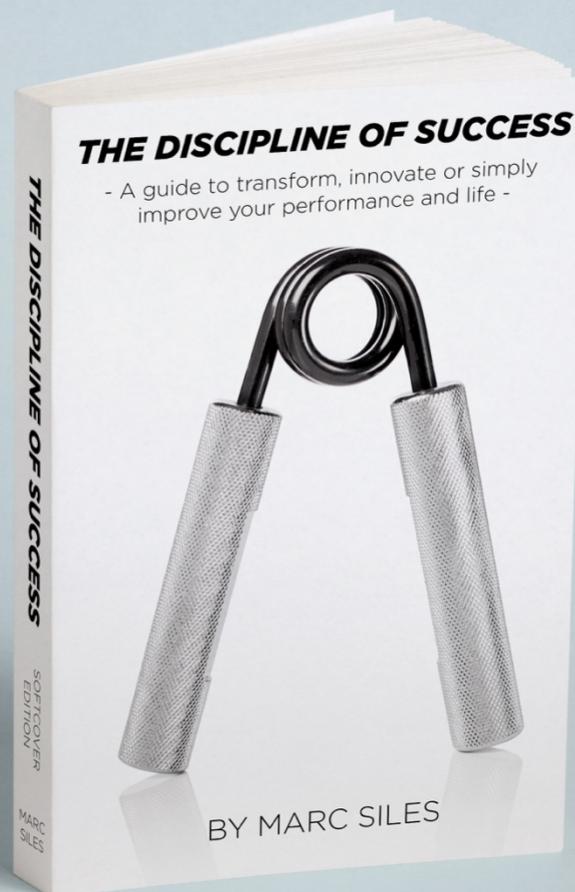


How To Know Yourself In The Work Environment
Article extracted from the upcoming book:

THE DISCIPLINE OF SUCCESS

-A guide to transform, innovate or simply
improve your performance and life-



“Enhance Your Growth With Smart Strategic Planning” By Marc Siles

It was a couple of years ago, during a seminar I was delivering in Norway that a few phones started to received messages at the same time. Something had happened back at the office, and it required immediate attention from quite many of the participants. One of the managers let me know what the situation was, and we decided to stop the session for one hour so they could take care of the urgent matters they had to. During that time, I chose to stay in the room and observed how they were handling the issue.

I noticed how a few of them kept calm, moving into problem-solving mode quite fast. Others went into raising worries and concerns openly and being pessimistic about the whole situation. After the initial chaos, the team started to organize. A few people engaged together to try to find solutions to the problem, while others were looking for their own space to understand what had happened and maybe find answers. Some of them were being extremely direct on their opinions, while others were more careful and trying to find ways for the team to deploy a solution together.

After a few discussions and exchange of opinions, I noticed how some of the ideas proposed were simple and based on past solutions, while others tended to be a bit more complicated and creative. While trying to explain the concepts, some would go into all details and steps needed to take while others would provide a higher picture level and addressing the things which needed to be changed. In the end, a couple of the team members with higher drive took charge of the next steps and pushed the team to reach a consensus and a concrete conclusion, to assign then a responsible for each of the tasks and clarify the next steps. One of them was showing concerns to make sure everybody's needs had been covered. In contrast, another of the team members had been very reserved and only spoke when he was assigned a task to perform as she thought more planning need to be done before the execution was started.

In the end, the team was able to solve the problem, and we could continue with the seminar. It's not relevant what the problem was, but what I was fascinated with was the team dynamics and how each personality had been interacting and playing a role in solving the problem. After I shared my observations with the team, it came off a big surprise for a lot of them, as this was an area they had never thought before. It became evident at that point for the team the big opportunity they would enjoy by spending more time understanding their preferences and behavior patterns, as well as understanding and accepting those of others.

Executive high-performance at its best

After coaching and mentoring executives and professionals all over the world, it has come to my notice certain common factors that drive high-performance and productivity. I like to call those factors “secret keys,” and it’s their mastering that will allow us to unlock the opportunity to experience the essence of our visions and goals.*

One of those keys is based on the handcraft of knowing-thyself and self-acceptance. This mastery will allow us to connect with our core performance drivers, gaining a better understanding of how to accelerate growth enhanced by developing plans that fit those drivers.

Deepening our level of self-awareness will also allow us to adapt better to the needs of the moment and context, and excel as well at the art of cooperating with others. Some psychology theories also

link some of these factors with the feeling of fulfillment and wellbeing.* I would summarize the action plan as: first, understand yourself, then understand others before you are understood.

Using a well-grounded and validated profiling tool like the Workplace Big Five Profile™ 4.0 will facilitate your learning path, providing guidance, and a space for reflection and self-discovery.

What does the personality test really tell you?

