

# MOTIVATIONAL STYLE ASSESSMENT

The Motivational Style (MS) assessment tool, also known as the Values (PIAV) Index, is the culmination of the work of Drs. Eduard Spranger and Gordon Allport and their study of human value, motivation and drive. The MS helps people to better understand their unique value hierarchy or belief system pertaining to what motivates them, what they are most drawn to and where their passions lie.

## HISTORY OF THE MOTIVATIONAL STYLE ASSESSMENT

In 1914 German philosopher and psychologist Eduard Spranger published a book in German titled, *Lebensformen* (later translated into English in 1928 as, *Types of Men: the Psychology and Ethics of Personality*). In it, he described his research and observations that lead to his identifying six core attitudes, values or motivators he found present in every person. These six values were what he believed created motivation and drive in an individual, and he defined them as, "world views or filters that shape and define that which a person finds valuable, important, good or desirous."

Values are formed through repeated experiences and multiple exposures to your world. Your experiences help determine your attitude or beliefs about what is valuable or good and what is not. The more positive the encounters associated with any dimension, the more reinforced that dimension comes as being valuable and good. Conversely, the more negative the encounters the less reinforced the dimension becomes.

Due to their connection with experiences and environment, our Values are dynamic. With enough time or experience an individual's value hierarchy can change. It is, however, very slow to change outside of a significant emotional event or crisis. This is why it is so important that people understand their motivators and drivers since they are primarily static.

The original six dimensions were:

- Aesthetic – The aesthetic person sees highest value in **form** and **harmony**.
- Economic – The economic person is characteristically interested in **what is useful**.

- Political – The political person is interested primarily in **power** and **control**.
- Social – The highest value for this type is **love of people**.
- Religious – The highest value of the religious may be called **unity**.
- Theoretical – The dominant interest of the theoretical person is the **discovery of truth**.

In the 1950's American psychologist Gordon Allport picked up the mantle left by Spranger and became one of the first psychologists to really focus on personality in the United States. He rejected both Freud's psychoanalytic approach to personality, which he thought went too deep, and Marston's behavioral approach, which he thought often did not go deep enough. He placed the most importance on the uniqueness of each individual, and the importance of the present context, as opposed to past history, for understanding the personality.

Allport believed that an individual's personality is largely founded upon people's values, or basic convictions that they hold about what is and is not of real importance in life. From this assumption, he began to work off of Spranger's findings outlining six major value types.

Working from Spranger's model, Allport and his two partners created the first values instrument to allow for measuring a person's value hierarchy (the Allport Vernon Lindzey Study of Values 1956). In so doing, Allport replaced Spranger's original Political dimension with the Individualistic dimension, which he felt was more accurate. It is important to note that this was more than simply a name change. The Individualistic dimension is its own dimension, separate and discrete, from the Political dimension hypothesized by

Spranger. Allport took the original Political dimension out and inserted the Individualistic dimension in its place.

## EVOLUTION OF THE MOTIVATIONAL STYLE ASSESSMENT TOOL

The new MS instrument has seven dimensions instead of six. Along with retaining both dimensions, the new MS tool also replaces Spranger's original Religious with the Regulatory dimension. Unlike the substitution of Individualistic for Political, this is not a replacement, rather a name and instrument change. To comply with contemporary EEOC demands, it is not favorable to have a profile that asks specific questions about one's religious preferences, nor is it really an accurate representation of what the dimension can be about anyway.

The new MS profile uses Regulatory in place of the older Religious title and removes any mention of religious preference in the instrument itself.

With these changes, the seven dimensions of motivators in the MS assessment profile include:

- Aesthetic (Original) – A drive for balance, harmony and form.
- Altruistic (Spranger's Social) – A drive for humanitarian efforts or to help others altruistically.
- Economic (Original) – A drive for economic or practical returns.
- Individualistic (Allport's) – A drive to stand out as independent and unique.
- Political (Spranger's) – A drive to be in control or have influence.
- Regulatory (Spranger's Religious) – A drive to establish order, routine and structure.
- Theoretical (original) - A drive for knowl-

edge, learning and understanding.

From Drs. Spranger and Allport, here are expanded definitions for each dimension:

**Aesthetic:** The aesthetic person sees the highest value in form and harmony. Each experience is judged from the standpoint of grace, symmetry, or fit. He regards life as a procession of events; each event enjoyed for its own sake. He need not be a creative artist, nor need he be decadent; he is aesthetic if he but finds his chief interest in the beauty of life. The aesthetic attitude is, in a sense, diametrically opposed to the theoretical; the former is concerned with the diversity, and the latter with the understanding of experience. The aesthetic person either chooses, with Keats, to consider truth as equivalent to beauty, or agrees with Mencken, that, 'to make a thing charming is a million times more important than to make it true'. In the economic sphere the aesthetic person sees the process of manufacturing, advertising, and trade as a wholesale destruction of the values most important to him.

**Altruistic:** The highest value for the altruistic person is love of people. In this dimension it is the altruistic or philanthropic aspect of love that is measured. The altruistic person prizes other persons as ends, and is therefore herself kind, sympathetic, and unselfish. She is likely to find the theoretical or economic attitudes cold and inhuman. In contrast to the political type, the altruistic person regards love as itself the only suitable form of human relationship.

