CPI 260® INSTRUMENT WITH THE STRONG INTEREST INVENTORY®

When people embark on a career search, often their first order of business is to figure out what skills they have that will give them an edge in the workplace. Later, after some years on the job, many begin to think about incorporating what they enjoy into their work rather than focusing solely on what they are good at doing. Psychological assessments can be advantageous at this juncture, helping people navigate opportunities for development in their career. This guide focuses on integrating the data provided by the CPI 260® and *Strong Interest Inventory*® assessments to assist facilitators, coaches, and human resource professionals in working with clients and employees to identify next steps in their professional development.

INTRODUCTION

The CPI 260 instrument is the most recent version of the *California Psychological Inventory*™ (CPI™) assessment, which was created in the early 1950s. Taking this assessment gives leaders an opportunity to learn about themselves in terms of their strengths, and then to see how they are tracking in comparison to a group of high-potential, on-track leaders who were part of the assessment's sample norm group. This rich data pool provides an opportunity to sit beside the best of the best and look at one's strengths, opportunities for development, and areas that are and are not working.

The *Strong Interest Inventory* assessment is one of the world's most widely respected and frequently used planning tools. For more than 85 years it has been used to match people's interests to careers they might enjoy and find fulfilling. The assessment compares participants' responses to those of a sample of more than 18,000 professionals who are satisfied in their career and have been in their role for at least three years. It explores participants' level of interest in six broad areas (the Holland themes of Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional), as well as in a number of

specific interest areas that often point to work activities, projects, course work, and leisure activities that are personally motivating and rewarding. Using this information, participants are able to extract occupations that may be of interest to them and/or areas to consider as potential new directions in their career.

It might seem logical to assume that the areas in which people show the highest level of interest on the *Strong* instrument always intersect with the areas in which they show the most strengths on the CPI 260 instrument. However, that is not always the case. When people spend a great deal of time working outside their comfort zone, they are likely to develop competencies in that area and may perform very well. However, the effort they must expend to deliver those results is probably much greater than it is for people who have a *Strong* interest in that area.

When using the CPI 260 and *Strong* assessments together, first look at your client's results on the *Strong* Personal Style Scales (PSSs). Then compare those results with your client's list of strengths from the CPI 260 assessment and look for overlap. The rationale for taking this approach stems from the idea that people's style dictates how they use their competencies—i.e., what their competencies will look like in terms of behavior. Furthermore, understanding personal style shines a light on the places where people may need to stretch outside their comfort zone to reach the results they seek in terms of performance and maximizing their potential.

The *Strong* PSSs are
• Work Style
• Learning Environment
• Leadership Style
• Risk Taking
• Team Orientation

Each of the following sections looks at one of the *Strong* PSSs and explores its relationship to the scales and leadership characteristics of the CPI 260 assessment.

WORK STYLE

The role of talent management professionals is to coach clients in areas that may need development. Knowing clients' work style can help you identify tasks or functions that may require more of their conscious attention because they don't come as naturally as those that relate to their natural style. Looking at their strengths and development opportunities from the CPI 260 assessment in combination with their work style from the *Strong* assessment enables clients to see the impact of their behavior in terms of both how people perceive them and how they manage relationships within and through the work they do. When you are coaching clients, use the questions below to identify areas of comfort and places where they will have to challenge themselves to think and act differently.

If clients' work style indicates that they clearly prefer working alone, ask them the following questions:

- How comfortable are you with projects that give you a great deal of visibility in the organization? Have you looked for these kinds of projects to try to promote your work?
- Do you have a tendency to isolate yourself from others because you feel you can be more productive working alone? How do you make sure people have all the information they need from you to do their job well?
- On projects that require a high degree of collaboration, how do you balance your time and energy so that you can meet with others to work together on the project while also meeting your needs?
- When you are making decisions and arriving at solutions, do you feel confident about what you have done, or do you prefer to double-check your work with someone else?
- Do you have the relationships necessary to generate buy-in on new ideas and projects? How do you connect with people to share your ideas?

If clients' work style indicates that they clearly prefer working with others, ask them the following questions:

- Have people complimented your ability to be productive when working with others? Do you leave meetings feeling like there are defined action steps and prescribed tasks for you to manage?
- Are there times when you learn as much by listening as by contributing ideas and thoughts about the work you are doing?
- Do you seem to have more conversations that are personal or professional? Do you strike a good balance between networking and being productive when you are connecting with others?
- Have you been able to navigate the interpersonal political landscape well? Do you know to whom you need to go when there is something specific you need to accomplish?
- How do you use your influence within the organization? Are you able to get buy-in from key players to implement projects that interest you?

