

(Well, sometimes economic necessity, your skills base, your sense of duty or one of a hundred other reasons... just be sure the reasons are really valid!)

There is still a way around this situation though; if you can't engage your highest scores at work, then – make sure you do *outside* of work. This would explain the person who sits at a desk far from the window,

pushing paper all day, and who on arriving home, even if it is pouring with rain, heads straight outside to work in the garden. Their job has done nothing for their high Outdoor and Artistic scores, but working in the garden (in the rain and/or the failing light) surely does.

Life Style Grid: Behaviour

Your Life Style Grid® begins on page 2 of your report. Before you look at that, there are some important foundations we need to lay...

What are other people like?

If I ask what other people are like, how would you answer? When asked this question in workshops, people's answers often include: "difficult", "strange", "similar to me", "reasonable" and "space aliens".

The answer I am listening for is simply "different". This isn't really rocket science! But here is why it is an important answer:

All of us, including those of us who go around telling others how strange we are, in our heart of hearts see ourselves as in some way defining normality. You could draw a dot in the middle of a page to represent yourself as the definition of "normal".

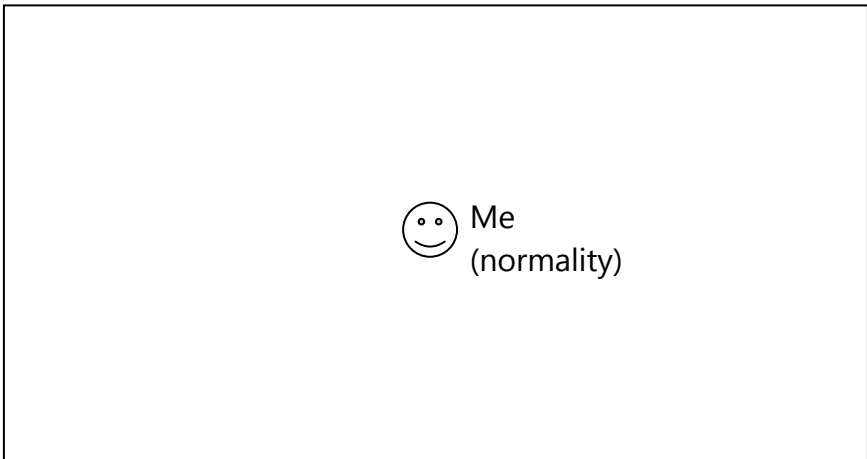


Fig 1. I am my own definition of 'normal'

Other people would then be categorised by how far away from that normality they appear to be.

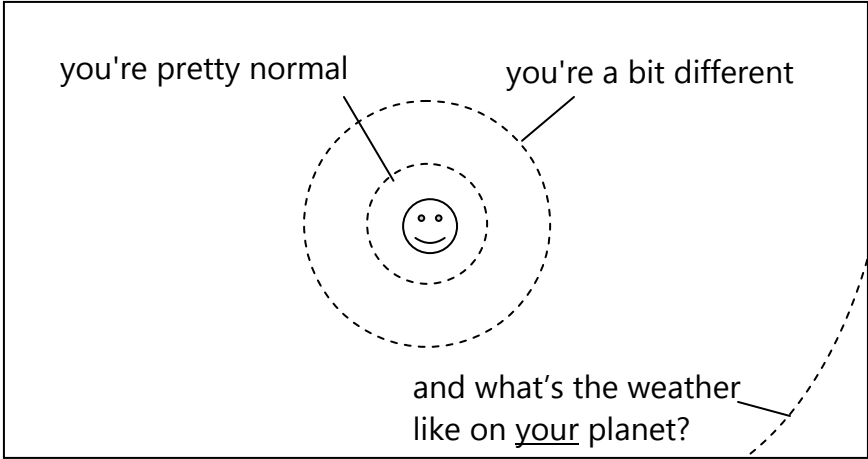


Fig 2. How other people compare to me

What you are going to get from this part of the Birkman® Express Report, is an objective frame of reference. Every point on this Grid is “normal”. Unless you fall right in the centre of it, you will realise that actually your view of yourself as the centre of normality is a little deficient. For example, if like me you fall in this corner of the Grid, you will have to recognise that in fact there are very few people to the “South” or “East” of you.

