Michelle Johnston, CPP executive coach and organizational development expert, answers questions from the webinar **"Be Better at Creating Powerful People: Cultivating Trust and Increasing Influence Through Behavioral-Based Coaching."**

1. **What is your approach if a client has a very clear preference for Feeling and a high Inclusion score on his or her FIRO-B® results? Is this a concern?** This would be a concern only if the client were experiencing issues that negatively affect his or her performance—for example, including more people than necessary in decision making. In that case, one approach would be to work on inclusion by reducing the number of people the client invites to meetings. The client could make a list prior to each meeting of everyone he or she wants to invite, and then assess the list on a "need" and "want" basis. You could also include questions around goals and determining what it is the client needs/wants to achieve and whether including others hinders achievement of the goal.

2. **What is the process for becoming certified to use the FIRO-B assessment?** CPP offers an in-house FIRO® Certification Program for five or more participants within the United States but does not currently have public programs. Public FIRO® Certification Programs are available in most other countries. If you are an MBTI® Certified Practitioner, you can also purchase and administer the FIRO-B and FIRO Business® tools. Certification training is for those who want to better understand how to interpret and apply the FIRO-B assessment more precisely.

   Please contact your **CPP Regional Consultant** to learn more about in-house FIRO® Certification Programs inside the United States, or e-mail me at **mjohnston@cpp.com** to learn more about FIRO-B options outside the United States.

3. **Can you explain a little more about the "wanted" scores/behaviors on FIRO results?** Wanted behaviors are behaviors individuals engage in that communicate what they want from others. For instance, if they have low Wanted Inclusion, they will engage in behaviors that communicate their low level of interest in being included in others' groups/social gatherings/activities.

4. **A 90/10 rule was discussed in the webinar. Can we use that in our coaching sessions?** Yes, of course! It's a common rule in the therapy world. Try to limit its use to coaching situations and interventions in which the participant should be doing work and processing information.

5. **Can you explain the difference between the FIRO-B and FIRO Business tools and whether that difference affects which assessment to use in combination with the MBTI® assessment?** The most obvious difference between the FIRO-B and FIRO Business assessments is the scale names they use:
   + Inclusion (FIRO-B) vs. Involvement (FIRO Business)
   + Control (FIRO-B) vs. Influence (FIRO Business)
   + Affection (FIRO-B) vs. Connection (FIRO Business)

   The model in the FIRO Business tool is a little different from that in the FIRO-B tool, and the scores for wanted and expressed behaviors are reported as percentages rather than numerically on a 0–9 scale. The FIRO Business assessment has only 30 items (vs. 54 items in the FIRO-B assessment) for shorter administration time and, with scoring based on sample norms in ten languages, is ideal for global use. But please be aware that no combined MBTI and FIRO Business report is currently available.

6. **What FIRO-B scores do not correlate with MBTI preferences?** No correlations have been found between the FIRO-B Wanted Control scores and the MBTI preferences. The ***FIRO-B® Technical Guide*** provides actual preference values for each FIRO-B score.

7. **Do you write the client's Behavioral Action Plan, or do you ask the client to fill it out?** Generally, I work through the assessments and other information and isolate a few of the core challenges the client is facing. Then I collaborate with the client to determine the most important challenges. Once we have agreed on one to three actions, I ask the client to write the plan and I assist where necessary to ensure that it is measurable.

8. **How has the FIRO-B tool been validated across cultures? These characteristics seem to have different values in different cultures.** Yes, the FIRO-B assessment has been validated in seventeen countries in addition to the United States. Specifics on these validations are provided in the ***FIRO-B® Technical Guide.*** Acceptance of certain behaviors may be different in other cultures; thus the application needs to be considered accordingly.

9. **Do you usually have clients take the full battery of assessments all at once at the start of your coaching relationship, or do you spread the assessments out over time?** I like to have the client take the full battery of assessments up front. I do this for several reasons:
   + I like to see things for myself and get my own impressions of the client before I receive 360° feedback or information provided by others in the organization.
   + I like to know how to approach the client. Often, the assessments' results will help me determine whether the client is likely to be receptive to feedback or defensive. I can then anticipate any resistance I might encounter and spend some time working with the client on his or her concerns before getting started on the coaching process. I feel this helps build trust.
   + By receiving all the information at once, I can see which traits are emerging/trending in all the assessments. Sometimes I catch something that is critical that I wouldn't have caught had I not had assessment results to review. There is only so much we can understand and isolate without assessments, so my personal approach is to assess first.