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

People's learning style influences how they retain and apply information. The two sides of the Learning Environment scale on the *Strong* assessment have to do with practical versus theoretical learning. Both are necessary in most corporate environments if one is to excel and achieve. Depending on how the person you are working with scored, there are certain scales on the CPI 260 instrument that interact with learning. Next, we will look at how the CPI 260 leadership characteristics (combinations of scales) relate to people's learning style on the *Strong* instrument.

Self-awareness: Self-acceptance (Sa) and Empathy (Em) scales

Relationship to learning style: Identifies the extent to which people can be honest about and reflect on the efforts they make to learn new information. In addition, people's Empathy score reflects the degree of tolerance and patience they may be able to draw on when working with others who have a different approach to learning.

Self-control: Self-control (Sc) and Social Conformity (So) scales

Relationship to learning style: Speaks to how likely people are to act impulsively, which may affect their ability to stay focused on a concept and to think through a decision in terms of the impact or consequences of choosing one option over another.

Resilience: Well-being (Wb) and Self-acceptance (Sa) scales

Relationship to learning style: Indicates how easily people can bounce back after they have made a mistake or been embarrassed by providing incorrect information, and the extent to which they are able to follow through during difficult circumstances.

Use of Power and Authority: Dominance (Do) and Self-control (Sc) scales

Relationship to learning style: Shows how hard people are likely to push or drive to prove their point or to convince others of their perspective, and speaks to the methods they may use to gain influence within the organization.

Comfort with Organizational Structures: Social Conformity (So) and Achievement via Conformance (Ac) scales

Relationship to learning style: Looks at how much people like to follow or challenge the rules and whether their general perspective tends to be more traditional or original. Also speaks to the level of structure people need to feel comfortable moving forward with decisions or taking action on tasks.

Responsibility and Accountability: Responsibility (Re) and Leadership (Lp) scales

Relationship to learning style: Represents people's interest in sharing appropriate content and taking the time to master knowledge, as well as the drive to follow through with intentions around what they will accomplish and what they promise to deliver.

Decisiveness: Dominance (Do) and Independence (In) scales

Relationship to learning style: Indicates whether people have confidence in their beliefs or need some collaboration to make a final decision. In addition, reveals how easily people can make an unpopular or difficult decision that will benefit the organization but may negatively affect the day-to-day lives of individual contributors.

Interpersonal Skill: Sociability (Sy) and Amicability (Ami) scales

Relationship to learning style: Reflects people's ability to network—the broader their network, the more access they have to those who can answer their questions. Furthermore, the degree to which people feel comfortable/enjoy being around others affects the scope of their potential and current relationships.

Understanding Others: Empathy (Em) and Insightfulness (Is) scales

Relationship to learning style: Explores people's ability to apply their learning to other situations and see other people's viewpoint. The ability to reflect on how others might feel increases understanding and tolerance of their perspective or position.

Capacity for Collaboration: Tolerance (To) and Creative Temperament (Ct) scales

Relationship to learning style: Reveals information about how open people are to seeing and using multiple ways of attaining knowledge. Creativity affects people's capacity to see beyond what currently exists and imagine what might be possible.

Working with and Through Others: Managerial Potential (Mp) and Independence (In) scales

Relationship to learning style: Indicates people's ability to determine when to collaborate and when to direct based on their own competence and fund of knowledge for the situation. Part of the balance between these two positions involves negotiating, persuading, and deciding to "take one for the team" at times to benefit others when full agreement has not been reached.

Creativity: Creative Temperament (Ct) and Achievement via Independence (Ai) scales

Relationship to learning style: Assesses people's ability to think about what is possible and challenge the status quo to make something better. Creativity affects people's ability to integrate new knowledge and make something their own in terms of understanding how it applies to day-to-day professional functions.

Handling Sensitive Problems: Empathy (Em) and Dominance (Do) scales

Relationship to learning style: Indicates people's ability to use emotional intelligence in understanding the people and relationships involved in managing a difficult situation or conflict. In the absence of some reflection on key players and their involvement in the conflict or situation, a leader may make decisions without considering the impact of interpersonal roles and relationships on productivity and morale.

Action Orientation: Sensitivity (Sn) and Flexibility (Fx) scales

Relationship to learning style: Explores people's willingness to be open to various viewpoints or to take a stand and make a tough choice, as well as their ability to be flexible and open to changing course in light of new information that is presented.

Self-Confidence: Leadership (Lp) and Independence (In) scales

Relationship to learning style: Evaluates how much people trust what they know, and know how to ask about what they don't know. Sometimes knowing which questions to ask is as important as admitting that one does not have adequate knowledge with which to move forward and make an appropriate decision.