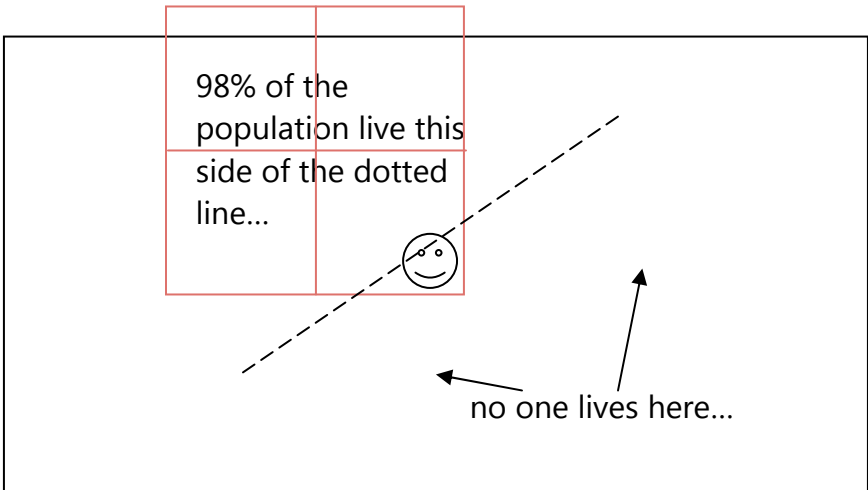


Fig 3. Imposing an objective frame of reference

Most of the population are more whatever the North-West corner represents than you are – but you (and they) are not abnormal; just *different*.

Once you learn to understand the implications of your own profile *and* of what it would mean to be different from you, you can start to relate to, and work with, people who are very different with much greater understanding and make the most of your complementary strengths and perspectives.

What do other people like?

In case you did a double take, go back a page and check. This is a different question. That was “what are other people like?” This is “what do they like?” In other words, how do other people want to be treated; in what kind of environment will they work most effectively; and so on.

If we draw a scale from 1 to 99, call it “How I Behave” and label it as follows:

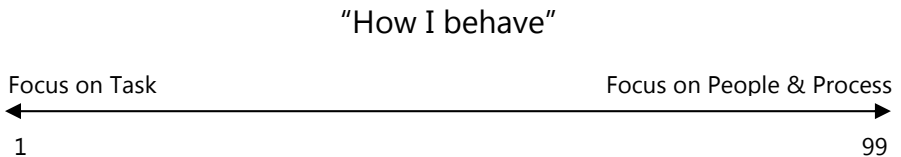
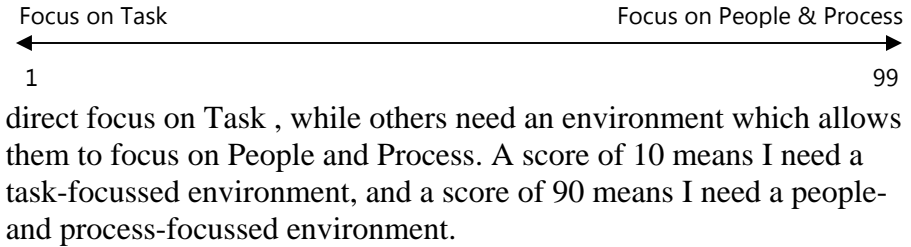


Fig.4. How I behave

what we are saying is that some people will behave in a manner that focuses directly on a task, and others will focus more on the people and processes required to do a task. Someone with a score of 10 is going to focus mostly on the Task, someone with a score of 90 is going to focus mostly on People and Process.

