

# IEP

## Interpersonal Effectiveness Profile

### *Summary*

The IEP is a compelling method for a person to assess how he or she **expects** to be seen by others — with subsequent hints for increasing interpersonal effectiveness. The very compact instrument uses only 26 thoroughly researched items to enable an individual to determine the extent to which he or she may over- or under emphasize behaviors critical to effective interpersonal relations. Most importantly, the IEP provides participants with a benchmark comparison against which they can compare their own ratings and a way to immediately do something constructive to be more effective as leaders.

The items (e.g., sociable, selfish, persuasive, obedient, contented, persistent, indecisive) have been carefully selected to provide a profile clearly displaying points of emphasis that are likely to fracture (and/or integrate) working relationships. Pragmatic practical “hints” for adjusting attitudes and behavior are provided along with a step-by-step action planning process for improving interpersonal effectiveness. The instrument has been translated into several languages and has been successfully used worldwide since 1985.

### *Background and Rationale*

The IEP is a product of over fifty years of continuous research and applications conducted by Harvard Professor Emeritus Robert F. Bales. Bales has received national and regional awards for his pioneering empirical and theoretical work reported in Robert F. Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis*, the University of Chicago, 1950; Robert F. Bales, *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1970; Robert F. Bales, Stephen P. Cohen, and Stephen A. Williamson, *SYMLOG: A System for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups*, the Free Press, New York, 1979; and Robert F. Bales, *Social Interaction Systems: Theory and Measurement*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1999. Bales has well over 100 professional papers in the major journals of sociology and psychology and is among the most often quoted social psychologist in the field.

The primary **purpose** for the in-depth studies was to better understand effective leadership, group dynamics, and superior team performance. **The results** of these years of continuous investigation include a comprehensive theory of social interaction; a highly refined measurement

system; and a set of precise tools for analyzing and improving effectiveness for people who live and work in groups of all sizes.

In the process of developing his approach Bales was required to integrate the work of other major theorists including Schutz FIRO-B, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership, Cattell's 16 Personality Factors, as well as Lewin's Field Theory, Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and other theories of social cognition including: balance theory (Newcomb, Heider), congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum), dissonance theory (Festinger) consistency theory (Abelson), social exchange theory (Thibaut and Kelley, Homans), and attribution theory (Kelley).

The IEP is, in fact, a very compact distillation and integration of the best these major works have to offer in the form of a small, self-report booklet, which contains actionable advice on how to increase behaviors that contribute to effective interpersonal relationships and decrease those that are detrimental. The IEP is unique in that it does not focus on how the participant views him or herself or how he or she **wants** to be viewed by others. Rather, it asks the participant to rate how he or she **expects** to be viewed by others. This is crucial information inasmuch as years of research have shown that, absent actual feedback from others, the way a person **expects** to be perceived is the next best predictor of their interpersonal effectiveness. The IEP is therefore very appropriate when actual feedback from others is not available.

## Applications

A basic principle in human relations is "the message sent is *not* necessarily the message received."

The IEP is intended for use as a learning tool to help participants gain insight into their own behavior. It is particularly useful in making discriminations between how participants perceive their own motivation and how they feel their motives and behavior may be perceived, and perhaps misunderstood, by others.

The IEP is not meant to be a psychological diagnostic but rather used as a tool for self-awareness and to create dialogue aimed at **improving** interpersonal effectiveness.

Applying IEP results can help participants achieve:

- An understanding of crucial behaviors they want to continue, start, stop, or modify to be more effective;
- A greater understanding of how and why they typically behave with others;
- Increased awareness of how they may foster unproductive conflict with others;

- Clear recognition of what they do well in interpersonal interaction;
- Substantially improved personal performance with each group member;
- Greater flexibility in relating to others to increase productivity in a group setting;
- An increased understanding of group dynamics and essential features of leadership;
- A planned change strategy for well-balanced and more effective leadership;
- An accurate method to measure and monitor progress over time;
- An opportunity to open a dialogue with others by checking expectations against real-time feedback.

### *Administration and Interpretation*

It is always best to gather useful, reliable, and valid feedback from others when making development plans. However, even though this is the best way, it is not always possible. In fact, the IEP is often used as a “starting point” prior to participants receiving actual feedback from others. In this way, the IEP provides an excellent beginning by allowing participants to thoughtfully and quickly rate how they expect to be rated by others and then to compare their scores with an “optimum” research profile drawn from over 1,000,000 profiles made worldwide. An extensive list of “hints for improving interpersonal effectiveness” is immediately available in the booklet along with a systematic planning guide.

The benefits of the IEP are that it is very easy to administer, takes about 10 minutes to complete, and is highly “user-friendly” inasmuch as the scoring is simple and the results immediately obvious. It is also highly engaging because it allows the participant to compare scores, reflect on the meaning, look through alternative strategies that are described in plain language, and apply the strategies themselves using the planning guide.

Most importantly, the IEP invites inquiry into the motivation and meaning of specific behaviors and brings immediate attention to behaviors that are likely either to alienate and isolate others or (more productively) elicit support and greater commitment to collaboration. Finally, all participants are encouraged to share their findings with co-workers in order to begin a dialogue regarding increasing interpersonal effectiveness throughout the work setting.

Bales and his co-authors have constructed the IEP to be a self-contained tool that does not require specialized training to administer or facilitate. The IEP is used most often by professionals adept at leadership development, management training, family relations, and other coaching fields. Issues of confidentiality can arise if the IEP is administered in

group situations but are seldom of much concern because the data only reveal how the participant “expects” to be rated by others and the participants initially want to share with others and have a delightful time explaining and defending why they behave the way they do. Almost in every case, this process of sharing generates insight into ways the behavior can be improved and the dialogue adds value to the planning exercises. The optimum size of the group for the processing of the information generated is in small groups of about six participants each.

*For more information...*

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