

Selling The Human Element[®] with Science

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Technology and the generation of knowledge continue to accelerate at a staggering pace—far beyond the ability of the human mind to keep up. The amount of information a person is confronted with on a daily basis and the number of new skills to learn can be overwhelming. We all have experienced the stress resulting from this information overload. The silver lining to this never-ending cloud of learning is the fact that people are getting smarter. They have more knowledge and ask more sophisticated questions.

University professors are struggling to stay ahead of their students who have the worldwide web literally at their finger tips and more time to surf the subject matter than their professors. Patients show up in physicians' offices having done their own diagnosis and request not only specific medication, but also the brand names. This same level of customer sophistication is showing up in therapy, business and most other professions. As a result, prescribing or selling products and services requires a more sophisticated sales person. Gone are the days

when you could sell a "group hug" just because a training guru said you needed one. The customer wants to know what type of group hug, its validity and reliability coefficients, its return on human capital and the qualifications of the trainers, including the letters after their names.

Without a doubt, The Human Element[®] (THE) is one of the most powerful personal growth training systems available, and it can have a significantly positive impact on organizations. Becoming a Human Element (HE) practitioner has always required a long learning path with the development of a significant amount of knowledge and skills about leading groups through the HE process. I have always been asked questions about the process—some designed to enhance the person's learning and understanding and others designed to challenge the process. The difference today, whether leading an HE group or selling an HE program, is that people expect you to answer their questions beyond the fundamentals of facilitating. When a participant asks the question "What do the numbers mean?" they do not accept the response "They mean whatever you want them to mean." They want a scientifically based, quantitative answer.



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continued

Selling The Human Element® With Science

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of some of the science behind THE in order to enable HE practitioners to respond in a more confident and quantitative manner.

A Dynamical Human Systems Model™

For years, I have been studying, researching and writing about FIRO™ theory from the perspective that FIRO is a dynamical system. Dynamical systems behave very differently from the simple linear systems described by Newtonian mechanics. That is, dynamical systems are nonlinear and are characterized by numerous interactions among many components across many time-scales. These systems are self-organizing and greater than the sum of their parts. And although they surpass the boundaries of our current knowledge of mathematics, they are the real world. Therefore, FIRO is far more complex than a linear arrangement of Inclusion, Control and Openness.

The Dynamical Human Systems Model views each person as a system nested within a larger system and as composed of numerous subsystems which self-organize across time, resulting in each person being unique. There are eight major systems that influence the development and robustness of the Human System (and FIRO) across time. These systems include social, physical, emotional, neural, cognitive, chemical, environmental and the psyche. The neural wiring of the brain begins before birth. Some neural pathways (e.g., instincts) come prewired (as do some aspects of the psyche). Other aspects of physiological and psychological development are in place and ready to emerge during the maturation process.

The Dynamical Human Systems Model governs the growth and development of the FIRO system which, in turn, drives THE process.

The Human Element

The Human Element (THE) provides a systems approach to addressing personal growth, interpersonal interactions and the human side of organizations and business. Some of the benefits of THE include:

Personal	Business
Personal growth	Increase leader effectiveness
Explore truth, choice and self-awareness	Common framework to promote team synergy
Examine behaviors, feelings and self-concept	Develop skills to promote high performance
Boost self-esteem	Increase individual and team awareness
Understand life transitions	Build trustful relationships
Experience team compatibility & development	Build a decisionmaking process with ownership
Explore work relationships & leadership	Enhance team compatibility
Resolve intra- and interpersonal conflicts	Improve communication

The engine that drives THE is FIRO. It is also important to realize that this engine (FIRO) has undergone a major evolution since its creation in the 1950s, resulting in what I call FIRO2, which is currently on the threshold of a second major evolution, FIRO3. The FIRO3 evolution will radically change the FIRO/THE landscape. A brief overview of the FIRO evolution is given below.

FIRO1

In 1958, Will Schutz, Ph.D., introduced to the world a theory of interpersonal relations, called Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (the version I call

continued

Selling The Human Element® With Science

FIRO1). The theory presented three dimensions of interpersonal relations posited to be necessary and sufficient to explain most human interaction. On the behavioral level, these dimensions were called Inclusion, Control and Affection.