If we now draw a second identical scale but call it “What I Need”, we are saying that some people need an environment which supports

“What I need”



direct focus on Task , while others need an environment which allows them to focus on People and Process. A score of 10 means I need a task-focussed environment, and a score of 90 means I need a people- and process-focussed environment.

Fig. 5. What I need

The £64,000 Question:

If I know how someone behaves (which is easy – behaviour is something you can observe), then what assumptions can I make about what environment they need?

Despite the fact that we would probably agree that a person’s needs can be something internal and hidden, few of us hesitate to guess. So, if we see someone whose behaviour puts them at around 80 on the “How I Behave” scale, we assume what?

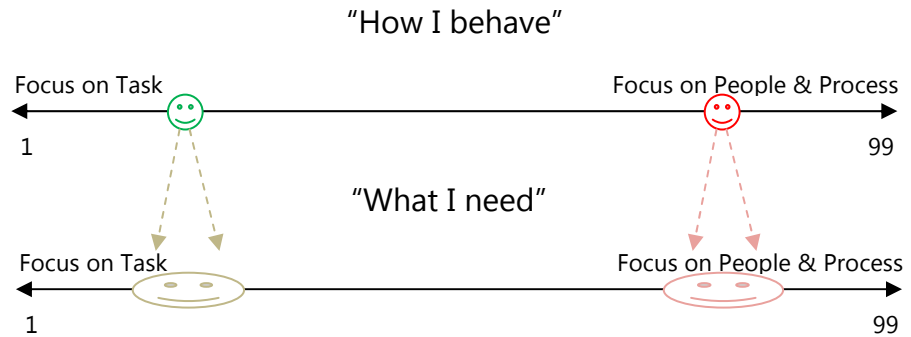


Fig.6. The natural assumption

That's right – we assume they will need an environment of around 85 on the “What I need Scale”. They focus on People and Process; that must be what they need from others and from their environment.

Likewise, someone around 15 on the “How I Behave” scale is probably going to need a “low-end” environment – they are Task-focussed, so will need an environment which permits focus on Task.

Perfectly reasonable – and completely ... **wrong!**

More than 50 years of research carried out by the Birkman organisation suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between how a person chooses to behave and what they would like from others or their environment. **Usual Behaviour** and **Needs** (to give them their Birkman labels) are independent variables. How I behave (visible) gives no reliable clue as to my underlying Needs (hidden).

And the problem is that we all behave as if the two were directly related. If I see that you are (for example) someone who communicates in a very direct and “up-front” manner, I assume that is what you would like from others. Dumb luck and the law of averages means I will be right some of the time – and wrong most of the time.



Have a quick look at the second page of your report.

We will explain the colours and symbols in a moment, but first of all, just look at where the Diamond and (combined) Circle/Square are in relation to each other. If these are very close together, you are probably one of the “lucky” ones who in general is fairly easy to read. That is, when people observe your behaviour and respond to you accordingly, it should meet your Needs most of the time. The rest of us are a little different: any significant distance between the Diamond and Circle/Square suggests that people will misread your Needs at least some of the time, because their assumptions (based upon your visible behaviour) will not match the underlying (hidden) reality.

