PARADIGM
PERSONALITY LABS

INTRODUCTION TO

THE FIVE FACTOR MODEL AND
THE WORKPLACE BIG FIVE PROFILE™

INTRODUCTION

At Paradigm Personality Labs, we believe understanding people is the key to unlocking business success. The WorkPlace Big Five Profile™, our premiere personality assessment, is widely leveraged for human capital performance on nearly every continent.

From global corporations to private consulting firms, the WorkPlace Big Five Profile™ offers in-depth personality insights that help people thrive in any organization.

Referred to as the gold standard of personality measurement by psychologists and researchers, the Five Factor Model (FFM) is the core of the WorkPlace Big Five Profile™. This model defines personality through five distinct dimensions, and has been heavily researched and validated over time. A pure FFM tool, our assessment is one of the most psychometrically valid and reliable assessments in the industry. It is appropriate for all Human Resources and Organizational Development applications.

In this Introduction, you will learn about:

The Five Factor Model

The "Big Five" personality dimensions

Popular applications of the WorkPlace Big Five Profile™

We hope this document provides you with a stronger understanding of the underpinnings of the WorkPlace Big Five Profile™, and has you ready to unlock business success through your people.

THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL

"There are a variety of different perspectives in the field of personality... However, the most commonly used and accepted is the Five-Factor model."

– Piers Steel, Joseph Schmidt, & Jonas Shultz (2008)

FIVE FACTOR MODEL INTRODUCTION

The terms Big Five and Five-Factor Model are interchangeable. This empirically-based model provides researchers with common language to identify and describe the individual traits that determine human behavior. Psychologists and personality researchers are using it as the primary means of understanding and interpreting personality.

Language as the Differentiator

Personality theories, or models, are metaphors for describing something nearly indescribable -- the human personality. Some metaphors are vaguer than others – for example, a PET brain scan is less vague than a pencil and paper test. Through this logic, the study of personality has been one of minimizing vagueness. It is from language itself and not theories, that we extract the source metaphor for describing personality.

Key Components of the Five-Factor Model

Personality has 5 dimensions

Scores on dimensions

Personality is best described by individual traits rather than type groupings.

Strength of individual scores indicates personality preferences. People scoring in the midrange prefer a balance of the two extremes for that trait.

Each of the 5 dimensions, or "traits" reflects these physiological activity of an underlying arousal system. For each behavioral arousal system, a unique type of stimulus triggers the arousal system into a new, different, or increased action.
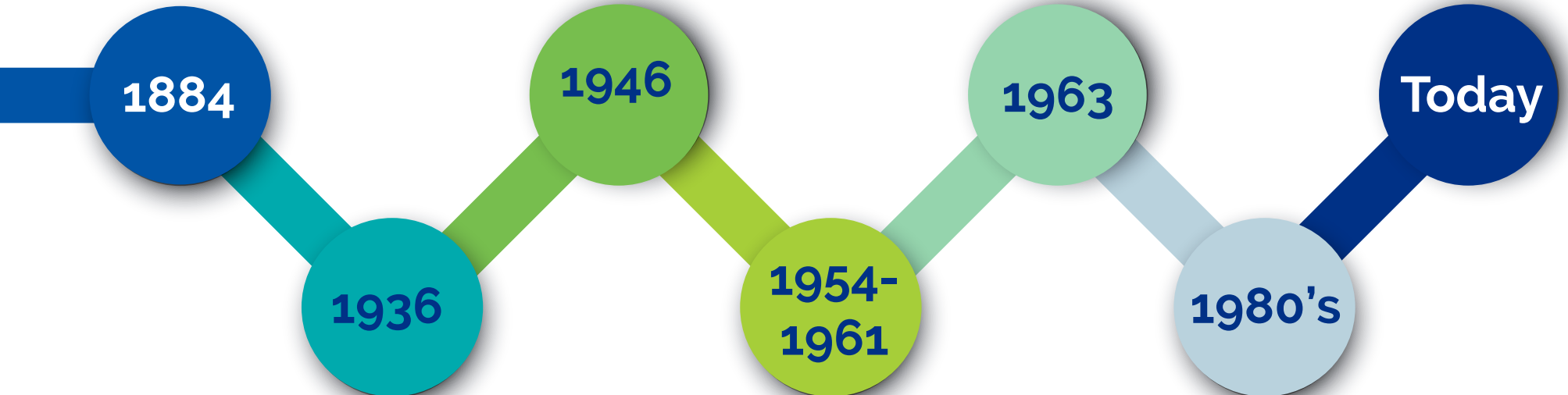
Timeline of Five Factor Model Development

The Five Factor Model evolved over close to a century. Because it is an empirical model, wide-scale validation of the model was not possible until the advent and availability of computers. The timeline below traces the evolution.

