

The Dark Side of Personality



The “Dark-Side” of Personality

(Especially in relation to “high-flyers”)

ACTSO

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Objectives for Today's Session

- To introduce you to the concept of the “dark side” of personality & some constituent factors.
- To consider the potential significance & utility of “dark side” analysis in the leadership context, especially the identification & development of “high-flyers”.
- To introduce you to a psychometric tool that has been designed to tap into these “dark side” factors.
- To provide you with a brief opportunity for reflection & self-analysis.

What Is the Dark Side of Personality?

- That part of our personality which can predispose us to behave less constructively towards others.
 - “Less-constructive inter-personal behaviours”. (LCBs).
 - “Less-constructive *intra*-personal behaviours”.
 - “Dysfunctional dispositions”.
 - “Flawed inter-personal styles”.

Health Warning!

- It's always important to try to obtain a properly rounded psychological picture of someone!
- The “holy trinity” of psychometric assessment is a good way to proceed:
 - A “bright side” assessment of normal personality, e.g. OPQ, MBTI, NEO.
 - An “inside” assessment of motives, values, beliefs etc, e.g. BEMQ, OMQ.
 - A “dark side” assessment, e.g. the HDS, MMPI.



The Holy Trinity,
El Greco, 1577

A Starter for 10

(but mentioning no names or otherwise making it obvious to whom you're referring!!!)

- Can you think of either someone famous, or someone with whom you've worked, who was either very difficult to work with, or whose career (spectacularly) derailed?
- Why was this, do you think?
- Which aspects of their behaviour can you point to as outward signs of things going wrong?

The Icarus Myth

- King Minos of Crete imprisons Daedalus, a famous inventor, and his son Icarus, possibly for helping Theseus kill the minotaur.
- Daedalus makes wings of feathers and wax for himself and Icarus, so that they can escape.
- Daedalus warns his son not to fly too high, as the sun could melt his wings.
- Icarus ignores the advice, disaster ensues...



The “Icarus Syndrome” (Furnham)

- Accident-prone sensation-seeker?
- A disobedient child who liked to rebel?
- Narcissist blinded by his own arrogance?
- Some other explanation?
- Why might we want to find out?
- How might we try to find out?
- What might we do then?
- Any parallels with “high-flyers” in your organisation?



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As leader-managers, why might we be interested in the “dark side” of personality?

- Or, in what contexts might it be important, interesting or useful to consider it?

Bentz's (1985) Themes of Managerial Incompetence

1. Inability to delegate or prioritise.
2. Being reactive rather than proactive.
3. Inability to maintain relationships with an extended network of contacts.
4. Inability to build a team.
5. Having poor judgement.
6. Being a slow learner.
7. Having an “overriding personality defect”.



Strengths into Derailers



The “Strengths Into Derailers” Paradox #1

- You can have too much of a good thing!
- The very strengths that can help people become effective and successful can, in certain circumstances, be the source of the emergence of dysfunctional interpersonal (dark side) behaviours :
 - When under pressure at work.
 - Significant adverse life-events.
 - When the person “lets down their guard” or lets their “social mask” slip.
 - Combinations of the above.

The “Strengths Into Derailers” Paradox #2

Possible Strength	Potential Derailer	DSM-IV-TR Axis 2 Personality Disorder
Enthusiastic	Volatile	Borderline
Shrewd	Mistrustful	Paranoid
Careful	Cautious	Avoidant
Independent	Detached	Schizoid
Focused	Passive-Aggressive	Passive-Aggressive
Confident	Arrogant	Narcissistic
Charming	Manipulative	Antisocial
Colourful	Dramatic	Histrionic
Imaginative	Eccentric	Schizotypal
Diligent	Perfectionistic	Obsessive-Compulsive
Dutiful	Dependent	Dependent

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How will you know if you have *“crossed the line”*?

- Invariably, it’s difficult to know when we may have “crossed the line” from demonstrating a strength to exhibiting a “less constructive behaviour” (LCB).
- Asking ourselves some good questions can help!
- Even better, we can ask other people some well-directed questions about our potential dark-side tendencies and behaviours, e.g...



Crossing the Line: careful – cautious

The next decision you make may be your first!

- This scale reflects a tendency to be over-concerned about making mistakes, and to be reluctant to take the initiative for fear of being criticised or embarrassed. Although such people are usually good corporate citizens, others may find them hard to work with because of their need to stick to the rules and their unwillingness to take chances or express controversial opinions.



Crossing the Line: careful – cautious #2

You carefully analyse a situation before you make a decision.

You require second and third opinions before making any decision.

You consider worst-case scenarios before moving forward.

You obsess about what might go wrong and eventually get stuck.