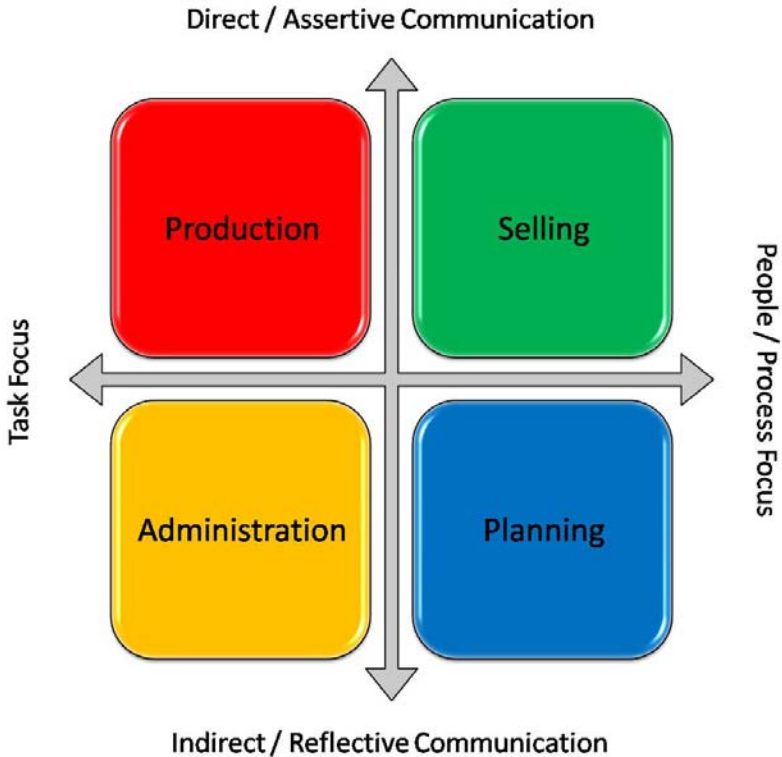
Learn the Language of Colours

If you have printed your report out, you might want to make some notes on that second page (the one titled “Life Style Grid®”). The colours don’t just relate to the Grid (although that is where we are going to learn them). You have probably noticed all of your report is very colourful already!

The Life Style Grid® is a two by two matrix and has – of course – two dimensions. From left to right we are looking at FOCUS (the scale we used as an example above). To the left you have FOCUS on TASK. To the right you have FOCUS on PEOPLE and PROCESS.

From top to bottom, we are looking at COMMUNICATION. At the top of the scale you have DIRECT or ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION. At the bottom you have INDIRECT or REFLECTIVE COMMUNICATION.

Now that we know what the dimensions are, we can “multiply them out” and arrive at definitions of the four Birkman® Colours.



Red – Task-focussed and Direct/Assertive; we will call this the **PRODUCTION** quadrant. It is about getting things done (preferably by yesterday or - RIGHT NOW would do...)

Green – People- and Process-Focussed and Direct/Assertive; we will call this the **SELLING** quadrant. It is about getting things sold (ideas as well as things) and spotting today’s opportunities. *Carpe diem...*

Yellow – Task-focussed and Indirect/Reflective; we will call this the **ADMINISTRATION** or **SYSTEMS** quadrant. It is about keeping things on track, with good records and compliance. What has proven track record in the past means more than your guesses about the future...

Blue – People- and Process-Focussed and Indirect/Reflective; we will call this the **PLANNING** or **CREATIVE** quadrant. It is about innovation and strategy. Less worried about today than where we might be in 6 months or 6 years...

The Grid Symbols: Four dimensions of behaviour

We are nearly ready to read the Life Style Grid® section of the report; we just need to talk about the four symbols you will come across.

Four symbols? Yes – it looks like just three only because two of the symbols are always superimposed on the Grid.

The Asterisk (Interests) *

In broad-brushstroke terms, what motivates you?



Read the pages (numbered Page 1 and Page 2) about your Interests to find out.

Where does the Asterisk come from? It is a weighted average of your Areas of Interest scores. As you surely noticed, your Areas of Interest bars were all colour-coded. Without getting into the detail, the one or two colours of each bar tell you how your score on the bar will move your Asterisk around the Grid.

Because there are more blue coded bars than green ones, you need more high blue scores to pull you towards the blue corner than you would need green ones to end up in the green corner. If that confuses you – it isn't really important. All you need to know is that your Areas of Interest scores look like this when they are put together.