**Economic:** The economic person is characteristically interested in what is useful. Based originally upon the satisfaction of bodily needs (self-preservation), the interest in utilities develops to embrace the practical affairs of the business world—the production, marketing, and consumption of goods, the elaboration of credit, and the accumulation of tangible wealth. This type is thoroughly *practical* and conforms well to the prevailing stereotype of the businessperson.

More than perhaps any other, the economic attitude frequently comes into conflict

with other values. The economic person wants education to be practical, and regards unapplied knowledge [often sought by the theoretical person] as waste. Great feats of engineering and application result from the practical demands economic people make upon science and theory. The value of utility likewise conflicts with the aesthetic value except when art serves commercial ends. In his personal life the economic person is likely to confuse luxury with beauty. In his relations with people he is more likely to be interested in surpassing them in wealth than in dominating them (political attitude) or in serving them (altruistic attitude). In some instances he may have regard for the regulatory attitudes, but inclines to consider it as a means to rewards of wealth, prosperity, and other tangible blessings.

**Individualistic:** The individualistic person seeks to be separate and independent. Her desire is to stand out, to express her uniqueness and be granted freedom over her actions to champion her own bearing. Unlike the political attitude, the individualistic person seeks neither power nor control of others or the environment in general. She is only concerned with controlling her own fate and protecting her own sovereignty. The individual person rails against his subjugation by any external force and when she feels so her only focus becomes her own emancipation.

**Political:** The political person is interested primarily in power and control. His activities are not necessarily within the narrow field of politics, but whatever his vocation, he betrays himself as a *Machtmensch* (i.e., control freak.) Leaders in any field generally have high power and control values. Since competition and struggle play a large part in all life, many philosophers have seen power as the most universal and most fundamental of motives. There are, however, certain personalities in whom the desire for a direct expression of this motive is uppermost, who wish above all else for personal power, influence, and renown.

**Regulatory:** The highest value of the regulatory person may be called unity. She is mystical and seeks to comprehend the

cosmos as a whole and to relate herself to its embracing totality. The regulatory person is one whose mental attitude is directed towards achieving structure and is permanently directed to the creation of the highest and absolutely satisfying value of order and constitution. Some of this type finds their life's value in the affirmation of life's systems or processes and in active participation therein. The 'traditionalist' seeks to unite herself with a higher order—to be one with the system.

**Theoretical:** The dominant interest of the theoretical person is the discovery of truth. In the pursuit of this goal he characteristically takes a 'cognitive' attitude, one that looks for identities and differences; one that divests itself of judgments regarding the beauty or utility of objects, and seeks only to observe, reason and understand. Since the interests of the theoretical are empirical, critical, and rational, he is necessarily an intellectualist, frequently a scientist or philosopher. His chief aim in life is to gain, order and systematize his knowledge.

## NATURE VERSUS NURTURE

Spranger championed Nature (genetics) as having the greatest influence on our value hierarchy. He wrote, "Become what you are", which could be interpreted to mean, "Become aware of what motivates you, what you value, what inspires you—and be true to it." Allport, on the other hand, championed Nurture (Socioeconomic influences of childhood) as being of greater influence on our value system.

Most modern researchers today favor something in the middle – a mix of nature and nurture that finds a genetic predisposition to certain traits, tendencies, talents, and abilities, but these must be activated through exposure to certain environmental conditions. It's like having a genetic predisposition to diabetes, but not everyone with those genetic markers contracts the disease. It takes exposure to certain conditions like poor diet, obesity, or illness to bring the diabetes on.

So, while our values definitely change and grow – they do so over the course of our

lives, not rapidly over a weekend. In other words, they are pretty much *fixed* for longer periods of time. This means it's important to understand them, so they can be optimally aligned with what, or more accurately, *why* we do the things we do.

If I'm predominantly motivated by altruism, yet my job motivates me most significantly by economic means, I won't find nearly as much passion and reward in what I do. Understanding what drives you, what motivates you, what inspires and is deemed important by you is a vital first step in improving performance, satisfaction, and happiness in any person's life.

## USES FOR THE MOTIVATIONAL STYLE ASSESSMENT

**Interpersonal & Intrapersonal Communication:** The MS profile provides a helpful tool that can allow two people to understand what aspects of a situation or environment they both appreciate similarly. Under-

standing what draws two or more people to a thing can help identify more people who would be likewise inspired, and it helps create synergy and camaraderie. Understanding your own attraction to certain activities or causes can be equally as important when it comes to divining the important in what you do and why you do it. In other words, knowing why you will get out of bed tomorrow morning is not a minor thing.

**Role Building and Goal Setting and Achievement:** When setting goals for yourself, or others, it helps to know why they would want to achieve the goal in the first place. What is it that the goal addresses that is important to them, or you? Setting a goal that provides monetary rewards to someone with the altruistic dimension as his highest will not likely deliver the anticipated motivation or inspire superior performance. Similarly, incentivizing a high economic with promises of new relationships and improving society (assuming there is no obvious economic return) will not be a good way to motivate the person. Being aware of and understanding a person's natural motivation

style helps ensure that goals are resonating with them maximally.

**Job Selection:** Much like creating an ideal role, placing a person in an ideal existing role requires the same level of awareness for four aspects of the role:

- What the job requires
- What the job provides
- What the person requires
- What the person provides

When you understand all four sides of this equation, you can make more informed decisions about who would be the best fit in which role. Understanding a person's motivations and drivers is one significant component in filling this need.