Sir Francis Galton proposed an idea of a lexical hypothesis- that language descriptors could provide input for a framework for personality.

Cattell reduced these terms to 171 by eliminating synonyms and discovered 16 clusters of personality traits.

Warren Miller, at the University of Michigan, learned of Tupes and Christal's work and replicated the study and confirmed the five-factor structure for trait taxonomy. These five factors are what we now know today as the Five Factor Model (or Big Five).

The FFM is used as a common language, human development and research tool in business and academic applications. Businesses apply the model to best align leaders, teams and employees with their roles and with business objectives.

1884

1936

1946

1954-1961

1963

1980's

Today

Allport and Odert explored this hypothesis and found 4,504 descriptive personality terms in the most comprehensive English dictionary at the time.

These studies propelled Air Force personnel researchers Tupes & Christal to conduct exhaustive computer-harnessed lexical studies, establishing the five factors we know today. Unfortunately, their work was published in an obscure Air Force publication.

Widely accessible computing allowed personality researchers to exhaustively explore the model.

Explosion in FFM Research and Application

Over the past 3 decades there has been exponential growth in the research and application focused on the Five-Factor Model of Personality. A sampling of applications and topics includes:

Uncovering physiological basis of traits

Correlating traits to effective leadership

Big Five Traits as the basis for estimating person-environment fit

The Big Five as a universal language for describing individual differences (cross-cultural acceptance)

The Big Five as the new basis of consumer behavior

The Big Five as the basis of learning design (classroom, coaching, teambuilding, relationships, etc.)

The WorkPlace Big Five Dimensions

The WorkPlace Big Five Profile™ measures the five dimensions of the FFM and applies them to the workplace. We call these five dimensions Super Traits. Each Super Trait is much like a container, holding multiple Subtraits that define the Super Trait.

SUPER TRAITS

Need For
Stability
(N)

(E)
Extraversion

Accommodation
(A)

(O)
Originality

Consolidation
(C)

Each of the Super Traits, including their respective Subtraits, are described in detail on the following pages.

N

Need For Stability (N)

Need for Stability (N) refers to the how a person responds to stress. More resilient persons tend to handle stressful workplace situations in a calm, steady, and secure way. More reactive persons tend to respond in an alert, concerned, attentive, or excitable way, thus creating the opportunity to experience more workplace stress than others.

Biological Basis: The arousal system involved with Need for Stability (N) is the autonomic nervous system. The stimulus that triggers it is a stressor, which elicits the general adaptation syndrome, better known as the fight-or-flight response.

N

Resilient (N-)

On the low end of the continuum are the Resilients (N-). Resilients tend to be more calm and rational at work than most people. They often appear impervious to stressors. At times, Resilients may be seen by others as not taking stressors, or situations, seriously. In reality, these individuals simply approach stressors from a logical stance rather than an emotional one. This approach is very conducive for success in roles such as management, plane pilot, and medical surgeon.

Responsive (N=)

Along the Need for Stability continuum from reactive to resilient is the mid-range of what we call Responsives (N=), who are a mixture of qualities characteristic of resilients and reactives. Responsives are more able to turn behaviors from both extremes on and off, calling on what seems appropriate to the situation. Responsives, however, are not typically able to maintain the calmness of a resilient for as long a period of time, nor is a responsive typically able to maintain the nervous edge of alertness of a reactive (as, for example, would be typical of a customer service agent).

Reactive (N+)

On the high end of the need for stability continuum, we have the Reactives (N+), who experience more negative emotions than most people, generally reporting lower levels of life satisfaction. That is not meant to place a value judgment on Reactives, however, as the susceptibility to the need for stability in the workplace provides the basis for shaping extremely important roles in our society such as social scientists, customer service professionals, and academicians. However, extreme reactivity (high need for stability) can interfere with the performance of many jobs, such as pilots and surgeons.

N

The four main correlated traits which comprise the **Need for Stability** "bucket" are listed and defined in the following table:

Subtraits	Resilient (N-)	Responsive (N=)	Reactive (N+)
Worry	At ease most of the time	Some concern from time to time	Frequently worries
Intensity	Usually Calm	Occasionally heated	Quicker temper
Interpretation	More optimistic	Realistic explanations	Less optimistic
Rebound Time	Rapid rebound time	Moderate rebound time	Longer rebound time

E

EXTRAVERSION (E)

Extraversion refers to the degree to which a person can tolerate sensory stimulation, from both people and situations. Those who score high on extraversion prefer being around other people and involved in many activities. Low extraversion is characterized by a preference to work alone and is typically described as serious, skeptical, quiet, and a private person.