Schutz also created a series of measurement instruments, including FIRO-B®, consisting of scales that measured the behavioral aspects of Inclusion, Control and Affection. This fact is very important in terms of selling THE because most of the world that has any knowledge of FIRO knows the terms FIRO-B and Inclusion, Control and Affection. Knowledge of the differences between FIRO-B and FIRO Element B can be crucial to making a sale with a FIRO-knowledgeable prospect.

FIRO2

Over the next 45 years, Schutz revised and expanded FIRO theory, developed the next generation versions of his instruments and added instruments to measure new aspects of his theory. By this time, FIRO theory had been so extensively revised and strengthened and Schutz had generated so many new instruments and important improvements that at the suggestion of Jack Black (founder of Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., and publisher of FIRO-B), the new set of measures was renamed. Since 1984, these instruments have been known collectively as *Elements of Awareness*. The Elements became the core/driver of a larger body of work emanating from FIRO theory known as The Human Element.

In 1997, Will and I decided to intensify our 15 year relationship. We began a collaboration that not only continued to expand the theory into what I call FIRO2, but included adding technology to The Human Element. Prior to this, Schutz' work had not been available to a worldwide audience through computer software or the internet. I developed not only the first computer and web-based programs for completing and scoring

the Elements of Awareness instruments but the following as well:

- *Introduction to FIRO Element B in Organizations*
- *Using Element B in Organizations Workbook*
- The Human Element Software System™ (Computer and web-based)
- Element B "Scannable" Form
- Element B "online" administration
- Element B Organizational Interpretive Report™
- Team Compatibility Report™
- Element B: Other™
- Element B 360™
- 3-D Team Compatibility Exercise™
- Element B overhead transparencies
- Element B™ PowerPoint® Presentation
- Elements of Awareness International Research Data Base™
- FIRO Stress Response Model™

In addition to the above, I am continuing to develop FIRO theory, certify practitioners in Elements B, F and S, conduct The Human Element training, conduct FIRO research and develop FIRO-related materials, publications and software. FIRO2, from a marketing and usability perspective, has positioned Element B to be competitive with FIRO-B.

FIRO3

I am continuing to work on the next phase of the FIRO evolution—FIRO3—which focuses on Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Space™ (FIROS™) and is restructuring the basic FIRO model, redesigning and reformatting the instrumentation and making visible the systemic links with other psychological (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, California Psychological Inventory™, StrengthsFinder™, Emotional Intelligence, etc.), complexity (Chaos, Artificial Intelligence, Complex Adaptive Systems, etc.), biological (brain, immune

continued

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system, disease, life-span development, etc.) and quantum theory models.

Some of the Science Behind The Human Element

As mentioned above, the past decade has seen changes in the sophistication of executives, human resources and training managers as well as the individual consumer, and in their knowledge of assessments and interpersonal relations training. THE users are asking questions about validity, reliability and usability. The ability to cite research, validity comparisons to other instruments, especially FIRO-B and the MBTI instrument, can mean the difference between making or losing a sale. I personally feel that practitioners should have a basic understanding of the psychometrics around instruments they are using to prevent misinterpreting the results. As Will pointed out on a regular basis, there are a lot of people teaching and writing about his theory and instruments who do not understand them and, consequently, are publishing incorrect information.

This section will provide some general information by topic garnered from the research I have been doing, as well as some of my colleagues' research that can be used to support the validity and use of THE in general and Element B in particular.

Communication. Thompson (2001a) has shown that Inclusion influences readiness to communicate and the amount of energy displayed; Control influences the degree of structure and length of comments before allowing others to talk; and Openness influences the business vs. personal flavor of the conversation as well as the type of information shared or requested.

Conflict. Schutz' Team Compatibility Model™ was extended by Thompson, et al., in 1998. A major modification to the model was the division of the Frustrating dimension into *Frustrating-Confronting* and *Frustrating-Apathetic*. Conflict often revolves around the Confrontation or Apathetic aspects of Role Compatibility. When conflict is the result of a "pure" Con-

frontational or Apathetic behavior, resolution is more direct because both parties are experiencing a similar conflict perspective. When there is a Frustrating role issue, one party has a Confronting perspective, the other an Apathetic perspective. Understanding and making this visible to the conflicting parties aides in facilitating resolution.

