

## Description of the Role Behavior Analysis®

Included in *Personal Profile System* for Windows is a companion instrument to the PPS, the Role Behavior Analysis®, which covers an additional application area of the DiSC System. The Role Behavior Analysis® provides specific DiSC behavioral statements for defining, describing and discussing expectations for role-based behavior. The Role Behavior Analysis® uses the DiSC System to collect and process perceptions of the behavioral expectations of 'how' a job, position, or role needs to be fulfilled to achieve maximum effectiveness. These perceptions are based on the role, *not* the person in the role. The Role Behavior Analysis® focuses on 'how' the role needs to be fulfilled *regardless* of who is in the role.

The DiSC System is used to bridge the gap between the "how" and "what" of role expectations. Position descriptions or job descriptions tend to focus on the 'what' of a job, defining tasks, duties, or responsibilities. Individuals may be able to define clearly "what" should be done in a position, yet be unclear on "how" those activities or tasks should be done. The Role Behavior Analysis provides a specific set of DiSC statements to clarify and define role expectations, or "how" the job needs to be done, eliminating the confusion that comes from using general or unclear statements to describe role expectations.

### Confusing personalities with professions

Many people confuse role-based behavior with an individual's "personality" or natural behavioral style. This can be observed in comments like "all accountants must be S's" or "we need a high D for this job." Both of these statements demonstrate confusing role-based behavior with a person's behavioral style. It is unlikely that all people who study accounting and become accountants are high S's. While many accounting positions may require considerable S role behavior, not all accounting positions will require it. Some accounting positions may be characterized by more D, I or C role behavior depending on the other role functions. For example, an accounting position that involved making and communicating tough credit approval decisions may involve more D role behaviors such as "move forcefully even though others may be offended" or "take higher risks based on potential payoffs". Or, the role may include some standard accounting functions as well as some interaction with people, such as financial counseling or tax and investment advising. This type of accounting position may require more Influencing role-based behaviors such as "resolve conflict through initiating and facilitating discussion" or "influence people through positive verbalization."

### Why use both the PPS and the RBA?

Frequently Human Resource practitioners are asked to provide training and development interventions for improving performance. Naturally, the Personal Profile is seen as an essential part of the performance improvement process; however, the Role Behavior

Analysis may be the necessary and often missing component in meeting, training and development needs. By using the Personal Profile exclusively, practitioners may be using the wrong tool for the task and get a result like using a hammer when they should be using a wrench.

In order to clarify when to use which assessment tool, it is necessary to reexamine the intention and philosophy behind training and development interventions. In training we are not trying to change *people*, we are trying to change *behavior*. The Personal Profile focuses on how a person sees him or herself as a *person*. The Role Behavior Analysis focuses on what behavior a *role* requires regardless of the person in the role. When we are talking about changing behavior we are not talking about changing *who* the person is, which is described in the PPS, but *how* the person behaves in a specific role for which the expectations have been defined in the RBA. The success of the training and development intervention is not measured by changes in the PPS but by observing changes in the person's ability to produce the behaviors required by the role. Therefore, using the PPS as a pre and post training "test" is inappropriate because we should not be trying to change *who* the person is but *how* the person behaves. Changes in the PPS scores and graphs would tell us about changes the person has made in how they see themselves as a *person* rather than changes in behavior required by the role. Or, the changes may simply tell us that we have taught the person that they need to give us different answers in the "test" because the first set of answers was unacceptable.

## **Ethical considerations**

In addition to the practical aspects of using the right tool for the right task to get the right results, there is also an ethical and philosophical issue involved. If we attempt to change *who* someone is we are violating the integrity of the person because we have implied that they are "not okay" as they are and need to be changed *as a person* to be acceptable. Communicating that someone is "not okay" as a person and needs to be changed or fixed has a negative effect on self-esteem and does not demonstrate a respect for differences. However, if rather than changing people, our approach is to provide both clarification of the behaviors required for a role and the coaching necessary to develop those behaviors, while validating the dignity and integrity of *who* the person is as a unique individual, then we not only improve performance but contribute to creating a climate of respect and empowerment which will result in *sustainable* performance improvement.

