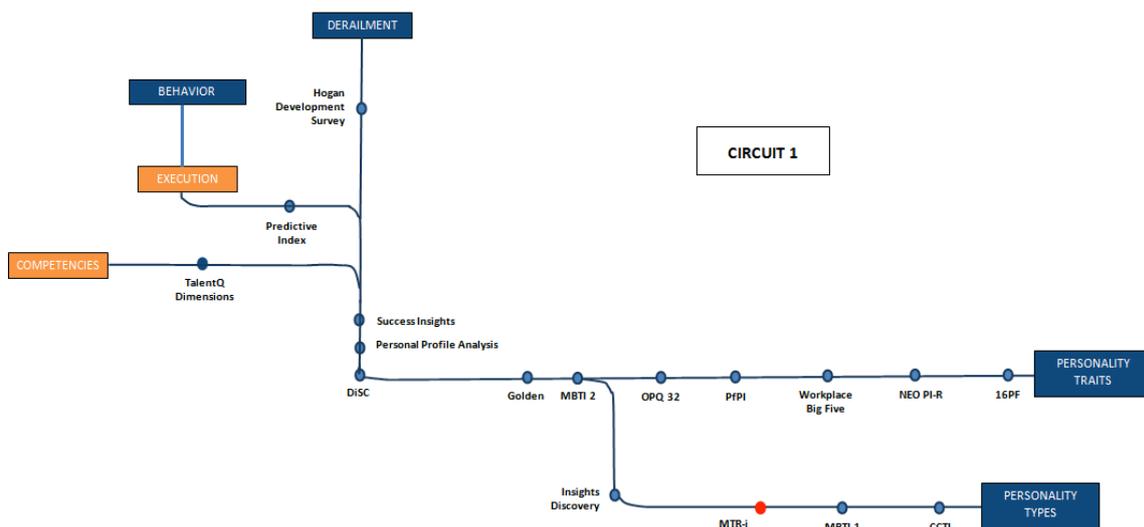


# Part 1

**CIRCUIT 1**  
**PERSONALITY**  
**(TRAITS) –**  
**PERSONALITY**  
**(TYPES) –**  
**BEHAVIOR –**  
**DERAILMENT**

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This is the longest circuit (16 tools). From the beginnings of psychometrics, an impressive number of tools have been developed, at different times, dealing with personality and how it manifests itself in behavior. We have made a current and representative selection.



## PERSONALITY VS BEHAVIOR VS DERAILMENT

The logic is apparently quite simple: the personality-behavior circuit is often seen as a continuum. Personality is, to an extent, what we are, and behavior is, to an extent, what we do. The personality is made up of a collection of elements that characterize an individual, and differentiate him or her from others; it is stable over time, and thus we can observe predictable behavior patterns in the individual. The behavior is thus seen as the expression of the personality in any given context. Behavior is a mini representation of a sovereign personality. Now, for many practitioners, a causal relationship is supposed to exist between these two notions: we do what we do because we are who we are. The reality is a little more complex.

When we observe the behavior of an individual, to what extent is it influenced by his or her personality or by the characteristics of the situation in which he/she finds him/herself? An introvert might express herself openly in a recruitment situation, or when the stakes are really high. A relatively submissive person can be transformed in a competitive game or conflict. Some researchers, (Mischel, Nisbett) would argue that the context - or the situation that is being experienced - has a decisive influence over behavior, and that personality consequently has only a weak predictive power (interactionist approach).

For others, however, personality is a behavior predictor, as a general trend, via a group of situations, even if it does not necessarily explain the precise behavior of an individual in a specific situation at a particular point in time. This position is reinforced by the postulate that - consciously or unconsciously - people often choose the situations into which they put

themselves (eg career choice) and that these choices are already a reflection of their personality. If the choice is not neutral, the infinite diversity of our interactions with our environment is not neutral either. Thus certain situations can allow our personality to fully express itself, while others require a set of behavioral reactions within a much more narrow range. A personality trait, therefore, can only emerge when the situation allows it to.

What is more, it is equally true that a person's degree of adaptability, which is a facet of his/her personality, influences his/her behavior in turn, with some people seeking to adapt to the demands of their situation more than others. Thus it emerges that people who possess this adaptability trait can have more varied behaviors, and be thus less predictable.

As for the use of psychometric tools, the behavior/personality differences can be seen in the following ways:

1. Behavior being dependent on situation, it is more changing, and the results of a questionnaire are more valid for the context in which the test was taken. A change of context (job role, company, etc.) might make it worthwhile to retake the questionnaire

2. Behaviors can be observed by third parties. This is why the 360 degree option is often used. Thus personality tests contain a potential bias, which must be tackled: the person answering the questions, by self-evaluating, could skew his results, either intentionally or unintentionally, or be tempted to submit to the law of social desirability.