Managing Change: Flexibility (Fx) and Self-control (Sc) scales

Relationship to learning style: Involves the pursuit of the unknown and doing what it takes to attain knowledge in ambiguous situations. Another component of managing change is being able to control the desire to act prematurely when all the information needed to make a responsible decision is not yet available.

Influence: Dominance (Do) and Sociability (Sy) scales

Relationship to learning style: Looks at people's ability to use their network to get buy-in from people in areas in which they have knowledge. Competency around subject matter contributes to one's ability to leverage knowledge and gain influence with peers, but relationships provide the confidence necessary to garner buy-in to support one's ideas.

Comfort with Visibility: Social Presence (Sp) and Capacity for Status (Cs) scales

Relationship to learning style: Explores the extent to which people share knowledge only when it is needed or helpful, or seize opportunities to show others what they know. Individual contributors especially need to advocate for themselves by sharing their accomplishments and contributions so that people at all levels understand their value to the organization.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

The next step is to examine leadership style on the *Strong* assessment and what certain scale scores on the CPI 260 assessment may reveal about it. People whose scores fall toward the left side of the Leadership Style scale tend to lead by example and to be less directive. Those who score toward the right side of the scale tend to direct and influence others with ease and generally are not afraid to share ideas that are outside the norm.

Below are some of the leadership characteristics and scales on the CPI 260 instrument that influence leadership style and how that influence may be manifested.

Self-awareness: Self-acceptance (Sa) and Empathy (Em) scales

People with a high score for Self-awareness on the CPI 260 instrument tend to be reflective and accountable for the actions they take and the decisions they make. Those with a low score may not see their impact on people or processes, and this can stall both their development and their progress within the organization.

Self-control: Self-control (Sc) and Social Conformity (So) scales

Having the capacity to stop and think about consequences is crucial to one's ability to influence others. People who are impulsive will likely find it difficult to get buy-in from others, as they may be seen as a loose cannon who operates without strategy.

Dominance (Do)

Leaders need to exhibit confidence and demonstrate their ability to make decisions independently if others are to respect their judgment. Balance is important here, however. Those who score very high on Dominance (above 70) can be too pushy or domineering, in which case people will avoid interactions with them and feel bullied.

Responsibility and Accountability: Responsibility (Re) and Leadership (Lp) scales

Following up is important, especially on projects that have action steps and schedules attached to them. If people know that their leader will remember due dates and expect compliance, they are more likely to make the effort to complete projects on time. When a leader fails to acknowledge work after it is completed, the people involved may wonder why they rushed to complete it. Most leaders demonstrate responsibility and accountability by example so that they can model the behavior for others.

Decisiveness: Dominance (Do) and Independence (In) scales

Making decisions, both independently and collaboratively, is a critical part of being a leader. Making tough decisions requires taking action and not being afraid if people don't like what you are suggesting. If leaders wait too long to make a decision or feel unable to act, they may in fact be unconsciously making a decision and missing an opportunity by not acting.

Interpersonal Skill: Sociability (Sy) and Amicability (Ami) scales

Now more than ever, people need to demonstrate the longevity of their leadership and the sustainability of their impact on others over time. Relationships are critical, and the way leaders speak to and treat people does not go unnoticed. As a matter of fact, people feel more inspired to act and to take calculated risks when they feel their leader is behind

them. One of the more impactful things leaders can do with their direct reports is offer encouragement through specific praise about the actions they are taking.

Understanding Others: Empathy (Em) and Insightfulness (Is) scales

Every leader needs to make an effort to imagine or hypothesize how people feel about who they are and the choices they are making in the workplace. A high score (above 60) on Empathy is indicative of an inclusive leader who considers the viewpoints of others. In addition, a high score on Insightfulness reveals an interest in others and what makes them tick. Both elements contribute to enhanced interpersonal skills.

Working with and Through Others: Managerial Potential (Mp) and Independence (In) scales

Leadership requires a delicate balance between directing and collaborating, and an effective leader needs to be able to navigate both sides. There are times when choices need to be made independently, without additional viewpoints, and other times when collaboration is necessary. People who are not willing to examine their style of connecting with others may be ineffective as leaders.

Creativity: Creative Temperament (Ct) and Achievement via Independence (Ai) scales

Most leaders have the ability to solve problems creatively and to bring in those who are talented at providing innovative solutions. Showing confidence and examining a challenge in terms of possible solutions is an important way to develop competence as a leader in directing others toward action.