## **What is a role?**

According to Webster, the term role comes from the French word rôle meaning literally "from a roll containing an actor's part". The contemporary definition includes "a part, or character, that an actor plays in a performance, a function or office assumed by someone" as well as "a socially expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society". The use of the term 'role' in the Role Behavior Analysis is very close to all three Webster definitions. The Role Behavior Analysis is used to define and 'script' how the part should be played by the person in the role. The process of using the RBA clarifies how the role needs to be played to meet the goals of the 'script' and the needs of the 'audience'. Additionally, the clear definition of role expectations provided by the use of the RBA helps in "casting the part" and in "coaching the actor".

## **How is a role different than a job or position?**

Typically, jobs or positions are defined by the "what" of the position— the tasks, duties, accountabilities, responsibilities or objectives of the position. Defining a role focuses more closely on the "how" of the role or the description of the behavior that is desired in completing the "what" of the position. The differentiation of the two terms is essential for a number of reasons. One reason is that there may be significant differences in how a role is to be fulfilled from one organization to another even though the position title and job description are essentially the same in both organizations. Or, the roles may be different from department to department even within the same organization based on different needs and behavioral expectations.

For example, two organizations may have very similar job descriptions for the position of salesperson, yet have very different behavioral expectations, or 'scripts', for how that role needs to be 'played'. The differences in role behavior expectations may have to do with the type of product, the type of customers or how the company would like to be perceived in the marketplace. One company may want to be seen as the "hard-charging, results-oriented people" while another may want to be seen as "the friendly, helpful partner". The job description, or the 'what', may be very similar in both companies, yet the 'how' is quite different.

Also, a job or position may involve several different roles based on the number of needs met by that job. For example, the position of Manager of Accounting may involve multiple roles. One role might involve managing the activities of others, a technical/analytical function might comprise another role, and consultative support to other departments as yet another role. In addition, the job may include a role as a member of a management team, as well as another role as a member of a cross-functional quality team. Each team role may require different team member behavior based on the needs of the team.

## **How many roles comprise a position or job?**

One of the challenges that people in a complex, rapidly changing environment face is the need to fulfill many roles in their work and social life. Each role may have a different set of expectations, not only in "what we do, but also, in "how" we do it. Behavioral expectations can change considerably from one role to another. Behavior that may be very successful in one role may be disastrous in another role. For example, if we take the behavior that is very successful in our job and attempt to use it at home, we may not be effective at all. Or, if we use the behavior that is effective in the role of a parent with small children with our peers at work, we may experience conflict. Using behavior that is effective when managing others may not work well when used in the role of a member of a peer work group or team.

The number of roles differs from position to position, however, the general trend seems to be an increase in the number of roles within each position as work becomes more complex and collaborative. Also, as the rate of change increases, redefining roles frequently is essential because while the formal position title may not have changed, the

behavioral expectations for the role may have changed significantly. Changes in market conditions or customer populations (internal and external), downsizing, flattening of the organization and corporate culture change, all may contribute to a change in how the role needs to be performed behaviorally.

### **How does shifting roles affect performance?**

If an individual is unaware of the differences in behavior required for each of the roles he needs to perform, he is less likely to shift to the appropriate behavior when necessary. What tends to happen most often is that either the person uses the behavior which is most natural for him in all the roles, or he uses the behavior perceived to be required for the *primary* role in all roles. In either case, the behavior used is not likely to be the behavior most effective for meeting the behavioral expectations of the role. The gap between the expected behavior and the actual behavior is likely to result in less than adequate performance. Conscious awareness and understanding of the different behaviors required by each role can be used to increase effectiveness. By selecting and performing the behaviors required by the role, the person is able to do both 'what' is required and perform it 'how' it is required.

