

INTRODUCTION TO
the FIRO-B[®]
I N S T R U M E N T
IN ORGANISATIONS



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THE FIRO-B® MODEL

The letters in the acronym FIRO-B stand for Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation™ - Behaviour. Originally developed to predict how military personnel would work together in groups, this short instrument was created by William Schutz and was first fully described in his book *FIRO®: A Three-Dimensional Theory of Interpersonal Behavior* (1958). The theory underlying the FIRO-B instrument incorporates ideas from the work of the eminent psychologists T.W. Adorno, Erich Fromm and Wilfred Bion.

The FIRO-B instrument has become a widely used assessment that helps those who take it to understand interpersonal behaviour. Many people find the FIRO-B instrument useful in career, family and relationship counselling, management and leadership development, and teambuilding. The FIRO-B instrument also has been used in research on educational administration, work-group compatibility, interpersonal dynamics in groups, and criminal justice administration. The reliability and validity of the instrument has been clearly demonstrated (see GA Gluck in the References listed on page 25).

You will be better able to use your FIRO-B results if you understand the model on which it is based.

Before we begin, however, a caveat is in order. All instruments have limitations. The FIRO-B instrument is *not*:

- A comprehensive personality test
- A judgment about “bad” or “good” behaviours or “bad” or “good” people
- A measure of abilities, career interests or achievement.

Remember, no one should make a serious life decision based on the results of a single psychological instrument.

As you think about the meaning of your scores, keep in mind that a number of extraneous factors may have affected how you responded to the FIRO-B items. Try to determine if any of these may have influenced your responses:

- Life events that lead to intense self-reflection or withdrawal from others
- Cultural differences affecting the expression of needs
- Misunderstanding the terms
- Consciously trying to avoid extreme responses
- Pressure from the environment to express certain behaviours.

Table 1: The Six-Cell Model

	INCLUSION (I)	CONTROL (C)	AFFECTION (A)
Expressed Behaviour	Expressed Inclusion (eI)	Expressed Control (eC)	Expressed Affection (eA)
Wanted Behaviour	Wanted Inclusion (wI)	Wanted Control (wC)	Wanted Affection (wA)

Adapted from W. Schutz, *The FIRO® Awareness Scales Manual*. Mountain View, CA: CPP, Inc., 1978.

The Three Interpersonal Needs

The FIRO-B instrument is based on a model that identifies three interpersonal needs: *Inclusion*, *Control* and *Affection*. Table 1 shows the terminology used in the six-cell model that forms the basis of the FIRO-B interpretation. We will define each of these needs with the descriptors in Table 2, and then describe how each can be either Expressed or Wanted. Finally, we will pull it all together in Table 3 and then, in Table 4, provide behavioural examples of each cell of the model. The remaining sections of Part 1 will then explain the FIRO-B scores. In Part 2, we will discuss applications of your FIRO-B results.

The FIRO-B assessment measures interpersonal needs in these three areas:

- The need for **Inclusion** relates to forming new relationships and associating with people, and determines the extent of contact and prominence that a person seeks.
- The need for **Control** relates to decision-making, influence and persuasion between people, and determines the extent of power or dominance that a person seeks.
- The need for **Affection** relates to emotional ties and warm connections between people, and determines the extent of closeness that a person seeks.

Table 2: Characteristics Associated with the Three Interpersonal Needs

INCLUSION	CONTROL	AFFECTION
distinction	power	personal
recognition	authority	consensus-orientated
attention	influence	sensitive
participation	responsible	empathetic
involved	managerial	open
association	directive	affirming
acknowledgement	leader	supportive
contact	decisive	closeness
belonging	consistent	faithfulness
acceptance	regulated	warmth

Table 3: The FIRO-B® Model

	INCLUSION (I)	CONTROL (C)	AFFECTION (A)
Expressed (e)	I make an effort to include others in my activities. I try to belong, to join social groups – to be with people as much as possible.	I try to exert control and influence over things. I enjoy organising things and directing others.	I make an effort to get close to people. I am comfortable expressing personal feelings and I try to be supportive of others.
Wanted (w)	I want other people to include me in their activities and to invite me to belong. I enjoy it when others notice me.	I feel most comfortable working in well-defined situations. I try to get clear expectations and instructions.	I want others to act warmly towards me. I enjoy it when people share their feelings with me and when they encourage my efforts.

Adapted from W. Schutz, *The FIRO® Awareness Scales Manual*. Mountain View, CA: CPP, Inc., 1978.

Expressed and Wanted Needs

For each of the three interpersonal needs – *Inclusion*, *Control* and *Affection* – the FIRO-B instrument also provides a measure of how much each need is **expressed** or **wanted** by you. According to FIRO theory, the extent to which a person will **initiate** the behaviour is called the **Expressed** dimension of the need, and the extent to which a person **prefers to be the recipient of those behaviours** is called the **Wanted** dimension of the need.