Action Orientation: Sensitivity (Sn) and Flexibility (Fx) scales

Most managers and executives score lower on the Sensitivity scale, which is as we would expect because leaders need to be able to make tough and sometimes unpopular decisions. At the same time, a degree of flexibility is expected in adapting to the changing needs of people and tasks.

Managing Change: Flexibility (Fx) and Self-control (Sc) scales

With the world becoming a global marketplace and the economy challenging businesses at all levels, leaders are driven to produce the best results with minimal resources. Remaining resilient in the face of change gives leaders an edge and increases their ability to affect others positively by inspiring them to be flexible. Using the appropriate behaviors and actions according to the situation yields better results more consistently.

Comfort with Visibility: Social Presence (Sp) and Capacity for Status (Cs) scales

Leaders need to be able to appear in front of others with confidence to share their assurance. Showing up during successes is as important as taking responsibility around failures. The important thing is to be present and accountable for one's actions.

RISK TAKING

Two individual scales on the CPI 260 assessment are especially important when we consider a leader's approach to risk taking. The first is Self-control (Sc), which examines whether a person pauses before making a decision or dives in and acts impulsively. People who score above 50 on this scale tend to be more deliberate about their choices. Those who score below 50 tend to decide quickly about actions and consider their impact after the fact. The second scale, Flexibility (Fx), indicates how willing people are to embrace change and innovation. People who score above 50 on this scale tend to be more flexible and open to taking risks. Those who score below 50 may take a more regimented or calculated approach.

TEAM ORIENTATION

The last PSS on the *Strong* instrument is Team Orientation. Here are some CPI 260 scales to consider in conjunction with the *Strong* Team Orientation scale when helping clients explore their approach to teamwork.
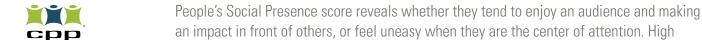
Dominance (Do)

People who score high (above 75) on this scale may hog the spotlight or take up a great deal of airtime in meetings. Ideally, leaders use their influence to share ideas and listen to the ideas of others. When people's Dominance score is too low (below 50), they may not speak up or share their ideas with team members.

Sociability (Sy)

People who score above 50 on Sociability tend to be drawn toward working with others and to enjoy the collaborative environment a team provides. People who score below 50 tend to work best behind the scenes and prefer to be individual contributors.

Social Presence (Sp)

People's Social Presence score reveals whether they tend to enjoy an audience and making an impact in front of others, or feel uneasy when they are the center of attention. High

scorers (above 60) often feel comfortable sharing presentations or giving lectures. Lower scorers (45 and below) may be anxious about speaking to a group and may have to muster the courage to present their ideas.

Self -acceptance (Sa)

People with a high Self-acceptance score are generally easy to work with on a team. They don't tend to take themselves or others too seriously, and they view constructive criticism as a means to improve. People with a lower score may feel less secure about their position on a team and may be absent from team discussions or when critical decisions need to be made. They may doubt their impact or think their contributions are not important.

Empathy (Em)

A high score on Empathy is a good sign that a leader tries to understand others' perspectives and function as a team player. Rather than becoming defensive or questioning, people with a high Empathy score hear feedback and consider what it means and how they can improve. In this way, they help the team move forward and model collaborative behavior for others.

Responsibility (Re)

Ideally, all team members hope to pull their own weight by making individual contributions that matter. A high score on Responsibility indicates that people take pride in their work, are accountable, and want to provide value for the team. When the score is lower, people may avoid or struggle with finishing tasks or doing their part for the team.

Flexibility (Fx)

Whether people are open to trying new things or require a consistent path can affect the team environment. If they score low on Flexibility and are too rigid, they may cause tension or conflict on the team by pushing too hard. People who score high on this scale, on the other hand, may help the team move out of a rut if the members are afraid to take a risk. The important thing is to maintain an equilibrium between trying new things and enhancing the things that are working well so that people sens a balance without too much chaos in their work environment.

Sensitivity (Sn)

This score is important because it reveals how people tend to approach one another. A low scorer likely has a direct style and prefers straight talk, while a person with a higher score needs others to use tact and diplomacy when sharing news. In either case, people need to consider the impact of their style on the team so that communication is effective and the work can move forward and develop.

CONCLUSION

We have taken a look at the Personal Style Scales of the *Strong* instrument and how they interact with the leadership characteristics and scales of the CPI 260 instrument. When working with your clients, you can dig deeper into this information by discussing the influence of their interests on their leadership competencies in their current (or future desired) role. Combining the data from the two instruments offers a more holistic picture of interests and potential behaviors so that professional development practitioners have more information to inform their work with clients and to use in helping clients create a strategy and plan for moving forward and realizing their goals.

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