The Diamond (Usual Behaviour) ◆

The Diamond represents - once again in broad brushstrokes - your Usual Behaviour. If your Diamond is in the top half of the grid, other people are more likely to see you as somewhat Direct or Assertive in the way you communicate, if in the lower half then more Indirect or Reflective. If your Diamond is to the left of the grid they will be more

likely to see you as somewhat Task-focussed, if to the right then more focussed upon People and Process.

The Diamond is the combination of – what? The answer is that the Diamond represents the combination of 9 behavioural components to which you don't have access in the Express version of Birkman (see the end of this guide for information on how to obtain the full Birkman Advanced Report). Each of these behavioural components (plus two more which don't impact the Grid) is divided into three scores: Usual Behaviour, Needs and Stress. The Diamond is the aggregate of the Usual Behaviour scores for these 9 behavioural components.



Even though you don't have the underlying scores, you should find the description of your Usual Behaviour (on the pages numbered Page 3 and Page 4) fits pretty comfortably.

The Circle (Needs) ○

The Circle represents your underlying Needs. If your Circle lies in the upper half of the Grid, you most likely prefer an environment offering clear and direct communication, if in the lower half of the Grid, then an environment offering more opportunity to reflect and communicate by indirect means (e.g. plans, metaphors, pictures rather than open debate).

Once again, this score is derived from the nine behavioural components, only this time the Needs scores of those components.



Read the Needs Pages (5 and 6)

The Square (Stress)

The Square represents how you may behave when your Needs are not being met over time. Stress in this context is not about long hours or demanding targets (although that may be something which doesn't meet your Needs and therefore contributes to you behaving according to your Stress scores).

Same as above – this score is derived from those nine behavioural components, only this time the Stress scores of those components.



Read the Stress Pages (7 & 8)

So – why is the Square always superimposed on the Circle?

Good question. Remember earlier, we said that there is no statistical relationship at all between Usual Behaviour and Needs? The same is not true of Needs and Stress. In fact, for the most part (a very important qualification) Stress is best understood as a counter-productive attempt to get your Needs met.

Let me illustrate (but **skip this section** if it doesn't interest you!) If I Need people to take account of my feelings and self image when communicating (a behavioural component we call **Esteem**), but instead I get very frank communication all the time, my Stress behaviour is likely to be that I will withdraw and become somewhat evasive. That is a counterproductive attempt to get my needs met; by withdrawing I am not exposed to the frank communication. The “counterproductive” aspect is that this won't really help me – and if the frank communicators care to track me down and confront me about my withdrawal or evasion the situation gets worse!

Most people however have at least one behavioural component where their Stress behaviour is the opposite of what we would expect if we knew their Needs score. For example, a person exposed to too much unexpected **Change** (another component) would be expected to resist

Change (the usual Stress behaviour associated with a Need to be protected from unexpected Change). Except there are people out there – I am one of them – who need protection from unexpected Change and yet whose Stress behaviour is to create even more disturbance and Change. In this case there is an inverse relationship between Need and Stress – which accounts for my “for the most part” two paragraphs above!

Coming back to the Grid, we don’t get into any of that detail here, so the Circle and Square are always super-imposed. If you find that there are one or two phrases on your Stress pages that don’t sound quite right, you may be feeling the impact of one or two of those “Reversed” Needs – Stress relationships in your profile. Most of us should find most of it pretty accurate, however.

Putting it all together

Your Asterisk tells us what you want to see achieved (because it is what you are most motivated about).

Your Diamond tells us how you will normally go about achieving those (Asterisk) goals – but only to the extent that your underlying Circle Needs are being met most of the time.

If your Circle Needs are not being met over time, we will start to see less Diamond Usual (Productive) Behaviour and more and more Square Stress Behaviour.



If you haven’t already – read through all 10 of the Life Style Grid® pages!