Biological Basis: The arousal system for Extraversion (E) is the somatic nervous system. The stimulus that triggers this system is sensation, that is the five senses. A person's E score is an estimate of that point at which his or her somatic nervous system becomes saturated.

E

Introvert (E-)

On the low end of the spectrum are the Introverts (E-). Introverts tend to be more independent, reserved, steady, and comfortable with being alone than most people. This introverted profile is the basis of varied and important social roles such as production managers and the harder physical and natural sciences.

Ambivert (E=)

In between these two extremes are the Ambiverts (E=), who are able to move comfortably from outgoing social situations to the isolation of working alone. The stereotypical ambivert is the player-coach, who moves upon demand from the leadership demands of coach to the personal production demands of the player.

Extravert (E+)

On the high end of the spectrum are the Extraverts (E+). Extraverts tend to exert more leadership, be more physically and verbally active, and be more friendly and outgoing around others than most people. This extraverted profile is the foundation of many important social roles, from sales, to politics, to the arts and the softer social sciences.

The six personality traits which comprise **Extraversion** are defined in the following table:

E

Subtraits	Introvert (E-)	Ambivert (E=)	Extravert (E+)
Warmth	Holds down positive feelings	Demonstrates some positive feelings	Shows a lot of positive feelings
Sociability	Prefers working alone	Occasionally seeks out others	Prefers working with others
Activity Mode	Prefers being still or in one place	Maintains a moderate activity level	Prefers to be physically active
Taking Charge	Prefers being independent of others	Accepts some responsibility of others	Enjoys leading others
Trust of Others	Skeptical of others	Somewhat trusts others	Readily trusts others
Tact	Tends to speak more directly	Some care in selecting words	Carefully selects words

ORIGINALITY (O)

Originality (O) refers to how open we are to new experiences and ways of doing things. People high in Originality (O+) usually have a variety of interests, are drawn to cutting edge technology, and like strategic ideas. Those lower in Originality (O-) tend to possess a more tactical mindset; they are usually experts in a specific area, possessing a down-to-earth view of the present.

Biological Basis: The arousal system that provides for the basis of the Originality (O) set of behaviors is a combination of the dopaminergic system and the general state of arousal of the cerebral cortex. Dopamine is proving to be the "creativity" chemical and each person has a natural set point.

Preservers (O-)

On the low end of the Originality spectrum are Preservers (O-). The Preserver generally holds narrower interests, is perceived as more conventional, and is more comfortable with the familiar. The preserver profile is the basis for such important social roles as financial managers, performers, project managers, and applied scientists.

Moderates (O=)

In the middle of the continuum are the Moderates (O=). The Moderate can explore the novel with interest when necessary, but too much would be tiresome. On the other hand, the moderate can focus on the familiar for extended periods of time, but eventually would develop a hunger for novelty.

Explorers (O+)

High scorers in Originality are the Explorers (O+). Explorers have broader interests, a fascination with novelty and innovation, and reports more introspection and reflection than the average individual. Explorers are not unprincipled, but they tend to be open to considering new approaches. The Explorer profile forms the basis for such important social roles as entrepreneurs, architects, change agents, artists, and theoretical scientists (social and physical).

The four personality traits which comprise **Originality** are defined in the table below:

Subtraits	Preserver (O-)	Moderate (O=)	Explorer (O+)
Imagination	Implements plans	Creates and implements equally	Creates new plans and ideas
Complexity	Prefers simplicity	Balances simple and complex	Seeks complexity
Change	Wants to maintain existing methods	Somewhat accepting of changes	Accepting of changes and innovations
Scope	Attentive to details	Attends to details if needed	Prefers broad view and resists details

ACCOMMODATION (A)

Accommodation (A) describes the degree to which we defer to others. For example, individuals high in Accommodation (A+) tend to relate to others by being tolerant, agreeable and accepting. On the other hand, individuals low in Accommodation (A-) tend to relate to others by being tough, persistent, and competitive. Low scorers on A may come across to others as hostile, rude, self-centered, and not a team player, while high A individuals may be perceived as easily walked over and too "go with the flow".

Biological Basis: The arousal system that governs the Accommodation (A) set of behaviors consists of the ratio of sex hormones (whether in males and females), along with the serotonergic system. The stimulus that triggers this system into action is the dominance challenge, with serotonin levels affecting the trigger point.

A

Challenger (A-)

At the low end of the continuum are the Challengers (A-). These individuals are more focused on their personal norms and needs rather than the needs of the group. The Challenger is more concerned with acquiring and exercising power. Challengers follow the beat of their own drum, rather than getting in step with the group. The Challenger profile is the foundation of such important social roles as advertising, managing, and military leadership.