Take a pen and a blank piece of paper and write down your name and surname. Now, do the same but with the other hand, so if you first wrote down your name with your right hand, use now your left hand to perform the same operation.

Which differences did you notice from using your preferred hand to write down your name versus using the non-preferred one? As you realized, you were most likely able to complete the task with both of your hands, but when using the non-preferred one, perhaps you had to focus more, it took a bit longer, and it might even have consumed more energy than when using your preferred one. It could also be that when comparing both results, the quality is not the same, even if the person behind it was.

Sometimes, like in this example, it is obvious which preferences we have, but some other times we need to do more profound reflective work to understand them and how they impact our performance and leadership capabilities.

It's vital to keep in mind that we all can learn to develop any capability and use all traits from our profile, but there is one main trade-off item that will be present at all times - that is, energy. This means that every time we behave or act in a way that is not aligned with who we truly are, it will consume a relative amount of energy. I am not saying that you must avoid those moments, as some situations will require you to use your non-preferred traits to obtain the expected performance. What you must remember is to manage your energy levels, and make sure you have your energy tanks full when you need to engage with energy-draining activities and that you recover well afterward.

How to know yourself in the work environment to unlock your full potential

In Japanese gardening, “Nemawashi (根回し)” is a unique technique of taking care of the roots used when transplanting trees to enhance growth. In this process, each portion of the root system is given particular nurturing attention and preparing it for change to better soil and growth. It's only when the roots are adequately prepared and well cared for that the tree will survive and prosper.

As I see it, the same approach entails the secret of sustainable performance and success. Some lucky leaders in business have landed in an environment that is wonderfully adapted for their unique personality, a surrounding with perfect soil and strong roots... but most are not.

How can you understand how to take care of your roots and get ready for true growth?

Over the last years, I have seen over and over again all over the world, excellent professionals who have to struggle with their environment every day. Learning to enhance your growth with smart strategic planning is a critical skill we all need to incorporate in your toolbox today.

For that purpose, I use five Supertraits from WorkPlace Big Five™ to help guide business leaders towards their optimum performance environment.

When we understand how our personality relates to our performance, preferences, and behaviors, we'll be in the perfect position to apply the “Art of Nemawashi.” Know-Thyself to unlock your full potential.

Let's explore each of the Workplace Big Five dimensions. To make this exercise relevant for you, keep in mind which are the demands and needs of your work to deliver high-performance, and your natural preferences if you had a free choice (not what you have learned about how you must behave.)

The Big Five trait report is based on 5 Supertraits and 23 Subtraits that simply and clearly explain work-related behaviors that all of us observe, hear, read, or experience every day in us, our co-workers, employees, managers, and colleagues.

The five Supertraits of the WorkPlace that describe work-related behaviors are*:

1. **Need for Stability:** Explains how people at work respond to and handle stressful situations, a critical aspect of today's successful work environment.
2. **Extraversion:** Defines how people at work tolerate and deal with sensory bombardment or the lack of it, as when people work alone at home, which can come in the form of people, situations, and sensory experiences such as a three-day senior management off-site strategy meeting.
3. **Originality:** Illustrates how open and accepting people at work are to new experiences, ideas, and change.
4. **Accommodation:** Measures how easily or uneasily people defer to others—this Supertrait relates directly to power and how to use it effectively.
5. **Consolidation:** Explains the degree to which people at work focus on their work, goal accomplishment, and needs for achievement and success.

Let's review one by one each dimension to understanding how it relates to our preferences.

The first Supertrait is “N: Need for stability.” That is the degree to which we respond to stress being alert and reactive, remaining calm and resilient, or somewhere in between being responsive. We can make a better sense of how we related to this dimension by trying to answer the following questions based on each Subtrait:

- **Worry:** How often do you experience concern, and which signs let you know that this is the case?
- **Intensity:** How easy is it to make you angry?
- **Interpretation:** In front of a stressful situation at work, those that know you well would describe you as being: usually pessimistic, optimistic, and upbeat, or somewhere in between?
- **Rebound Time:** How long does it typically take you to recover after an intense, stressful situation?

A better understanding of how we worry, our level of intensity, how we interpret situations, and the amount of time we require to get over stress will help you to understand better your resilience towards and stress and how you react towards it, as well as others.

The second Supertrait is “E: Extraversion,” which is the degree to which we tolerate sensory stimulation from people and situations being socially involved most of the time, preferring to work alone or shifting between both being an ambivert. We can make a better sense of how we related to this dimension by trying to answer the following questions based on each Subtrait:

- Warmth: How difficult do you find to develop close friendships?
- Sociability: Do you rather spend most of your time working with others or alone?
- Activity Mode: Which percentage of your day would you rather spend still in one place, and which moving around?
- Taking Charge: How often do you tend to volunteer to take the lead?
- Trust of Others: How do you decide if you trust others or not?
- Tact: How careful are you selecting words before telling others your opinion?