You go slowly before deciding because the wrong decision can have serious consequences.

You go slowly before deciding because you believe *every* decision can have serious consequences.

You turn down requests for projects and resources when you have *hard evidence* that flaws exist.

You don't give people the go-ahead because of your *fears* that a proposed project is flawed.



Crossing the Line: careful – cautious #3

Remaining cautious to the point of indecisiveness...

- *Prioritise and commit to a date to decide – and hold yourself to it!*
- *Consciously do things differently – not just at work!*
- *Focus on past successes – and try to replicate.*
- *Confront your worst fears – clearly articulate to yourself and others the real reason for your fear, procrastination and indecisiveness.*



Some Ideas for Managing Your Dark-Side

- *Adversity Analysis* – seriously reflect on your top 5 failures...any recurrent themes? How can you make sure they don't recur again?
- *Take the HDS and get some feedback!*
- Pro-actively ask your direct reports about:
 - How can I be a better leader?
 - Which facets of my dark-side are you aware of? How do I irritate/annoy/upset you? What advice would you give me?
- Find a confidant/mentor and discuss dark-side issues as part of your regular agenda.
- Discuss with your coach, boss, peers, family, appropriate others.



The 11 Scales of the Hogan Development Survey (HDS)

- **Volatile** – moody, easily annoyed, hard to please, short lived enthusiasm for people, projects or things, emotionally volatile.
- **Sceptical** – distrustful, cynical, sensitive to criticism, and focused on the negative.
- **Cautious** – unassertive, resistant to change, risk-averse, and slow to make decisions.
- **Detached** – aloof, indifferent to the feelings of others, and uncommunicative.
- **Passive-Aggressive** – overtly cooperative, but privately irritable, stubborn, and uncooperative.
- **Arrogant** – overly self-confident, with inflated feelings of self-worth.
- **Manipulative** – charming, risk-taking, impulsive, rule-bending/breaking, limit-testing and excitement-seeking.
- **Dramatic** – excessive emotionality, animated, attention-seeking, interruptive.
- **Eccentric** – creative, but thinking and acting in unusual or eccentric ways.
- **Perfectionistic** – meticulous, precise, inflexible about rules & procedures, hard to please, critical of others' performance, micromanaging.
- **Dependent** – eager to please, reluctant to act independently or against popular opinion.

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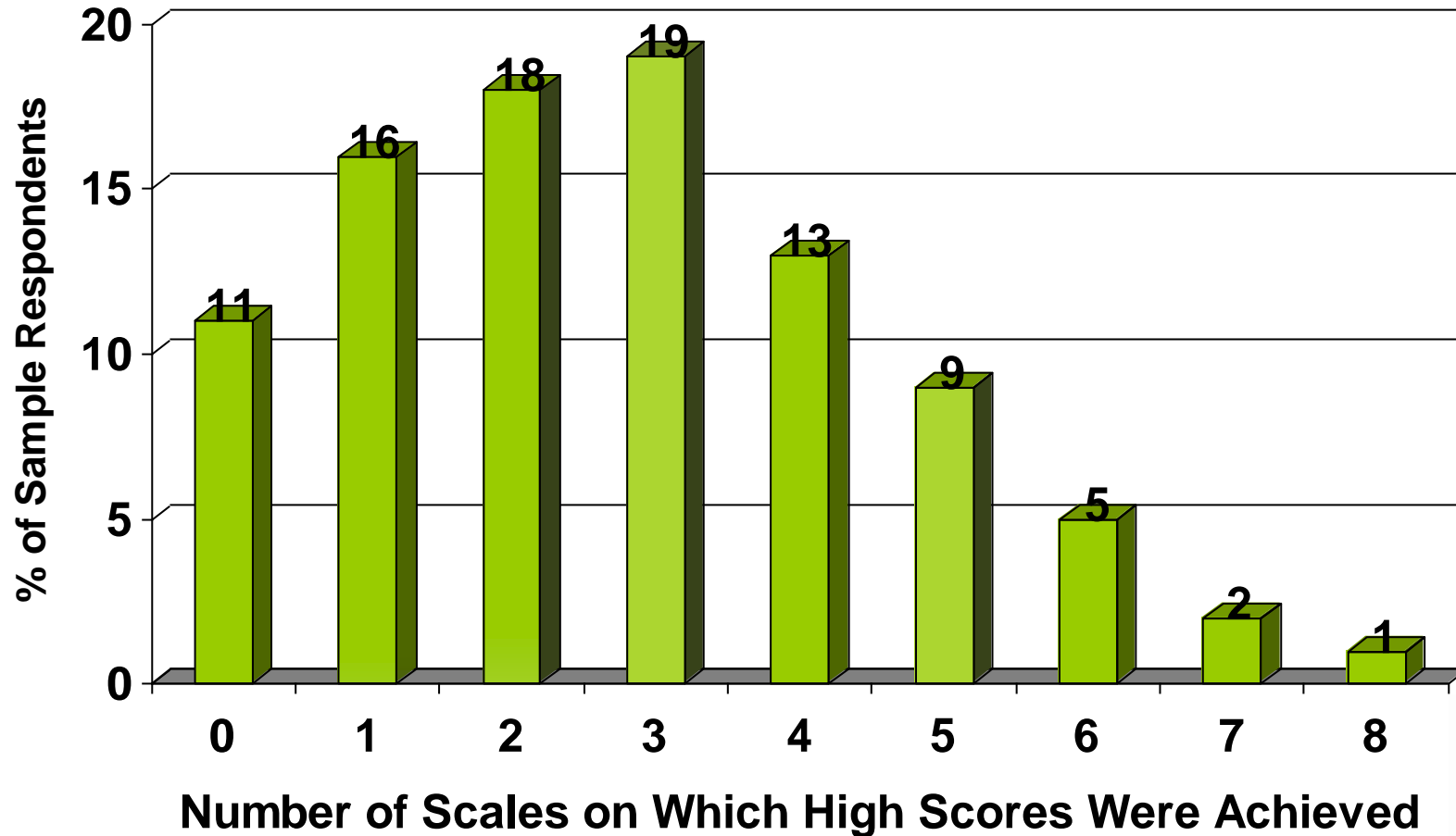
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A close-up photograph of a vibrant red tulip flower, positioned on the left side of the frame. The flower is in sharp focus, showing the texture of its petals. Below the flower, its reflection is visible on a dark, reflective surface. The background is a solid, deep black, which makes the red of the tulip stand out prominently. The text is located on the right side of the image, in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

