



STRENGTH DEPLOYMENT INVENTORY[®] COMPARISON GUIDE

Which assessment will really make a difference?

By Tim Scudder, Ph.D.



FOR MILLIONS OF PROFESSIONALS THE WORLD OVER, TAKING A PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT NOW COMES WITH THE JOB.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), about

60% of employees are asked to take an assessment of some sort, with

22% of employers using assessments to evaluate job candidates.



It's no wonder that the assessment market has grown by about 10% annually over the past several years, reaching \$500 million in annual sales.¹

Today, more than 2,500 tests are available, many of which are clones or iterations of original works. Some tests are diagnostic, while others are developmental. Some of these iterations have made improvements, others are simply poor imitations of the originals. It's worth taking the time to evaluate what some of the most popular assessments measure, how their insights are applied, and what theory and evidence supports their use.

The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) is a personality assessment that is grounded in Relationship Awareness® theory.² We believe

an assessment—with effective training and application—can produce profound effects on working relationships, company culture, business performance, and the development of talented people. We also believe that comparing our theory and assessment with others offers a good way to help organizations find the right fit for tackling the business initiative at hand.

This guide starts off with some important issues to keep in mind when considering the administration of any type of personality assessment, and how the SDI addresses those issues. Next, we provide a brief overview and critique of four commonly used assessments, along with some advantages that the SDI brings to the table. Finally, we conclude with a look at the most recent developments currently underway at Crucial Learning.



Assessments in the Real World

Too often, training gets forgotten when people re-enter the workplace. No matter how well a program is facilitated, or how much fun people have during a program, training loses its impact if learners are not sure how to apply what they've learned. Savvy training buyers look for programs with assessments that emphasize practical application.

The following pages discuss a few guiding principles that the most useful assessments follow.



01

The assessment should be reasonably simple to complete.

In most organizations, time is everyone's most valuable resource, and people simply don't have enough of it to complete lengthy questionnaires. The solution should offer flexibility in how the assessment and its results are delivered. Compatibility with mobile devices is a big plus. As a general rule, the easier and more engaging the assessment experience is, the more people will actually complete it.

02

Results should be easy to remember and have high face validity.

Most personality assessments were designed by psychologists who devoted their lives to developing rich and complex psychometrics. Therefore, the results are often presented in long-form narratives peppered with special codes or language that must be deciphered then committed to memory. Conversely, results that are presented using simple language are more memorable.

Even more important is whether the results are accurate. Results that feel right to the learner have face validity, and this is essential to participant engagement. The SDI excels in this measure with >99% face validity. We've achieved this because our solid theoretical and statistical foundation³ gives us a compelling way to describe people's core personality and to link motives to the strengths they use at work. When participants accept the results of their assessment, they are more likely to remember them and be curious about others' results.



03

Results should be applicable to various relationships and circumstances.

Insights from assessment results are interesting when they are about you. But unfortunately, that is the limit of many assessment results. With the SDI, we see that the core “you” is present in every situation and interaction. But the strengths you use can change based on the people you are with, your goals, and the demands of the situation. A good assessment will not limit you to a specific situation or overgeneralize to the point of being impractical.

04

Results should be focused on workplace application.

Relationship intelligence is the applied awareness of people’s motives and strengths to communicate in the right style and achieve goals faster.⁴ Most assessment-based training is delivered for teams or groups, based on the assumption that the awareness gained by each person will foster better communication and higher performance. But this is possible only if the training focuses on how to communicate the results and apply them at work.

The SDI offers a simple way for people to share and apply their results through a custom-built presentation platform that dynamically displays individual and team results. This helps teams establish a common language and shared frame of reference. Most importantly, it ensures teams use their insights consistently while working with others.

Comparing the SDI to Other Assessments

The following brief comparison of the theories behind four popular assessments highlights some of the key points of difference. It's by no means exhaustive, but it is a good starting point as you seek to understand what each of these tools were intended to do and what advantages the SDI can bring to the table.



DiSC

While there are many versions of the DiSC assessment, the interaction between environment and response are the basis for the primary DiSC types, which are Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance. For example, Dominance describes an assertive response to an antagonistic environment, and Compliance describes a passive, or submissive, response to an antagonistic environment. The underlying premise is that behavior changes stem from environmental factors.

