

Understanding Who You Are Before You Can Lead

As a leader we should always be striving to learn and grow. The best leaders know that the best place to start is to look within. If we understand the aspects that make up our personality in the work environment, we are able to learn how to work better with others and thus become better leaders. I had the privilege of learning from two leaders, Laura Bernhardt and Ken Jacobs, about how to utilize the predictive index test and also get some tips for how to be a better leader.

What is the Predictive Index?

The PI Behavioral test provides a simple framework for understanding your workplace behaviors. "It lets you see beneath the surface so you can predict how people will behave in given situations ([PI, 2021](#))." If you know where a person falls on the spectrum of these 4 factors, you possess a great deal of knowledge about what it would be like to work with them.

So how does the PI work?

Assessment takers get two lists of adjectives. The first is to describe how others expect them to act and the second is to describe themselves in their own opinion. Each adjective is associated with one of four key factors that determine workplace behavior: *dominance, extraversion, patience and formality*.

The chart is broken down into *how you truly are, how you believe you need to behave, and the average of both categories, which is likely how your behaviors are presenting to others*. This assessment is all about the understanding yourself.

So what do the four categories mean?

- **Dominance (A)** is the drive to exert influence on others or events. Low dominance means you are collaborative, cooperative and team oriented. High dominance means the person is independent, assertive, and self-confident; this type of person thrives on individual recognition.
- **Extraversion (B)** is the drive for social interaction with others. Low extraversion means you are slow to trust, value your privacy and are very analytical/fact driven. High extraversion scorers connect with others easily, crave social acceptance and opportunities to influence others.
- **Patience (C)** is the drive to have consistency and stability. Low patience drive means that you need variety, freedom from routine and opportunities to multitask; you are comfortable with change and fast-pace work. High patience means you crave a stable work environment and the ability to work at a steady pace; you need a calm environment and are not comfortable with change.
- **Formality (D)** is the drive to conform to rules and structure. Low formality means you need freedom from rigid structure/rules and control and like to be spontaneous and focus less on details. High formality means you need clarity of expectations (or rules) and like to be a subject matter expert to avoid mistakes.
- **The last factor is called Factor E (or objectivity) and while it is not one of the 4 main drivers, it does reflect our decision-making and judgement style. Someone high on the spectrum is objective, needing facts and data, while someone low is subjective, relying on intuition and their gut.**

PI can be used in three processes: Hiring, Onboarding and Talent Development. Employers can use it as part of the hiring process and to tailor the onboarding process in a way that will make the new hire behaviorally comfortable. For the purposes of this article, the most important aspect is TALENT

DEVELOPMENT. Because not only can our employers leverage the PI assessment for talent development, but as leaders we can also leverage this to develop ourselves.

"The best leaders are self-aware. They leverage their strengths and mitigate their weakness" - Laura Bernhardt

What does this all mean?

Senior and executive managers are very good at what they do, but they are often promoted before anyone has asked "but are they a great leader?" Many managers have issues with command and control, they have a very "my way or the highway" mentality. That works temporarily but it doesn't work long-term, this is leadership style is why we often see people frequently leave. The biggest challenge is understanding the difference between being a manager and a leader.

Being a manager is easy; all you need to do is complete tasks and grow the business. You step into leadership when you focus on larger things like: Having a firm vision and values, building trust and respect, and listening to your team. These things set you apart and take you from a manager to an inspiring leader; this ultimately leads to more productive and successful work. Transforming yourself from a manager to leader requires understanding who you are, how you work and what you need to work on.

Two of the best tips for better leadership

To set you apart from the pack, learning the difference between leading up vs managing up is important. Managing up, according to a conversation I had with Ken, is more manipulative and selfish. When you lead up, you are helping your boss do well and providing a positive example for others on your team and in turn, when you help them elevate you will be pulled up as well.

You must be willing to lead first and manage second; you also have to be willing to modify your leadership communication in order to be seen as a leader and not just a manager to your teams. However, to be able to modify your leadership communication, you need to first understand who you are as a leader, which brings us back to behavioral assessments like PI.

About Laura Bernhardt

Laura has been with Oliver Group and the Leadership Pipeline Institute since 2014, and is a leader in development, training, assessment, and executive coaching. Utilizing objective assessments such as the Predictive Index, she develops clear plans of action to ensure the right people are in the right roles, ready to adapt to new challenges. Her work helps leaders understand where to appropriately spend their time and apply newly developed skills tied to what needs to be done based on their skills and personalities. You can find her on Twitter at @LauraBernhardt

About Ken Jacobs

Ken is an experienced consultant and certified coach, and owner of Jacobs Consulting & Executive Coaching. Prior to launching his companies, Jacobs spent 25 years in management and leadership positions. Ken served on senior management and leadership committees responsible for staff development, training, morale, recruitment, and retention throughout his career. In addition to his work with clients, Jacobs shares his knowledge through "Taking The Lead," his monthly leadership column for the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) [*Public Relations Tactics*](#). He has also written on

leadership development, executive coaching and agency management for [PR News](#) and PRSA's [The Public Relations Strategist](#). You can find him on Twitter at @KensViews.

About Yvonne Muñoz

Yvonne Muñoz is a DePaul Grad student and Account Coordinator at Ketchum. When she is not working, she is spending time cuddling her three Chihuahuas or reading a new book. Follow me on [LinkedIn](#)