

Teamwork: Sense or Nonsense?

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Much information about teamwork can be gathered by measuring how people respond to two factors: working with others around and sharing responsibility. The in-depth research for this article was done using jobEQ’s iWAM questionnaire.

Work Environment Type

When you ask people if they prefer to work alone or with others around, the majority clearly prefers to have others around. Only 14.2 percent clearly prefer working alone. Some people like to work alone from time to time, mainly in order to concentrate or to get some urgent work done. Indeed, many people like working at home by telephone a couple of days a week, but few would like to work like this for five days a week! Maybe it’s human nature to be attracted to other people and to communicate with them. It seems that the majority of people will tolerate working in open office spaces, and that their productivity will only be harmed if they have some work that requires serious concentration and aren’t able to tune out the environment.

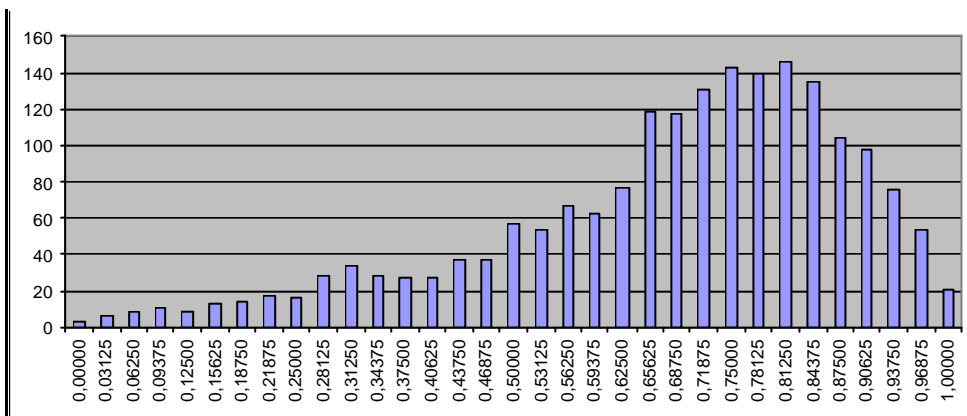


Figure 1: Frequencies for “Work Environment preference” (BP7A)

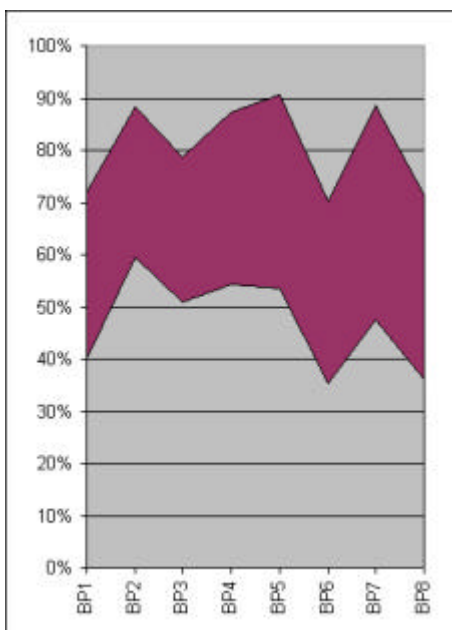


Figure 2: Standard Group scores for the 8 Basic Profile parameters for all 1,911 iWAM records

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the 1,911 answers of metaprogram BP7A in absolute values. BP7A indicates the Work Environment Type – (High score: want people others around / Low: want to be alone).

From this graph we learn that from an *absolute* point of view, people prefer more the answers that are related to working together than the answers related to working alone. The mean lies around an absolute score of 0.71875. (statistical average = .68).

iWAM data is mostly represented in a normalized way. Figure 2 shows the standard group presentation typically used in the jobEQ graphics. The standard group is calculated by taking the statistical average for the population and drawing a zone that starts at average -1



STDEV and ends at average +1 STDEV. If the distribution for BP7 may be considered “normal,” about 66 percent of the population should be in the colored zone, about 17 percent will be above and some 17 percent will be below. If you look at the position of the colored zone on the graph, you see that in general, people prefer working together in some degree, above working alone.

	7M<0.06	7M<0.22	7M>0.22	7M>0.44
7P<0.34	0.5%	3.3%	5.2%	8.9%
7P<0.58	4.0%	12.7%	8.6%	4.0%
7P>0.58	5.6%	21.1%	8.2%	1.3%
7P>0.83	4.1%	10.2%	2.2%	0.2%

Table 1: Frequencies for “wanting to work with other people around” (OF7P) versus “wanting to work alone” (OF7M)

BP7A is the combination score of $(OF7PA + (20 - OF7MA))/2$. OF7PA is the absolute score for sentences measuring “wanting to work with other people around.” OF7MA is the absolute scores for sentences measuring “wanting to work alone.” Table 1 indicates how OF7PA and OF7MA relate.

In the lower left quadrant, 7P is more important than average and 7M is less important than average. This quadrant contains 40.9 percent of the population. We can say that these people prefer to work with others nearby, as opposed to working alone.

In the upper right quadrant, 7M is more important than average and 7P is less important than average. These 26.7 percent of people prefer to work alone. Of this group, just over half (53.2 percent) prefer working alone more than the standard group, while disliking working together more than the standard group.

The two other quadrants can be combined into *people that are both*: the preference for one factor is compensated by the other factor (both are low or both are high) – here you find the remaining 32.4 percent. Of those, 0.6 percent found both ideas “very” important and 1.5 percent said that both are very unimportant.

