

# Strength in Numbers

**We report on a new test that expands the idea of Myers-Briggs to groups, helping teams work smarter.**

**D**r. Robert Klein likes to tell the story of a middle manager who, as part of a leadership seminar a couple of years ago, took a test version of the Klein Group Instrument (Klein's leadership development tool that became available to the public in May).

KGI assesses one's team participation abilities across four scales (leadership, negotiation orientation, task focus, and interpersonal focus), offering a treasure-trove of advice. Last year Klein, a professor of education at Western New England College in Springfield, Mass., ran into the man again at a conference.

"He told me, 'I took my individual report, and I put it in the top drawer of my desk. Each month, I selected a new behavior to work on. Now my work teams are operating better, and I am much more effective working with them,'" Klein recalled. The man's supervisors apparently agreed—they recently promoted him to director of marketing.

It's the kind of news that gratifies a researcher who has spent an entire career developing a tool for effective leadership. "What you've done is you've empowered an individual who is now rounding out and building skills that have made him more effective," Klein said. "And he is being recognized by his organization, too." That's exactly the outcome Klein has been working toward these past 14 years.

The Klein Group Instrument could very well become the hottest new ticket in business management circles. Building on the principles of the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), it helps individuals and groups identify their team-participation strengths and weaknesses. Then, in a comprehensive and easy-to-read report, it offers practical guidelines for self-improvement.

"It's a goldmine of information and useful help," said Dr. Russell Fanelli, professor emeritus from the school of business at Western New England College, who has used the instrument in his classes.

"I love it. And I hope that it gets what I think is going to be a tremendous audience."

## Beyond MBTI

The KGI is being published online through [www.capt.org](http://www.capt.org), the Web site of the Center for Application of Psychological Type. That's the Gainesville, Fla.-based organization that publishes and distributes materials related to the MBTI, the king of psychological typing tools. (MBTI uses the results of a questionnaire to score individuals along four "type" continuums, generating 16 general personality descriptions.)

KGI advances those ideas. While MBTI serves as a snapshot of an individual's personality, KGI is more dynamic, identifying



an individual's function within a group setting and his or her strengths and weaknesses in forwarding the work of that group. Through a personalized profile, it offers suggestions for growth in nine categories.

If members of a group take the KGI together, they will get an additional report on the functionality of the entire group and how to improve weak spots, providing data for team building.

The Center for Applications of Psychological Type has been supportive of the project since Klein first called to request research materials while writing his dissertation on group participation and the MBTI. "Few people are taught what is needed for effective teamwork, so when confronted with a team that has problems, they don't know where to begin to effect change," said Betsy Styron, president and CEO of the Center. "KGI results provide both the 'what' and the 'how' for moving a team forward."

"We've worked hard to make it very user-friendly," said Klein, who has been researching, developing, and refining the tool since that first call to the Center. "The emphasis is on clear ideas; relevant data for the essential skills; and easy, direct access," he said. "I'm a practical guy. I think that's one of my greatest strengths in this world."

### Painstaking research

Being a practical guy, Klein didn't just stumble on the idea and write it up. "We started out with 500 group behaviors. In the initial model, I had 86 items. We tested 400 people, then we did some statistical analysis to see how the items clustered. Over the years, we refined it and field tested it until we obtained a polished, 60-item assessment," he said.

"What we came up with is something really powerful," he said. It's the image of a diamond, representing a productive group dynamic. Leadership and negotiation form the top and bottom points; task and interpersonal relationships form the sides.

"In any group, someone needs to guide the team. And then leadership moves in two different directions: obviously, toward getting the work done, but also, how are you going to accomplish the task if you don't have cooperative, committed people? In doing any task, you have to keep track of the interpersonal dynamics. A leader is

trying to balance those things to keep the group working as an effective team," he said. "We saw how negotiation applied to both areas."

With the help of his colleagues at the college and the Springfield Leadership Institute, resources provided by the Center for Applications of Psychological Type, and the input of thousands of survey-taking volunteers, Klein (after countless hours of interviews and analysis) has developed a questionnaire and tallying matrix he believes is "exceptionally tight."

But now that the work is available to the public, the fun really begins, he said. To keep the help section fresh and useful, Klein will need to stay on top of the very best research in the field. "That's going to be an ongoing process, and I look forward to it. Refining it is a creative process."

### Ready to run with it

In the meantime, Klein is preparing himself for what could be a rush of response. In June, he was scheduled to present his work at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich. With the online instrument accessibly priced for both individuals and businesses (around \$30 per participant), there are bound to be more requests for speaking engagements and consulting work.

Recently, Klein's colleague Fanelli saw how powerful the tool can be. Last fall, he made KGI the centerpiece of a large undergraduate business management class he taught at WNEC. "Students loved the material, and I was impressed with the outstanding work they did," he said. "I'm not easily impressed. It was simply the best course I've taught in 32 years."

Klein suggests, modestly, that the material is powerful because it addresses, in simple and practical terms, skills that are relevant to so many aspects of our lives.

"We all spend a great deal of time working in small groups in educational, business, professional, and religious settings," he said. "An instrument that helps us develop our leadership and social skills is very meaningful. That's what's exciting about it." ■

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