Negotiator (A=)

Midrange scorers on A are Negotiators (A=), who can move from leadership to followership as the context demands. Being situational, the Negotiator can call upon the dependence of the Adapter, and the independence of the Challenger when needed.

Adapter (A+)

High scorers on Accommodation are called Adapters (A+). These individuals are prone to defer to the group's norms rather than insisting on their own personal norms. For Adapters, group harmony is much more important than personal needs. The Adapter profile is the core of such important social roles as teaching, social work, and psychology.

A

The four personality traits which comprise **Accommodation** are defined in the table below:

Subtraits	Challenger (A-)	Negotiator (A=)	Adapter (A+)
Other's Needs	More interested in self needs	Interested in needs of others and self	More interested in others' needs
Agreement	Welcomes engagement	Seeks resolution	Seeks harmony
Humility	Wants recognition	Likes some recognition	Uncomfortable with recognition
Reserve	Often expresses opinions	Expresses opinions somewhat	Keeps opinions to self

CONSOLIDATION (C)

Consolidation refers to how we push toward goals at work. Individuals high in Consolidation (C+) work toward goals in an industrious, disciplined, and dependable fashion. Individuals low in Consolidation (C-) approach goals in a relaxed, spontaneous, and open-ended fashion. People low in Consolidation are usually capable of multi-tasking and being involved in many projects and goals at the same time.

Biological Basis: The arousal system that supports the Consolidation (C) set of behaviors is the attentional focus system. This system is affected by levels of testosterone: higher levels are associated with a greater capacity to focus one's attention on sustained, repetitive, goal-focused behavior. Distractions are the stimuli that trigger the attentional system.

C

Flexible (C-)
Flexible (C-) individuals are more easily distracted and less focused on goals. They are generally laxer with respect to goals. Flexibles are easily seduced from the task at hand by a passing idea, activity, or person. Flexibles do not necessarily work less than most people, but their work effort is less goal-directed. Flexibility generally facilitates individual creativity. This profile is the core of such important social roles as researchers, detectives, and consultants.

Balanced (C=)
Midrange scorers are Balanced (C=) individuals, who find it easier to shift from focusing to relaxing. Balanced individuals are usually ideal managers for either groups of Flexibles or Focuseds, providing just enough of the opposite quality to keep Flexibles reasonably on target without alienating them and to help Focuseds relax periodically to enjoy life a little.

Focused (C+)
Focused (C+) individuals exhibit high self-control, resulting in consistent focus on personal and occupational goals. The focused person is normally characterized by academic and career achievement. However, in its extreme form, this results in workaholism. A focused person is difficult to distract. Such a profile is the basis for such important social roles as leaders, executives, and, in general, high achievers.

C

The five personality traits which comprise **Consolidation** are defined in the table below:

Subtraits	Flexible (C-)	Balanced (C=)	Focused (C+)
Perfectionism	Low need to refine or polish	Occasional need to refine or polish	Continually refines or polishes
Organization	Comfortable with little organization	Maintains some organization	Keeps everything organized
Drive	Satisfied with current achievements	Needs some additional achievement	Craves even more achievement
Concentration	Shifts easily between on- going tasks	Some shifting between tasks	Completes tasks before shifting
Methodicalness	Operates in a spontaneous mode	Does some planning	Develops plans for everything

APPLICATIONS

The WorkPlace Big Five Profile™ is suitable for all Human Resources needs. The most popular applications are:

Selection

Team Building

Project Team Identification

Diversity Training

Work-Job "Fit" and Employee Engagement Research

Leadership Development

Succession Planning

Coaching and Career Development

BENEFITS OF A FIVE FACTOR MODEL ASSESSMENT

There are several benefits of using a five-factor-model based assessment. Some of the most important are:

1. PRECISION

2. BALANCE OF SIMPLICTY AND COMPLEXITY

3. CREDIBILITY

Precision

Unlike major "type" instruments, a five-factor model based assessment provides users with a specific position within a series of personality "traits." This allows for greater precision in interpretation. Type instruments are likely to misclassify individuals with "middle of the road" traits.

Balance of Simplicity & Complexity

Practitioners often seek "simple" instruments, which can be easily interpreted. The problem is: personality is a highly complex topic. While simple "four-type" models may seem attractive, the reality is that there are more than "four types of people." The five-factor model allows for a good balance of simplicity (so that professional practitioners can adopt it readily) and complexity (so that individual differences are respected and well described).

Credibility

A quick "Google" search reveals thousands of scholarly articles based on the five-factor model. This is a serious and well researched model, leading to more defensible interventions.

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To learn more, visit our website at

www.paradigmpersonality.com

If you are interested in more details on the
WorkPlace Big Five Profile™ 4.0, visit:

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You can read Dr. Pierce Howard's blogs at:

paradigmpersonality.com/pierces-blog

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