For example, if you are very interested in initiating behaviours that control or regulate the activities of others, you probably have a high need for Expressed Control. If, on the other hand, you are very interested in having your work assignments clearly spelled out and structured, then you probably have a high need for Wanted Control.

Similarly, your level of Expressed Affection will determine how much you show support and caring for others, while your level of Wanted Affection will determine how much you accept encouragement and personal interest expressed by others.

Expressed and Wanted behaviours operate dynamically between individuals. How individuals respond to Expressed behaviour from others will depend on how much they want that type of behaviour. In this way, Wanted behaviour represents how much Expressed behaviours from others are accepted and tolerated.

Table 3 displays the complete FIRO-B model, showing how the expressed and wanted dimensions relate to the three needs for Inclusion, Control and Affection.

Table 4 provides additional behavioural examples of each of the six possible combinations.

Table 4: Behaviours Associated with the Three Needs

	INCLUSION (I)	CONTROL (C)	AFFECTION (A)
Expressed (e)	<p>Behaviours indicating Expressed Inclusion (eI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking and joking with others • Taking a personal interest in others • Involving others in projects and meetings • Recognising the accomplishments of others • Incorporating everyone’s ideas and suggestions • Offering helpful information or “tips” to new colleagues 	<p>Behaviours indicating Expressed Control (eC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuming positions of authority • Advancing an idea within the group • Taking a competitive stance and making winning a priority • Managing the conversation • Influencing others’ opinions • Establishing structured tasks, procedures, policies 	<p>Behaviours indicating Expressed Affection (eA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassuring and supporting colleagues, both verbally and physically • Giving gifts to show appreciation • Exhibiting concern about the personal lives of others • Being trustworthy and loyal • Sharing personal opinions or private feelings about issues • Coaching and developing others
Wanted (w)	<p>Behaviours indicating Wanted Inclusion (wI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequenting high-traffic areas (eg, the coffee machine) • Wearing distinctive clothing • Decorating the work space with personal mementoes • Seeking recognition or responsibility • Getting involved in high-profile projects and activities • Going along with the majority opinion 	<p>Behaviours indicating Wanted Control (wC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for help on the job • Involving others in decision-making • Requesting precise instructions and clarification • Deferring to the wishes, needs and requests of others • Asking for permission and circulating progress details • Raising issues for others to consider 	<p>Behaviours indicating Wanted Affection (wA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being flexible and accommodating • Listening carefully to others • Displaying an open body posture • Sharing feelings of anxiety, sadness, loneliness • Trying to please others • Giving others more than they want or need

Team Roles

People play many roles in groups. The roles that you play depend on your interpersonal needs and the needs of other team members. Your FIRO-B results can help you understand the roles you prefer when working in a team. Table 11 provides examples of FIRO-B scores and the roles that team members with these scores can be predicted to assume. The closer your FIRO-B score is to the following examples, the more likely you are to assume these

roles in group settings. Scores that fall in the middle range may indicate that you take on one of the following roles only under certain circumstances. Individuals with low eI, low eC or low eA generally do not consistently initiate activity within the team. These individuals tend to be more receptive and reactive so their Wanted scores should be used to determine which roles they are likely to assume in a group.

Table 11: Team Roles Suggested by FIRO-B® Results

Scores	Role	Description
High Expressed Inclusion	<i>Clarifier</i>	Presents issues or solutions for clarification, summarises discussion, introduces new members to the team, keeps team members up to date, provides group with facts and data.
High Wanted Inclusion	<i>Tension-Reducer</i>	Helps move the team along by joking or clowning at appropriate moments, redirects group at tense moments, builds on common interests in the group.
Low Wanted Inclusion	<i>Individualist</i>	Is not an active team player, sees meetings as unnecessary or distracting, may work on other tasks or hold side conversations during meetings, may not follow through or cooperate with group decision.
High Expressed Control	<i>Director</i>	Pushes for action and decision-making, may interrupt others or monopolise the “air-time” in meetings, may be unrealistically optimistic about what can be accomplished.
High Wanted Control	<i>Questioner</i>	Seeks orientation and clarification, is a constructive critic of the team and its members, may use questions to postpone closure or decisions.
Low Wanted Control	<i>Rebel</i>	Struggles to establish a position within the group, may criticise others, challenges the status quo, may refuse to comply with group decisions, provides alternative ideas but may have difficulty with follow-through.
High Expressed Affection	<i>Encourager</i>	Builds the ego or status of others, is friendly, responsive, warm, diplomatic, may sacrifice the truth to maintain good relationships.
High Wanted Affection	<i>Listener</i>	Maintains participative attitude and interest non-verbally, is involved in group goals, shows interest by receptive facial and bodily expressions.
Low Wanted Affection	<i>Cautioner</i>	Expresses concern about direction of the group, relays doubts about the success of initiatives planned, shows reluctance to get swept up in group energy, provides careful analysis of potential problems, may play devil’s advocate.