A better understanding of how we express positive feelings, enjoy being with others, our need to keep on the move, our tendency to want to lead others, our belief on others and the care we take in our speaking will help you to understand better the degree to how you tolerate sensory stimulation from people and situations, and how you react towards it, as well as others.

The third Supertrait is “O: Originality,” which is the degree to which we are open to new experiences and new ways of doing things being an explorer of new options, tending to preserve the way things are done or somewhere in between being moderate. We can make a better sense of how we related to this dimension by trying to answer the following questions based on each Subtrait:

- Imagination: How would you rate your level of creativity?
- Complexity: Do you feel more motivated in front of simple or complex challenges?
- Change: Do you rather find solutions based on past solutions or in new ways to do things?
- Scope: When planning, do you feel comfortable with a big-picture description, or do you rather have as many details as possible beforehand?

A better understanding of our preferences for inventing ideas, how we make things complex, our easiness to accept change, and our tolerance for handling details will help you to understand better the degree to which you are open to new experiences and new ways of doing things, as well as others.

The fourth Supertrait is “A: Accommodation,” which is the degree to which we defer to others, adapting more to others’ authority, negotiating to look for a win-win outcome, or being more of a challenger. We can make a better sense of how we related to this dimension by trying to answer the following questions based on each Subtrait:

- Others’ Needs: How do you balance your own needs with those of others?

- Agreement: How do you usually react in front of a conflict or disagreement?
- Humility: How would you rate your capabilities in comparison to an average person?
- Reserve: During meetings, how often do you express opinions versus keeping them for yourself?

A better understanding of how we inconvenience ourselves for others, our driving force during conflict, our wished level of recognition and the degree to which we voice opinions to others will help you to understand better the degree to which you to others, as well as the rest, relates to this dimension.

The fifth and last Supertrait is “C: Consolidation,” which is the degree to which we push towards goals being more focused and goal-oriented, multitasking with flexible open-ends, or balancing both dimensions being balanced. We can make a better sense of how we related to this dimension by trying to answer the following questions based on each Subtrait:

- Perfectionism: How often do you find yourself retaking completed tasks to refine or polish them?
- Organization: How organized would you consider yourself?
- Drive: How strong is your drive to achieve your defined goals?
- Concentration: How difficult do you find to stay focused and avoid distractions?
- Methodicalness: What is your approach to planning before taking action?

A better understanding of how we strive for perfectionism, how we stay organized, we pushed we feel to achieve, how we sustain our attention, and the amount of planning we do will help you to understand better the degree to which you to others, as well as others.

To get the best out of your profile and that you are using reliable and official sources, make sure that you work it out together with a Big Five certified coach.

How to enhance your leadership performance

There is a difference between the handcrafts we develop as leaders and how our personality and preferences affect our behavior. Both are needed to deliver high performance as leaders. The continuous work on your self-awareness will allow you to create better development plans by noticing which are the capabilities you need to enhance to grow as a leader, putting a particular focus on your preferences. The aim to achieve the highest fit between our preferences and the competencies needed to satisfy the role’s performance requirements (go to appendix A to see all competencies).

The Workplace Big Five Profile™ Trait Capacitor Report is an additional report based on your initial profile that estimates how your energy capacity impacts your needed competences. This means how much they energize or drain your energy levels after spending a considerable amount of time using that capability.

The development of targeted development strategies will enhance your growth. To do that, first think about which competencies you need to excel at work, and how they related to your preferences.

For example, a few weeks ago, I was having a coaching session with a client using this approach. Let's call him Antti to keep his identity confidential. Antti chose ten core competencies he believed he needed to deliver a high-performance at work, out of the 54 key competences, the Big Five Profile™ has mapped out. These 54 competencies are categorized in 8 different groups: capacity for interpersonal skills, capacity for leadership, capacity for managing others, capacity for managing processes, capacity for professional growth, capacity for sales, capacity for self-Management, and capacity for work mechanics.

Let's take a look at the top three Antti chose to see how the report was used to create a development plan. Those were: "Risk taking," "Teamwork and cooperation," and "Facilitation."

"Risk taking" is related to a strong sense of curiosity, challenging, and being comfortable with the unknown. Antti's estimated fit for this competence was very high. This meant that it was energizing him every time he had the opportunity to use this competence. His performance at work on this dimension was very good, so he put "Risk taking" together with the other competencies that rated on the same level in the bucket of "Look for more opportunities to use at work and teach to others."