Health. An interesting, and often controversial, aspect of Schutz' FIRO theory is the proposition that there exists a relationship between the FIRO Element B behavioral dimensions of Inclusion, Control and Openness and a person's health. Schutz suggests that dissatisfaction on one or more of these interpersonal dimensions (I, C, O) not only predisposes a person for illness, but for a specific type of illness. Thompson (2003b) cites various research studies that support Schutz' hypotheses.

Job Ads. Alonzo Johnson's dissertation (2003) looked at the influence of job ad wording in persuading job searchers to apply for a particular job. His research showed that people were drawn to the ad (high inclusion, control or openness wording) that matched their scores on Element B. This work has dramatic implications for job ad wording.

Job-Home Ratings. Many times participants state that they would have scored differently if they had taken FIRO Element B thinking about their home life rather than their job. FIRO Element B is designed such that approximately one-third of the questions relate to work ("job"), one-third to personal life ("home") and one-third are ambiguous enough to be interpreted as work or personal. In this study of 41 participants in TeamDynamics™ workshops, Thompson (2002c) found the instrument to be robust across both situations. The only difference in scores between the two mindsets ("job" and "home") was that the *I want to control people* scale was higher in the "job" mindset (4.2) than at "home" (3.7) and the *I want to be open* scale was higher in the "home" mindset (4.2) than "job" (3.7). Although these scores are different, they are far from being statistically significant.

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FIRO Element B Organizational Interpretive Report™

Thompson and Schutz (2000a) created an interpretative report for use with Element B scores. This report is based on the culmination of five years of intense research on behaviors associated with scores on Element B. This was the first and only Element B Interpretative Report that Will contributed to and was approved by him.

Leadership

Leader Styles and ICO. Thompson (2001b) found a relationship between ICO scores and observed leader styles. For example, leaders with high *I control people* and low *I want people to control me* had the following characteristics.

- Take no prisoners
- Mission impossible
- Overconfident
- Excessive responsibility
- Maintain superiority
- Like those who recognize them and do not try to control them
- Want autonomy

Management Styles. A. J. Arul's dissertation (1994) looked at the interpersonal behavior of 575 Indian cooperative dairy managers. As a group, their FIRO Element B scores were highest in Control, then Inclusion and lowest in Openness. The most successful managers scored much higher on Control than the unsuccessful managers. There was no overall effect of FIRO compatibility in terms of how the managers performed in their assigned groups, but Openness did predict group performance. Groups with the highest Openness compatibility performed better as a group.

Leaders by Level. Thompson (2006a) looked at 281 leaders from the supervisor Role Level to the Executive Role Level. The results suggest that there is little

variation in Inclusion and Openness scores across Role Levels. Control, however, increases significantly as the Role Level increases, with Executives having a mean *I control people* score of 7.3 compared to a Supervisor mean of 4.6 and *I want people to control me* score of 1.3 compared to a Supervisor mean of 2.6.

Relationship to Other Instruments

MBTI. Thompson and Schutz (2000b, 2000c) wrote a two-part article that first looked at the evolution of FIRO theory and the evolution of FIRO-B to FIRO Element B. The second part briefly explored the linkage of FIRO Element B to the MBTI instrument. To understand the relationship of the information provided by the two instruments, one must be aware that the theories have different psychological underpinnings. For example, psychological Type as measured by the MBTI instrument is an adaptation of C. G. Jung's work and is a type of cognitive or information processing model that is presumed to be hardwired. Stimuli are perceived, brought into the psyche, identified, named, valued, acted upon and stored. FIRO theory and FIRO Element B come from a psychoanalytic perspective and assume that Inclusion, Control and Openness behaviors manifest out of adaptation to anxiety during childhood—Schutz did not believe FIRO behaviors are hardwired.

My research shows that Extraversion is positively correlated with all Element B scales except *People control me* (23) and *I want people to control me* (24). It would appear that extraverts do not want to be controlled. There is a relationship between the Openness scales and iNtuiting. *I include people* (11) and *People include me* (13) scales are also correlated with iNtuiting. Thinking correlates with *I control people* (21); Feeling correlates with *I include people* (11), *I want to include people* (12) and all of the Openness scales. The JP dimension did not have significant correlations with any of the Element B scales.

