

# 10 TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING THEMES AND PATTERNS ACROSS ASSESSMENT RESULTS



- 1. Begin with the end in mind.** [Covey's famous principle](#) reminds us of the importance of knowing what we're assessing and why. This begins at test selection and continues through to presenting the assessment results.
- 2. Use a conceptual framework.** Organizational tools (e.g., [the Wheel](#)) help identify what to measure. Your understanding of the client's presenting concern impacts the tools you choose and interpretation of results.
- 3. Understand what you're measuring.** Every assessment tool is grounded in theory. To effectively integrate and interpret results, it's important to understand the specific meanings of each scale and/or score. Use manuals and other resources to make sense of reports and profiles (e.g., a t-score is interpreted differently from a percentile; extraversion is defined differently on various tools).
- 4. Beware of your biases.** It's normal to find what you're looking for. Be sure to look at the big picture and question your assumptions about what's normal or expected; ask yourself, "Could there be another explanation?"
- 5. Recognize the impact of response patterns.** On a likert scale, some people start at the mid-point, working up or down from there; others prefer the extreme ends of the scale. Still others respond randomly; perhaps due to literacy issues or simply lack of interest/motivation. Others choose the answer they think you want to hear. Each response pattern results in very different profiles on the final report. Validity indicators built into some assessment tools (e.g., social desirability scales AKA lie detectors) can help surface response pattern issues.
- 6. Find a focus.** Recognize that individual assessment reports (e.g., profiles, graphs) will typically contain far more information than is relevant to your specific purpose for testing. Use discernment to focus only on the highlights.
- 7. Cluster results into themes.** Use numbers, post-it-notes, or different coloured highlighters to identify similar concepts. Be aware that many assessment tools will use slightly different terms for the same idea. Record where each result came from so you can refer back to specific reports for more information and to cite your sources when reporting results.
- 8. Fill in the gaps.** Take a holistic approach; although it may be necessary to conduct additional assessments (formal or informal), don't rely on self-assessment reports alone. Integrate test results with other information including resumes, observations, case notes, performance reviews, and/or reports from multiple sources (e.g., significant others, colleagues, supervisors).
- 9. Explore contradictions.** Sometimes results just don't make sense; however, contradictions may showcase the uniqueness of a client. Engage your client in interpreting confusing results. The "art" of assessment is in rich interpretation.
- 10. Report comprehensive results in a meaningful way.** Structure reports, whether written or verbal, with both your audience and the assessment purpose in mind. Consider level of technical language, amount of detail, and whether to report themes or respond to a specific assessment question.



imagine ♦ achieve ♦ excel



604.856.2386  
info@lifestrategies.ca  
www.lifestrategies.ca