Critics argue that DiSC isn't a personality assessment because personality, by definition, is the set of enduring, stable characteristics of a person that are not due primarily to the environment.⁵ The risk associated with using DiSC is that people will assume the results are stable over time, but the underlying theory suggests that the results should change as the situation changes.

The SDI Advantage

People act differently in different situations, but there is a lot more to the story. The SDI measures core personality under two conditions—when things are going well and when there is conflict. There are stable patterns of human motives that are not the result of the environment. The SDI also takes the environment into account by reporting the strengths people use productively at work, along with the way strengths appear when overdone at work, which can limit individual and team effectiveness. The SDI shows that you do not have to change who you are in order to change what you do.



Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

This assessment provides a four-letter type code from four pairs of opposite preferences: Introversion vs. Extraversion, Sensing vs. Intuition, Thinking vs. Feeling, and Judging vs. Perceiving. There are 16 types, such as ENTP and ISFJ, that largely identify each person's set of preferences for how they take in information and make decisions. One challenge users of the MBTI find is that the preference names do not carry the same meaning as when the words are used in everyday language. For example, Judging does not mean judgmental, and Perceiving does not mean perceptive.

Many people who complete the MBTI do not accept the results because their scores fall in the middle ranges and do not show "clear preferences." Many people also criticize the MBTI because it does not offer an easy way to apply knowledge gained by the assessment to improving interactions among the types.

The SDI Advantage

We often hear that people who took the MBTI cannot remember their results. Or if they do remember their 4-letter type, they don't remember what it means, so they don't even try to use the results at work. SDI results have high face validity, are memorable, and easy to apply to relationships. Furthermore, the SDI is based on an entirely different theory. While the MBTI reports on a set of four independent preferences, the SDI explains the way core motives blend in every person, how these motives change in conflict, and how people can improve their relationships. The SDI shows how people can make choices about using their strengths, or adapt their communication style, in ways that are authentic and congruent with their underlying motives.



Hogan Assessments

Hogan assessments are based on socio-analytic theory, which maintains that the core of personality is based on evolutionary adaptations around status hierarchies. That roughly means that how people represent themselves to others has a greater effect on their behavior than internal personality traits.

These assessments are often used in selection processes to identify which employees are best suited for development and promotion by uncovering career-limiting factors among the executive team or by simply weeding out ineffective managers. The overall results provide participants information about their “bright side,” or how they tend to behave on good days, as opposed to their “dark side,” or how they behave when faced with challenges and stress.

The Hogan assessment comes with a high price tag, so it’s often used for executive-level development. The risk associated with such targeted assessments for only a few key people is that you may lose the opportunity to create a common language that can be used to improve communication throughout the organization.

The SDI Advantage

The bright vs. dark distinction is quite different from how we view people. SDI results describe motives under two conditions: when things are going well and when there is conflict. But conflict can be effectively managed to gain clarity, focus energy, restore relationships, and drive needed change. The SDI does not measure people’s skills or point out deficiencies that would disqualify them from advancement. Instead, it offers a common language that people can use as they collaborate to achieve results. SDI clients have also shared the SDI with entire teams or organizations, ensuring wide adoption of the insights and applications.



StandOut & CliftonStrengths

Don Clifton's book, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, co-authored with his protégé, Marcus Buckingham, introduced the StrengthsFinder Profile assessment. They categorized 34 strengths (or success themes) and developed an assessment to identify the top five in every individual, with the idea that people would achieve greater success by focusing on their current strengths instead of struggling to develop others that wouldn't come as easily. After splitting with his mentor, Buckingham developed the StandOut Assessment which identifies Nine Strengths Roles, rather than the 34 used by Clifton.

While the idea of organizing one's professional life around key strengths that come easily is appealing, many find that the material does not provide practical ways to apply it when working with other people—or simply rising to occasions where the circumstances require you to exercise non-preferred strengths. The real world is where StrengthsFinder (since renamed CliftonStrengths assessment) and StandOut can fall short. Speaking up in a meeting to represent an important perspective that's been overlooked might not be your strength, but it might be the right thing to do to get the result you want. Likewise, calmly listening to the concerns of a disgruntled employee may push you out of your comfort zone, but it helps to identify the root cause so the problem can be solved and the relationship can be preserved.