3. Personality also comes through in our emotions, perceptions and thoughts, and these cannot be measured by a behavioral tool.

4. Research indicates that personality can also be affected by physiological factors and needs, and this goes beyond the bounds of what can be explained by behavioral tools.

5. Causality is different in the two approaches. Analyzing behavior measures what has truly been observable, in other words, "past" contextualized behavior, so to speak. Personality tools aspire to having a proactive and predictive orientation, focusing on an individual's preferences or traits, that is, his/her natural tendencies in future actions.

Even if we accept the fact that "personality does not explain everything" there is, today, no other psychological variable that offers a better way of explaining behavior. In any case, this current debate can affect the choice a practitioner makes between a behavior-measuring tool and a personality tool. For those who want to measure **performance** more precisely (and not potential performance), studies show that personality tools are as relevant as behavioral tools.

**Derailment** (career) is at the other end of this circuit. This notion, imported from the United States, covers all the reasons why talented people "come off the rails" in terms of their performance. To paraphrase a number of recent seminars in business schools, "why do intelligent people make stupid mistakes?" Derailment is an issue for a significant number of people in high level roles in companies. One approach suggests that derailment is the result of an incapacity to adapt to a changing environment. A second approach - less popular today - explains derailment in terms of deficits and limitations (*career stoppers*) or of weaknesses of the individual. For Hogan, derailment derives from an overuse or a misuse of one's strengths at inappropriate moments.

These analyses are not to be found at the level of a person's professional competencies, but in fact at the level of the facets and characteristics of the personality itself, leading to surprising parallels with personality disorders. It is for this reason that it is located on this circuit, since other factors, linked to the environment or context (eg the technical demands of the job), can be just as good an explanation of the derailment of a person in his role. And thus, an individual's personality traits can be "double-edged", according to the context, one's strengths containing potential weaknesses. Derailment suggests certain personality dysfunctions, a *dark side*, which has a significant impact on behavior and performance.

## TRAITS VS TYPES

In the circuit shown below, there is a “fork” between personality traits and personality types.

Personality traits are characteristics that explain how an individual is psychologically different from others. They are stable over time and differentiate individuals according to the trait's intensity and they can influence behavior. Trait theory focuses on classifying personality traits by using a hierarchical taxonomy. This classification is done using factorial analysis (see glossary), and this allows a correlation to be made of the traits and thus to establish groups or “clusters”. Allport (1936) was the first to draw up 18 000 adjectives to describe the personality. His classification was made on three levels: central, or essential, personality traits, secondary, or minor traits, and finally cardinal traits, which allow us to distinguish *strongly* one person from others.

Other work followed. Cattell reduced Allport's list to 4500 adjectives and then to 171 traits. Then factorial analysis established a final list of 16 traits (hence the **16pf**<sup>®</sup>), which explains - using this approach - the whole of the personality. More recently, the FFM (Five Factor Model) or the Big Five, presented by McCrae and Costa, based on 18 000 descriptive words, offers a classification using five broad personality dimensions (see **Workplace Big Five Profile**<sup>™</sup> and **NEO PI-R**<sup>™</sup>). This classification is widely accepted today, although the category names may vary, according to the tool used. These five dimensions appear to be universal (50 cultures were studied) and certain psychologists even detect biological links to their origins. The trait theory, then, offers a pragmatic analysis of a vast number of personality characteristics, in dynamic correlation.

Personality types, on the other hand, result from a theoretical personality approach (essentially Jungian, such as that embodied by **MBTI**<sup>®</sup>), which presents the personality as a coherent and interdependent collection of elements that make it exclusive: each individual has only one personality, from a very large range, and each personality has, so to speak, its “frontiers”. According to this approach, if you are a certain type, you are not another type. You are forced to choose. You are either introvert or extravert, in preference terms, and it will make no sense to say that you are a little of each at once. This bipolar positioning is a contrast to the trait approach, in which you are more or less introvert and more or less extravert. In other words, with trait theory, it is the degree of the personality traits that you have, and how they combine, which allows us to be differentiated from others, and expresses the true uniqueness of your personality. The personality type approach is often perceived by trait fans as a sort of over-simplified categorization or “stereotype”.

Such an approach is reductive. The type approach, (based on the notion of “preferences”, which create our predisposition to act) is more of a possible indicator of future behavior. This is how, if we know the type of a given person (eg. ESTP), we can anticipate certain