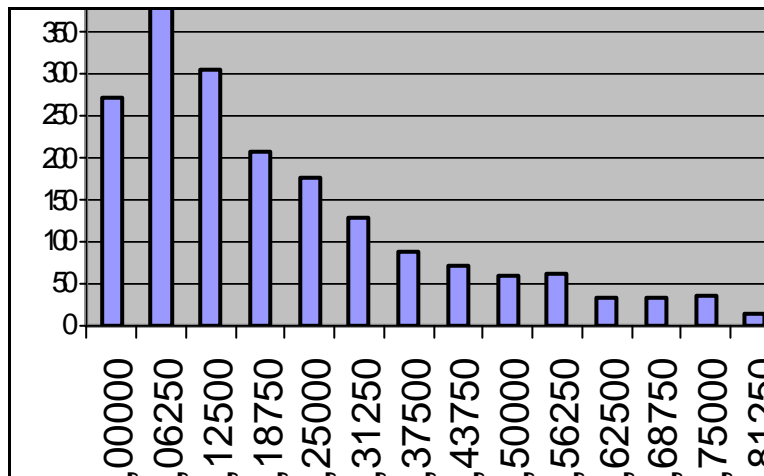


Figure 3

Figure 3 shows the distribution for willing to work alone. The statistical average is .22, and the mean is .12. In other words, in absolute terms, most people score the answers related to having to work alone at the bottom of the scale (“least like me”).

Work Responsibility Type

I remember that the professor who taught me organizational management said: “Shared responsibility is no responsibility.” As you will see from the data, not everyone thinks like him. If you ask people whether they want sole responsibility versus shared responsibility, the proportions are more evenly distributed. Figure 4 illustrates that there is a slight preference for sole responsibility.

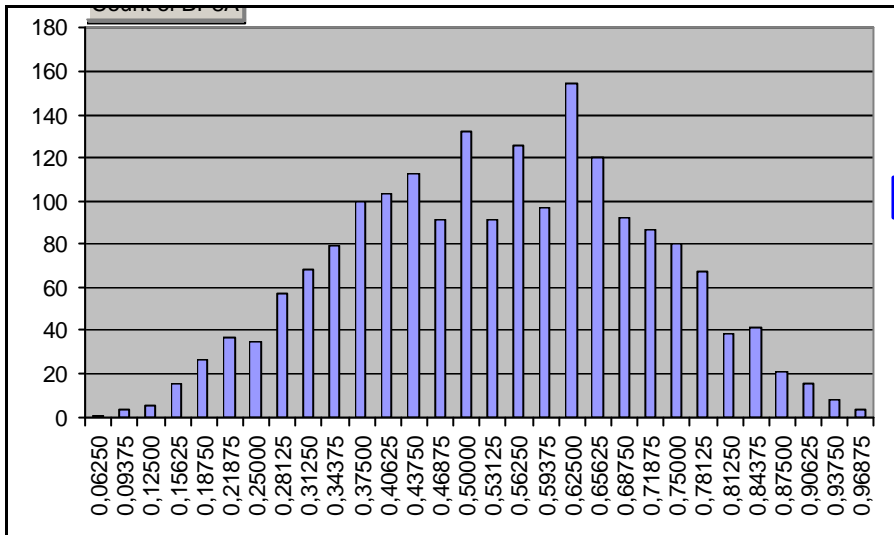


Figure 4: Frequency chart for Work Responsibility Type (BP8A). A low score for BP8A indicates preference for shared responsibility, a high score indicates sole responsibility

As is the case for BP7A, the data for BP8A is obtained by combining the score of OF8P and OF8M using the following formula: $(OF8PA + (20 - OF8MA))/2$. When we look at the iWAM data as indicated in Table 2, 37 percent prefers sole responsibility (lower left quadrant), 31.5 percent clearly prefers shared responsibility (upper right quadrant) and the remaining third of the population can function in both systems.

	8M<0,258	8M<0,462	8M>0,462	8M>0,667
8P<0,33	0,2%	2,8%	8,3%	7,6%
8P<0,53	2,4%	10,9%	9,4%	6,2%
8P>0,53	8,1%	13,7%	6,8%	3,6%
8P>0,74	8,3%	7,1%	3,2%	1,5%

Table 2: Frequencies for “Wanting Sole Responsibility” (OF8P) versus “Wanting Shared responsibility” (OF8M)

So what do these figures tell us about teamwork?

Teamwork is highly motivating for 35.2 percent of the people that filled out the iWAM test, because working together and sharing responsibility makes sense to them. But 24.2 percent of people don't really appreciate working in teams. If they have to, they will try to distribute the responsibility amongst the team members and try to figure out ways to find a quieter place to do the work, and then come back to the rest of the group to put the results together with others. Our past findings suggest that IT people (programmers) and bookkeepers especially prefer to work on their own, with sole responsibility. If they have to work together as a team, their productivity will drop significantly. Given that teams are popular because managers hope it will augment productivity, this illustrates that in some cases teams may be “non-sense.” The final two groups are people that are motivated by both working together and

individual responsibility (25.6 percent), and those that prefer to work alone but with shared responsibility (14.9 percent).

As you can see, there is not one clear choice among people. Each combination of metaprograms is shared by 15-35 percent of the population. Therefore, it is safe to say that in some cases, teamwork makes sense. But the only way to know for sure if a specific team makes sense or non-sense is to measure their metaprogram patterns. This will allow you to make an objective decision about the team – and hopefully a decision that makes sense!