"Teamwork and cooperation" relate to how we balance our personal agendas with those from the team, focusing on the one-team spirit development and how we enjoy being part of it. Antti's estimated fit was medium. For him, it meant that some situations, like social events with a high level of engagement, were energizing him, but other situations like being optimistic through difficult times required a conscious energy investment. Antti also noticed the opportunities to perform better at this dimension, so he put "Teamwork and cooperation" together with the other competencies that rated on the same level in the bucket of "Register into a training program and get a mentor to support my development."

"Facilitation" requires an attitude towards win-win negotiation outcomes, constructive conflict management approach, and getting the best out of each team member while leaving personal agendas aside. Antti's estimated fit was low. This meant that it was draining and stressing activity for him to undertake, especially when he experienced resistance in the team to change things and keep things the way things are. Antti also noticed the opportunities to improve as he got feedback from his team about his poor facilitation skills. To perform better at this dimension, so he put "Facilitation" together with the other competencies that rated on the same level in the bucket of "Delegate when low in energy and find support for delivering the task." This meant that he recognized that even if he improved his facilitation skills, it would be energy-draining for him. He identified the opportunity to delegate the task to other team members who were good and energized by it, or if not possible, he would ask for help to be assisted by an expert when he had to facilitate a session.

Following Antti's example and identifying the competences to develop and your level of performance at the moment, notice the three focused strategies you can use to draft your growth plan:

- 1- The Leverage Strategy: Look for more opportunities to use at work and teach to others.
- 2- The Development Strategy: Register into a training program and get a mentor to support your development.
- 3- The Support Strategy: Delegate when low in energy and find support for delivering the task.

The road to high-performance

Art Markman, a Ph.D. and professor of psychology and marketing at the University of Texas at Austin, said that “Personality is a broad name for reasonable stable differences between people in the way they act and react in particular situations.” As we saw on the situation in Norway encountered a few years ago, different challenges may trigger different reactions on us, but in the long run, there will be a pattern that we will tend to prefer — of course, assuming that we have a certain level of choice.

The more aware we are of our preferences, how they relate to our energy levels, and needed competencies to deliver a high-performance outcome, the better development plans and strategies we will be able to create and deploy.

And remember, first understand yourself, then understand others before you are understood.

Appendix A

Capacity for Interpersonal Skills

1. Diversity, Comfort with
2. Facilitation
3. Humor
4. Informing Others
5. Listening
6. Teamwork and Cooperation

Capacity for Leadership

7. Ambition
8. Development of Personnel
9. Diplomacy
10. Entrepreneurship
11. Basic Leadership Orientation
12. Motivation of Others
13. Political Savvy

Capacity for Managing Others

14. Decision-Making Skills
15. Delegation
16. Follow Through
17. Hiring and Staffing
18. Meeting Management
19. Objectivity
20. Performance Focus

Capacity for Managing Processes

21. Adherence to Policy
22. Managing through Systems
23. Organization
24. Planning
25. Quality Orientation
26. Safety Orientation
27. Customer Service Orientation

Capacity for Professional Growth

28. Ambiguity & Paradox, Comfort with
29. Innovation, Comfort with
30. Creativity
31. Flexibility
32. Future Orientation/Visionary Outlet
33. Overseas Work Success, Likelihood of
34. Range of Perspective and Interests
35. Risk Taking

Capacity for Sales

36. Competitiveness
37. Optimism
38. Presentation Skills
39. Sales Orientation
40. Self Confidence

Capacity for Self-Management

41. Responsibility Acceptance
42. Action Orientation
43. Independently, Comfort Working
44. Reliability and Consistency
45. Self Control
46. Self Development
47. Work/Life Balance

Capacity for Work Mechanics

48. Analytical Thinking
49. Business Acumen
50. Keyboarding Skills
51. Numerical Accuracy
52. Paperwork, Comfort with
53. Technical Learning
54. Written Communications

Sources:

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- <https://aboveorbeyondjm.com/content/workplace-big-five-profiletm-40>

Appendix B

The Discipline Of Success – Book Index

Introduction - The Spirit Of The Book

- I- A personal note from the author
- II- The struggles of change: Crisis as a source of radical growth
- III- How to use this guide

Chapter 1 – The Theoretical Background

- I- The Growth Jaws Principle
- II- Redefining trust, success and results
- III- The mindset journey

Chapter 2 – The Core Principles

- I- The anatomy of a High-Performer
- II- Basics on the essence of Goal-getting and Growth Mindset
- III- The seven secret keys of a High-Performer: Introduction

Chapter 3 – The D.O.S. Guide

- I- The Discipline: Bringing focus and commitment
- II- The game within
- III- The Discipline of Success reloaded

Bonus Chapter - How To Bring The Discipline Of Success To Your Company

- I- A cultural framework to design and work with an agile strategy
- II- How to implement incentives, KPIs and management by OKRs
- III- Developing Growth Agents™ to create a sustainable future