### **What is role-based behavior?**

Role-based behavior is the behavior required to perform a specific role within a specific position/job/function, defined within a specific organizational culture. The cultural framework of the social unit (company, family, nationality, community, agency, etc.) contributes to the behavioral expectations of the role by defining what are the norms for behavior in that culture. In other words, the culture defines how "people like us" behave when performing a specific role. As cultures change, expectations for how roles are performed also changes. This is particularly relevant as companies go through mergers, acquisitions and become increasingly global. It is relevant also as expectations for social roles (spouse, parent, partner, etc. ) change with changing social conditions

As a result of this confusion between role-based behavior and natural style, when people first begin looking at what a role actually requires, they may not have a clear perception. This may result in a RBA response in which all four role-based appear to be about equal. While this may be an accurate description of the behaviors required to be effective in that role, it may also indicate a lack of skill in defining role-based behavior or a lack of clarity in expectations due to role confusion or conflicting expectations. .

### **Creating a Consensus RBA**

The most effective way to clarify behavioral expectations of a specific role is to have several people familiar with the role participate in a consensus discussion of the role behavioral expectations. This discussion is conducted by having each person individually rank-order each group of statements on the RBA response form. Then the group discusses their individual responses and comes to consensus on the ranking of each group. As each group of behavioral statements is discussed, each person has to present the rationale for their selection. In this part of the process people frequently discover areas where they had clearly different information about the role or clearly different expectations about "how" the role needs to be performed behaviorally. (This discussion is

modeled in the DMS video.) This frequently comes as a surprise because they had thought they were dealing with a clearly defined position description. And, they probably were.

The problem is that position descriptions define the "what" of a role, defining tasks, duties and responsibilities. However, seldom does the position description describe "how" the "what" should be performed, which results in a hidden source of conflict. The reason that the source of this conflict remains hidden is that people lack a process or system for discussing role-based behavioral expectations. As a result of this lack of tools and lack of experience, most people initially are not very skilled at defining role-based behavior. However, by using the RBA process, people very quickly develop skills in defining the behavioral expectations for a specific role, including negotiating consensus decisions.

The language of the Role Behavior Analysis response form has been carefully selected to accurately reflect specific DISC correlates of role-based behavior. Each phrase is designed to be used as it occurs, with little or no editorial freedom. People frequently unknowingly distort the meaning of the phrases when summarizing or re-stating the phrase. For example, the first phrase on the RBA Comparison Grid says "take unprecedented risks" which someone might restate as "Yes, we want people to take unprecedented risks in this role after they have had a chance to gather information and think about it for a while." This restatement changes the intent of the original statement from a D behavior to either an S or C behavior. Remaining close to a word-for-word use of the statement ensures an accurate DISC description of the role.

When the role expectations have been defined by a consensus process, the DISC-language RBA can be used for performance management in the areas of selection, career development, training, coaching and performance counseling. For each of these performance management activities, the RBA profile for a specific role can be compared to the individual's natural behavioral style as determined by the Personal Profile System. The Comparison of the RBA and PPS result in description of three categories of person-role performance `matching'.

The first category of performance matching is called `good fit'. These are the behaviors where the role requires about the same amount of the behavior as the person has naturally occurring (scores within 20%). The next category is called `stretches'. These are the behaviors that the role requires more of than is naturally occurring in the person's behavioral style (greater than 20% difference). The third category is `overuses'. These are the behaviors that the person has more of naturally occurring than the role requires (greater than 20%), which means he/she may overuse these behaviors and may need to re-direct his/her naturally occurring behaviors to those behaviors required by the role.

For example, some one may have a naturally high D profile which would mean they would have a natural tendency to use behaviors such as "speculate on untested ideas" and "move forcefully even though others may be offended." However, the role may require considerably less of those behaviors so the person would need to re-direct his/her natural

tendency to use these behaviors, using instead those behaviors required by the role that may represent a `stretch'. The RBA/PPS Comparison Grid can be used to identify those behaviors requiring additional training, coaching or mentoring.

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