Organizational Focus Overview: Perceptions and Approach

Up until now, we have been breaking things down – Areas of Interest, Usual Behaviour, Needs, Stress. Now we are headed in the other direction. Let's forget the different dimensions of motivation and behaviour, and instead aggregate everything together (actually about 100 independent scores go into this pot, in a two-stage process), and see how you come out in terms of the four Birkman® colours.

Why would we do this? Essentially because it tells us about the perspectives you bring to any task or problem. Everybody has something of all four colours; some may have one or two very dominant perspectives, others may have three or even all four as dominant, yet others may have comparatively little influence from any of the four perspectives. None of these are particularly better or worse (a value judgement), they simply explain why you see things the way you do.

In general, your longest bar (on this part of the report) represents your primary response to situations and problem-solving. If the bar is long, that response will be strong, if it is short then somewhat less marked. If there are other bars of roughly the same length, those perspectives are more likely to be in the mix of how you approach the problem or situation, if not then the longest bar probably determines your approach.

Why this matters is particularly where you are working with others. If you ever find that what seems obvious to you passes others by (and *vice versa*) you are probably working with different perspectives. Learning to understand what it is that they see that you don't (and *vice versa*) means you are likely to end up with better solutions and more effective group working.



Read the Organizational Focus Pages.

Job Families / Job Titles: Career Orientation

This final section of your Report matches you against people known to be successful and to have tenure in each of 167 specific career roles, grouped into 3 Management Styles (Purple bars) and 21 other Job Families. If you look a lot like people in that role and Job Family, you will have a long bar. A short bar suggests you don't look a lot like people in this role or Job Family.



Read the Job Families / Job Titles Pages now.

How should you use this information?

If you come out with a high match for something unrelated to your current job, should you resign and change careers?

This part of the report isn't telling you what you should be doing. Although it is unusual, it does happen that people are happy and successful in a job for which they have an apparently poor match. Almost invariably though, they will be succeeding by bringing atypical perspectives to that role. If they are a database administrator and have a very low match for that kind of role, but a high match for various sales roles, it is likely that they are a very "outside the box" kind of database admin. (This is an actual example – the person in question spent far more time networking with humans than computers and as a result kept their organisation at the leading edge of good practice).

However, that said: in general, it is easier to succeed in roles for which you have a high match. If you suddenly found yourself working in a role for which you have no experience but a high match, you could expect to be surprised by the extent to which you would talk and think like those around you in that new role, even if you were racing to try and catch up with the missing skills.

How do you use this information, then? If you are making career decisions, it can be a helpful guide or a starting point. If you are

already in a career, it may give you ideas as to how to shape your role. For example, if you have a lot of green matches, look for more opportunity to present to groups or exercise persuasion; if a lot of yellow matches, look for more opportunities to contribute to building or specifying systems and procedures – and so on.

Going Deeper Still

You have several options if you would like to explore this information about you further.

One is to contact us to find out about Birkman® Express events which may be planned in your area. These workshops can help you get a much greater facility with using this data to manage yourself.

Secondly, you can request a one-to-one telephone session with a certified Birkman® Consultant, who can talk you through how all of this works in your life and work.

Finally, you can obtain the full Birkman® Advanced Report (usually accompanied by a telephone consultation). This gives you access to the behavioural components underlying the Grid, plus some very powerful additional insights into your fit for various organisational and professional roles and styles.

For details on any of this, please email birkman@cff.org.uk with details of your interest and we will put you in touch with the right people.

About the Author

Jon Mason is a New Zealander who has worked as a consultant and trainer in all three sectors (public, private and not-for-profit) and in Australia, Asia and the UK. He has been working with the Birkman® Method since 2000 with a wide range of clients from individuals looking at career change to global corporations. He has also authored software which extends the functionality of the Birkman®. He qualified as a Birkman® Senior Consultant in 2007.

He is married to Sarah (also a Birkman Consultant) with four children, at the time of writing is moving from Plymouth to Cardiff, plays tenor sax and keyboards and would probably rather be outside in a storm...