   I tend to look at the 360° feedback last to minimize bias in my interpretation of the other assessments.

10. **How do you decide that coaching is not the best avenue to pursue, i.e., that the client is not open to learning and change?** That is a very good question. If the client is not motivated to change or is resistant to learning, coaching probably will be a challenge. Sometimes this is indicated in the assessment results. Seeing a lot of defensiveness doesn't necessarily mean that you won't win the client over, but it does give you an indication that coaching may not be an easy process. For example, in my presentation of "Jack," his profile indicated that he wouldn't be very receptive to coaching—and he wasn't. However, over time, and through a very long feedback session, he became more interested in changing. There may be times, though, when you will need to explore options other than coaching with your clients.

11. **How many coaching sessions do you typically have in the six months?** The number of sessions depends on the objective of the coaching engagement and the client. For example, you may have a client who is in need of a little direction rather than intense coaching. You may meet with this client only once a month, ending the sessions in around six months. In such a scenario, I usually build into the agreement that we will go longer than six months if needed. In other cases where the change needed is more in-depth, we will meet weekly or biweekly.

12. **Would you readminister the FIRO-B instrument at the conclusion of the coaching engagement? Would you expect changes in the scores?** I have done this as a pre-/post-coaching measure and when the coaching engagement lasts longer than six months. I usually instruct the client to take the assessment in the present mind-set (i.e., the past few weeks), which often results in differences in scores that are reflective of behavior changes. It is a best practice to readminister when the coaching sessions have been actively taking place for a period of six months or more. It usually takes that long for the behaviors to become more consistent and for the mind-set to change.

13. **I use the MBTI® Step II™ and FIRO-B assessments and have found that by looking further into the twenty facets I can identify points of incongruence. Have you found this to be true?** Absolutely! Incongruence is a fruitful source of information for coaching sessions, and being able to ask the client more about a difference is critical. Self-awareness is key to change, and pairing these two assessments provides a much deeper understanding for the client. An individual can't change a behavior if he or she is not aware of it. It is difficult to cover all the applications and interpretive capabilities in the 45 minutes of a webinar.

14. In the presentation, one of the recommendations in the Behavioral Action Plan is to "appear more approachable." Can you explain the use of "appear" rather than "be"? Some coaching approaches, such as the Goldsmith approach, are focused on impression changes rather than on true change. If people think a leader is changing and have that impression, they are more likely to engage with the leader and more inclined to follow. There is some research indicating that an impression is enough to help improve leadership effectiveness. I would argue that if a leader has changed his or her behavior enough to give a different impression, then he or she is changing—not just changing impressions. No matter what coaching philosophy you follow, some sort of change is taking place, regardless of how you want to speak to it.

15. Where was the information you included about "Jack's" FIRO-B scores for Control derived? That information is a general—but very brief—interpretation of "Jack's" FIRO-B scores. There is much more that can be interpreted from the various scores, but the webinar presentation included only a few for the sake of time. During the interpretation process, you go through a "face validation" process to check accuracy. In the real-life case I did this. I modified it for the presentation, however, so it's for the most part fictitious.

16. How transparent should I be as a coach to the team "Jack" is working with about why he is being coached? And how up-front should I be about the work perceptions? It is important to note the types of involvement team members have with "Jack," as well as to keep confidentiality top of mind. If coworkers are not directly affected by "Jack's" performance, they probably don't need to be involved in the coaching process. With directly affected team members, a good way to find out the perceptions is through 360° assessments. When appropriate, I also involve direct reports in the coaching process (although this doesn't mean you need to speak with other staff members directly), both for accountability and to get feedback on changes.

    There is some research that shows that if a leader asks direct reports about his or her performance and how he or she might improve, those employees report more changes about the leader. Including others in the process can reinforce the idea that the leader is serious about changing. It can also be a two-way street, as the leader's asking for employees' input keeps the leader abreast of his or her impact and employees feel their leader is changing. The debate is whether the leader is actually changing or just giving the impression of change. Be sure to clarify with your client what information will be shared so that he or she will be comfortable with it before involving others. You also need to make sure the client understands why others' involvement is necessary.