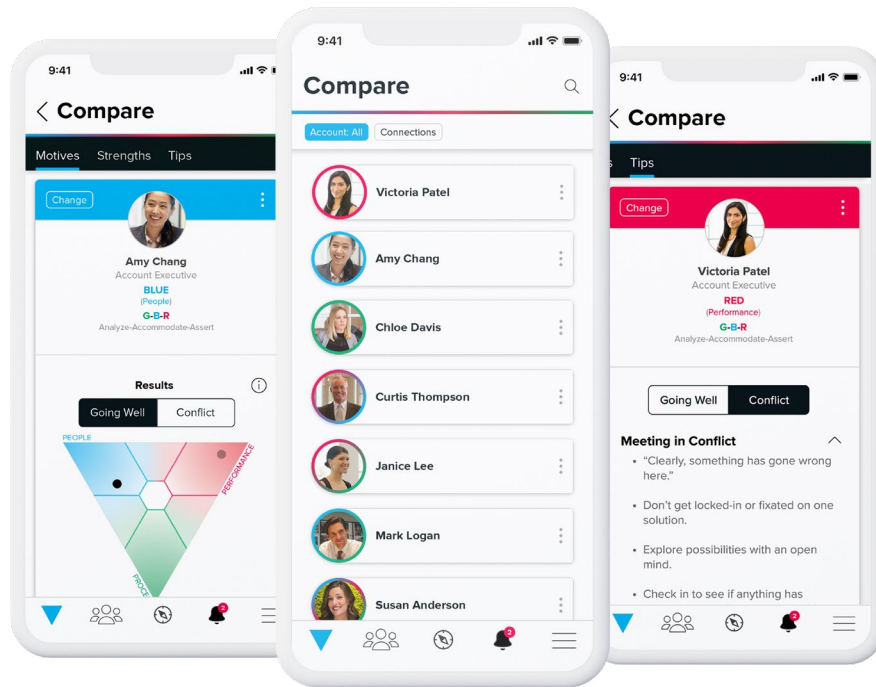
The SDI Advantage

Buckingham has circularly defined a strength as “Whatever makes you feel strong.” Both Clifton and Buckingham see strengths as talents and advise that people orient their roles to use their talents. That makes sense, but it can have the unintended effect of limiting people's development because they aren't encouraged to try new things. At its worst, relying on your top strength is like grabbing a hammer from your toolbox and asking “What needs pounding?” To be most effective, you need to first consider the job at hand then select the tool.

The SDI has an entirely different point of view. First, strengths are behaviors that people use in pursuit of desired results. Whether we are effective and productive with our strengths depends on our ability to bring the right strength to the situation and relationship. Like CliftonStrengths, we also acknowledge that well-intended strengths, when overdone, can limit our effectiveness. Too much of a strength is simply not a strength when it causes harm to oneself or others.

Furthermore, the SDI shows how people have access to the full array of strengths. We connect every strength to individuals' underlying motives to help them find personally meaningful and compelling reasons to bring any strength to a situation and get better results through relationships.





Learn More

The Strength Deployment Inventory is a personality assessment that provides insights about you and how you relate to others. It measures your motives, how you experience conflict, your productive strengths, and how your strengths can limit your effectiveness when overdone. With these four views, it delivers personalized relationship intelligence to help you and your teams build trust and form productive relationships.

Get Started

To bring the Strength Deployment Inventory to your organization for increased results and relationships, contact us to learn more. Call **1-800-449-5989** or visit us at **CrucialLearning.com**.



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Crucial Learning improves the world by helping people improve themselves. By combining social science research with innovative instructional design, we create flexible learning experiences that teach proven skills for solving life's most stubborn personal, interpersonal, and organizational problems. We offer courses in communication, performance, and leadership, focusing on behaviors that have a disproportionate impact on outcomes, and an assessment that helps individuals and teams form productive relationships. Our award-winning courses, assessments, and bestselling books include Crucial Conversations® for Mastering Dialogue, Crucial Conversations® for Accountability, Crucial Influence®, The Power of Habit™, Getting Things Done®, and the Strength Deployment Inventory®. Together they have helped millions achieve better relationships and results, and nearly half of the Forbes Global 2000 have drawn on these solutions to improve organizational health and performance. CrucialLearning.com