An Opportunity for
Reflection & Self-
Analysis...

- Which of these factors do you think might apply to you? Do you have any other “less constructive behaviours” not mentioned in this list?
 - What situations provoke them for you?
 - How do you manifest them?
 - What consequences might they be having for you & others?
 - What ideas do you have for developing some coping strategies?
- What about the possibility of one or two “blind spots”?
 - How might you investigate?
- As a product of this self-analysis, would you like to commit yourself to a few action points?

Proportion of Sample Respondents Achieving High Scores on the HDS Scales (90th %ile plus)



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Karen Horney's Themes (1950) – 3 techniques for managing insecurity

“Moving Against Others”

(Dominating, coercing & manipulating others)

- Arrogant.
- Manipulative.
- Dramatic.
- Eccentric.

“Individuals with high scores on these scales make other people nervous”.

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“Moving Away From Others”

(Withdrawing from contact with others)

- Volatile.
 - Sceptical.
 - Cautious.
 - Detached.
 - Passive-Aggressive
- “Other people make individuals with high scores on these scales nervous”.*

“Moving Towards Others”

(Being critical of others or conforming to their wishes)

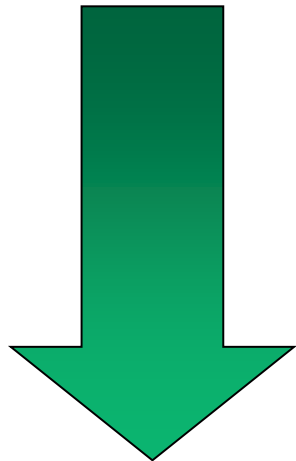
- Perfectionistic.
- Dependent.

“Individuals with high scores on these scales make themselves nervous”.

A Model for High-Potential Talent Development (Yapp)

