

Case study: Understanding leadership profiles

Debrief

A FIRO-B profile can be very helpful in looking at leadership behaviours. Different profiles may be appropriate in different situations. The same profile may be effective in certain situations or with certain team members, but might not be if circumstances change or the team changes.

Analyse your leader's profiles:

Questions

1. Total Expressed – leadership visibility (p7)
2. Highest and lowest total need score – drivers (p22)
3. Highest Expressed score – impression they create (p11)
4. Highest Wanted score – perceptions about others (p12)

(page numbers refer to *Introduction to the FIRO-B Instrument in Organisations* booklet)

What are the leader's:

- > Strengths
- > Development needs
- > Best context to lead in

Leader A profile

1. Look at how visible the leadership is. This is based on the total Expressed score, and here it is 17. The total possible is 27, so this shows a medium level of visibility. This is most likely to be seen as a positive leadership attribute.
2. The core driver is Inclusion. This means a focus on fairness and involving people, integrating diverse interests and a desire to have an impact – they like to be involved as a leader. The lowest need area is Affection, so they may appear distant and difficult to get to know. They may be able to make tough decisions that impact on people without the fear of upsetting individuals.
3. Circle the highest Expressed score because this is what people will see most prominently for the person. In this case, Expressed Inclusion supports what people see of the person. It is the social arena where someone is most comfortable taking action.
4. Circle the highest Wanted score as this may be the hidden motivation behind behaviour that people don't comprehend. In this case, Wanted Inclusion is the same as the highest Expressed need area, so they may be seen as consistent and easily understood.

Probable strengths

Likely to have a focus on bringing people together in groups to get tasks done and meet deadlines. The style will be seen as truly consultative as opinions will be sought and listened to (wC and wI).

Possible development need

At times this person may be seen as taking too long or involving too many people in decisions. Also, in some cases they are likely to overlook the personal impact of decisions, and sometimes be seen as rather distant.

Best context

An inclusive environment where everybody expects a consultative style, but not so intimate that colleagues are expected to socialise after work together or share personal problems.

Leader B profile

1. The total Expressed score is 17. The total possible is 27, so this shows a medium level of visibility. This is most likely to be seen as a positive leadership attribute.
2. The core driver is Control , which means that influence, making decisions and taking responsibility is important and desired. Supported by medium Expressed Inclusion and Expressed Affection, and medium Wanted Control, this makes for a consultative approach but with a focus on task completion and providing challenging goals.
3. Circle the highest Expressed score because this is what people will see most prominently for the person. In this case, Expressed Control supports what people see of the person. It is the arena where someone is most comfortable taking action.
4. Circle the highest Wanted score as this may be the hidden motivation behind behaviour that people don't comprehend. In this case, all wanted areas have the same score which happens to be in the medium range. Wanted inclusion and Affection are similar to their respective expressed areas so they may be seen as consistent and easily understood in those areas. Wanted Control is in the medium range as opposed to the high expressed Control which may be something expected of the leader as they are often expected to provide more guidance, instructions and want to receive less direction back from others.

Probable strengths

Seen as a leader who will get the job done, reasonably good at delegating and involving their team. They are comfortable setting direction and driving towards achieving goals. Likely to be seen as motivational and fair by his/her team.

Possible development need

There is a possible need to learn when to say no to greater challenges. May assume that others enjoy the same level of challenge and push people too far, and then become over cautious if a person does not seem to have the competence and confidence.

Best context

This profile works well in many leadership positions, but may not be suited to situations where there is a highly professional group or where people need more freedom to do things in their own way.

Leader C profile

1. Look at how visible the leadership is. This is based on the total Expressed score, and here it is 19. The total possible is 27, so this shows a medium to high level of visibility. This is most likely to be seen as a positive leadership attribute.
2. The core driver is Affection. This means relationships, maintaining harmony and being warm to each other is important. They like to get to know their direct reports and get energy from sharing personal stories. This is balanced by medium scores in the other two need areas.
3. Circle the highest Expressed score because this is what people will see most prominently for the person. In this case, Expressed Affection means that the leader may show care, warmth and interest in their direct reports on a one-to-one basis.
4. Circle the highest Wanted score as this may be the hidden motivation behind behaviour that people don't comprehend. In this case, Wanted Affection is the same as the highest Expressed need area, so they may be seen as consistent and easily understood.

Probable strengths

This person is likely to focus on developing the individuals within the team and increasing employee satisfaction. They can be expected to create common goals and harmony. They are likely to gain co-operation through personal commitment and loyalty.