17. How do I ensure that the coaching efforts "stick" and set the client up for success? A best practice I try to employ is to move my clients toward becoming more comfortable asking for feedback from their team members in the organization, and to look to their staff as their guide on performance. After clients have developed self-awareness and gained insight into their effectiveness, they are more likely to see when they are slipping into old patterns and to be comfortable reaching out again. I also follow up with my clients every year to see how they are doing.

18. How do the MBTI Step II facets play into the results of coaching? I use the Step II assessment to help me understand how the client's behaviors are emerging (personality is just one way to understand what is driving behavior). I then cross-validate the information from multiple assessments with what is expected vs. what is being expressed by the client. The Step II facets can help the client understand why behaviors are emerging and can also help identify inconsistencies between the inborn preferences and expressed/wanted behaviors.

19. What happens when we see a similar score in someone's expressed and wanted scores? When there is parity between expressed and wanted scores in a person's FIRO results, the impressions others have of the person will be consistent with the person's behavior. For example, if a client has an Expressed Inclusion score of 0 and a Wanted Inclusion score of 0, there is consistency, but trust issues may still exist. If a leader never hosts meetings and doesn't show up to others' meetings, there is consistency, but others may start to have issues with the behavior because it communicates lack of trust/interest in others' input and lack of interest in providing input into others' initiatives. It leads to impressions of "you're not important," "I don't trust you or value your input," or "I don't think your initiatives are that important." So you can see how the negative impressions would still be there. There are many applications of the FIRO results and a lot of other good information that can be gleaned from the assessment results in addition to the actual scores.

20. How do you work on the behaviors that affect a client's approachability? What is important to keep in mind is that there are a lot of behaviors one could focus on. The coach needs to try to find the most critical behavior that is affecting the client and focus on being able to measure it. Many coaches forget that although they are familiar with various behaviors and can easily understand them, the client may not be on the same page. Breaking things down into smaller pieces to make them understandable helps avoid overwhelming the client. I am a firm believer in keeping the coaching simple and applicable to everyday life in the client's organization. If it becomes too difficult and is not easily applicable to the client's actual work environment, it likely will not stick for the client.

21. **In my consulting work I've experienced a lot of leaders with preferences for ENTJ, similar to "Jack," and whose behavior seems to cause similar reactions in their staff. As coaches, is there a way we can promote more EF, IF, and IT personalities into leadership roles?** People of *all* MBTI types can be great leaders. As a coach, your role is to help today's and tomorrow's leaders become more self-aware through insight-driven approaches. Once leaders see their impact and how it's affecting the organization's performance, it's hard for them to deny the realities. There is also the important factor of the organization itself enforcing change that is necessary. So, for instance, a vice president would need to have the president or CEO hold him or her accountable for the needed change.

    The MBTI assessment should never be used for selection. Personality preferences do not indicate competency and people can flex into other preferences. There is much more involved with leadership than just preferences, such as specific job skills and experience.

22. **What was the reason for giving "Jack" three months to accomplish the goal?** The real "Jack" had eighteen months of coaching. The fictitious example used in the webinar was presented to highlight research findings that setting deadlines helps facilitate the change process. Each goal needs to be considered carefully and the timeline for change needs to be based on what is realistic given the goal.

23. **What ultimately drove "Jack's" behaviors, and how did you discover and corroborate the findings?** I coupled "Jack's" CPI 260® and FIRO-B results to help me isolate a core issue for "Jack" (it prompted me to ask a critical question) that stemmed from an earlier life experience. Discovering that link helped "Jack" understand all his other scores and take them less personally. Because we had isolated his core issue, "Jack" became very motivated to change. He saw who he was becoming and decided he didn't want to be that kind of person. This was "Jack's" first assessment experience, and he found the insight extremely helpful.

24. **What reason was the staff given for the coach's feedback request?** The staff was told that "Jack" was working on improving his leadership skills and that their participation was needed to help identify what skills were most critical to his team. They then participated in a 360° assessment for "Jack." We did a couple of 360° assessments over eighteen months. During this time, "Jack" opened up more on his own to his team regarding what he was doing and why and began to solicit feedback on his performance. Eventually, he had done enough work and evolved enough for his staff to freely give feedback when asked for it.

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