Typical focus of high-potential talent assessment

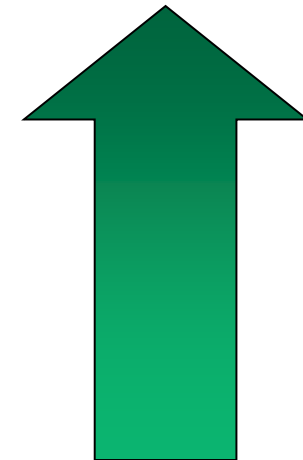
Lower



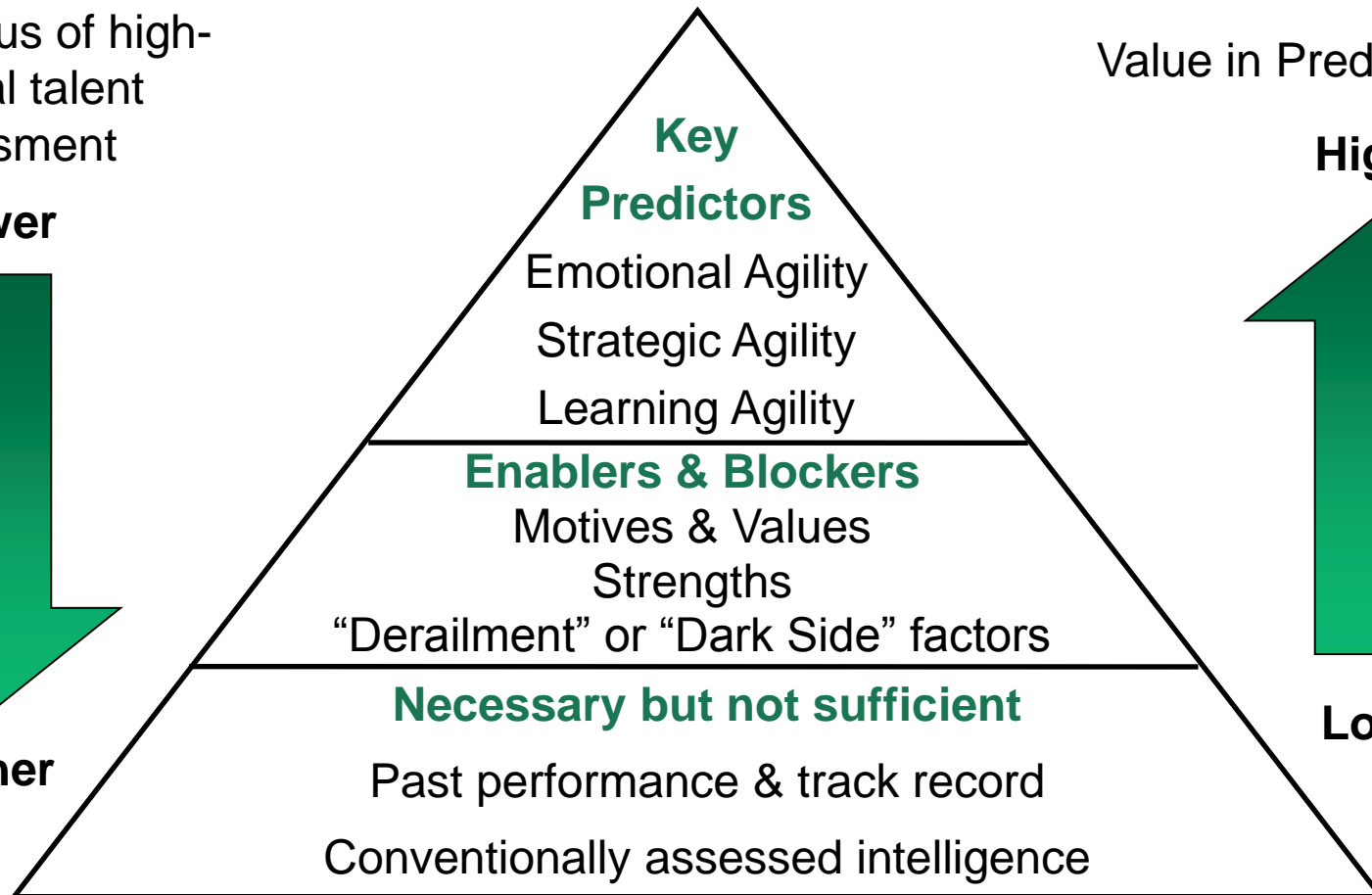
Higher

Value in Predicting Potential

Higher



Lower



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Summary

- Various researchers have identified similar dysfunctional inter-personal behaviours, aka derailment, or dark side factors, e.g. Horney, Bentz, Hogan.
- These factors seem to be consistent with work to identify & describe certain personality disorders, as described in e.g. DSM-IV-TR Axis 2.
- Psychometric instruments have been developed, which can assess these factors with some fidelity, e.g. the HDS, MMPI.
- They are probably best used in the developmental context, e.g. as part of a coaching programme, but should also be used in selection processes, *with care*.
- Managerial assessment processes generally, and for high-flyers in particular, should contain a range of methods, inc experiential components, designed to address the “brightside”, the “inside” & the “dark side”.
- The more successful and effective people *learn to manage their dark-side*.
- *Do not neglect dark side factors in people-management processes – the consequences could be significant for both the individual & the wider organisation!!!*

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- www.hoganassessments.com, www.psychological-consultancy.com
- The Centre for Creative Leadership (USA), www.ccl.org.

Further Information

- Today's presentation and other documents are available for download at www.dwhr.co.uk.
- If you would like to find out more about the “dark side” of personality and how the Hogan Development Survey might be used in your organisation, please contact:

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embrace your dark-side...