Possible development needs

May be seen as lacking focus or too personal at times. They may become annoyed if their warmth shown towards others is not reciprocated. Others may question the amount of time they spend talking to people about non-work topics.

Best context

This profile works well when the task is clear and where there is a need to motivate and engage people, eg good for keeping people engaged through a change process.

Leader D profile

1. This is based on the total Expressed score, and here it is 11. The total possible is 27, so this shows a lower level of visibility.
2. Their core driver is Control (low expressed and high wanted). As the expressed scores of Inclusion and Affection are higher they will show a combination of those characteristics in their behaviour. This means a focus on including others, and relationships, harmony and warmth are important. The lowest expressed need area is Control so they may come across as passive when decisions have to be made, potentially deferring responsibility and at the same time requiring more guidance and instructions from others.
3. They will be seen as consultative, warm and engaging. Although Control is the main driver a consultative style is of great importance to this leader.
4. Circle the highest Wanted score as this may be the hidden motivation behind behaviour that people don't comprehend. Wanted Control is important to the leader, which means they may provide themselves with additional information and structure and ask for clarification when working on tasks.

Probable strengths

This style focuses on consultation, engagement and empowerment. They may provide a broad vision or guidance, but will not impose set structure or standards on all. People will be trusted to get the job done, unless they demonstrate a lack of capability.

Possible development needs

Maybe be seen as lacking direction or being too laid back. Will not be visible enough for some, and the process and relationships may override the focus to get a job done.

Best context

This leadership style will be truly consultative, utilising every team member's expertise and giving an amount of autonomy and independence to direct reports. It would be less effective in an environment where strong direction was expected from the leader. In such a situation, this leader may appear weak.

Leader E profile

1. This is based on the total Expressed score, and here it is 11. The total possible is 27, so this shows a lower level of visibility.
2. The core driver is Control. High standards are important and expected, as well as the focus on tackling greater challenge. The leader may set the structure and process for the team. Leader E has low scores for Inclusion and Affection, which means that the Control focus will not be softened as much as in others with different profiles (compare to Leader B profile). This leader is likely to communicate decisions in writing or through one or two direct reports.
3. Circle the highest Expressed score because this is what people will see most prominently for the person. In this case, Expressed Control may suggest that the individual enjoys taking charge, providing structure and providing guidance to others.
4. Circle the highest Wanted score as this may be the hidden motivation behind behaviour that people don't comprehend. Highest Wanted need for this individual is in the lower range and a combination of Wanted Inclusion and Control. The individual is fairly consistent in the area of Inclusion in their Expressed and Wanted behaviours, however they are displaying more expressed behaviours in Control compared to what they want to receive from others which can lead to confusion.

Probable strengths

The strengths of this profile lie in setting direction and standards. Making expectations clear and providing feedback to increase performance. Making decisions and following through to make things happen. The leader may be a source of expertise and competence in their chosen area.

Possible development needs

This leader may need to listen more to others when engagement from the team is needed. There is a tendency to drive change through too quickly or even not to accept that change is needed. They could potentially benefit if they develop their interpersonal skills and influencing style.

Best context

This style works best where there is a clear need for consistent, clear standards and structure.

Leader F profile

1. This is based on the total Expressed score, and here it is 11. The total possible is 27, so this shows a lower level of visibility. This is the only profile which displays higher Wanted needs than Expressed.
2. The core driver is Control. This means a focus on competence, decision-making structure and responsibility is desired. The lowest need area is Inclusion, which may mean that the leader might not get as much energy from team meetings.
3. Circle the highest Expressed score because this is what people will see most prominently for the person. In this case, Expressed Control may mean that the leader takes charge and responsibility when the situation requires it and provides others with structure and guidance.
4. Circle the highest Wanted score as this may be the hidden motivation behind behaviour that people don't comprehend. In this case, a combination of Wanted Control and Affection may lead to an inconsistent interpretation by others. In these two areas the individual may need more from others, which others would not guess based on their Expressed behaviour.

Probable strengths

The individual is happy to take the lead when the expectations are clear, and will be comfortable delegating to those who show initiative.

Possible development needs

They may become anxious if they are in ambiguous situations. If the need for clarity and warmth is not met, they are likely to be seen as detaching themselves, but in a way that others may see as moody. They are likely to have different relationships with their manager, peers and direct reports.

Best context

They will work well with a manager who provides both direction and support.