At the MBTI Step II sub-scale level there are numerous correlations with the Element B scales. For example,

continued

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Inclusion correlates with all the Extraversion scales, as do *I control people* (21), *I am open with people* (31) and *I want to be open with people* (32). The SN sub-scale 4 and JP sub-scale 5 do not correlate with any of the Element B scales. (For more elaboration and detail, see Thompson & Schutz, 2000.) (See Table 1)

Emotional Intelligence. Thompson (2005) looked at the relationship of FIRO Element B and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), a measure of Emotional Intelligence, in a sample of 239 leaders. Statistically significant effects were found among most of the pairings, but the most prominent are highlighted with rectangles. (See Table 2)

The Element B behaviors (I, C & O) suggest significant relationships with Emotional Intelligence (EI).

- Inclusion is highly related to Total Emotional Intelligence (TEI), Empathy (EM), Social Responsibility (RE), Interpersonal Relationship (IR) and Happiness (HA).
- Control is highly related to Assertiveness (AS).
- Independence is related to low scores on People control me.
- Openness is highly related to Empathy (EM), Social Responsibility (RE), Interpersonal Relationship (IR) and Happiness (HA)

StrengthsFinder. Thompson (2003c) did a pilot study that looked at the relationship of the Gallup StrengthsFinder and Element B in a sample of 29 leaders. Although this study had a small sample size, statistically significant effects were found among:

Table 1
FIRO Element B Scales and
MBTI Scales Correlations

Element B Scale	MBTI Preference			
	EI	SN	TF	JP
I11	-.48	.18	.16	.08
I12	-.33	.09	.21	.08
I13	-.43	.14	-.02	.11
I14	-.28	.09	-.07	.01
C21	-.30	.14	-.13	-.02
C22	-.13	.04	-.08	-.05
C23	-.11	.00	.17	.01
C24	-.06	-.05	.12	-.03
O31	-.13	.19	.29	.07
O32	-.20	.22	.28	.02
O33	-.23	.33	.16	.12
O34	-.21	.28	.22	.07

N=234
Red = p<.05

- Low *I include people* and Adaptable
- High *People include me* and Communicator
- High *I control people* and Strategic & Maximizer

Table 2
FIRO Element B Scales and
EQ-i Subscales Correlations

Correlations (WSI DEC 22, 2005.sta) Marked correlations are significant at p < .05000 N=239 (Casewise deletion of missing data)												
Variable	EB11	EB12	EB13	EB14	EB21	EB22	EB23	EB24	EB31	EB32	EB33	EB34
TEI	0.39	0.31	0.44	0.31	0.26	0.22	-0.27	-0.24	0.33	0.29	0.37	0.28
SR	0.30	0.19	0.33	0.19	0.22	0.22	-0.18	-0.11	0.21	0.19	0.15	0.08
ES	0.32	0.26	0.33	0.24	0.23	0.19	-0.17	-0.15	0.38	0.35	0.37	0.32
AS	0.24	0.21	0.29	0.23	0.41	0.38	-0.29	-0.09	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.20
IN	-0.02	-0.06	0.18	0.02	0.31	0.24	-0.41	-0.29	0.01	0.01	0.10	-0.03
SA	0.29	0.18	0.28	0.15	0.23	0.21	-0.24	-0.20	0.24	0.17	0.26	0.16
EM	0.35	0.34	0.42	0.35	0.07	0.03	-0.10	-0.18	0.36	0.33	0.49	0.43
RE	0.31	0.32	0.42	0.30	0.00	-0.03	-0.13	-0.26	0.33	0.30	0.38	0.35
IR	0.57	0.48	0.48	0.37	0.16	0.12	-0.13	-0.05	0.41	0.39	0.48	0.40
ST	0.12	0.04	0.23	0.07	0.34	0.27	-0.27	-0.18	0.12	0.12	0.20	0.15
IC	0.14	0.09	0.13	0.09	-0.12	-0.14	-0.01	-0.11	0.05	0.08	0.07	0.04
RT	0.14	0.15	0.20	0.18	0.12	0.08	-0.19	-0.21	0.19	0.13	0.19	0.19
FL	0.20	0.14	0.29	0.15	0.16	0.12	-0.15	-0.13	0.18	0.17	0.22	0.19
PS	0.21	0.21	0.30	0.26	0.26	0.24	-0.22	-0.17	0.12	0.10	0.22	0.16
OP	0.21	0.22	0.26	0.29	0.25	0.22	-0.22	-0.22	0.11	0.10	0.20	0.16
HA	0.46	0.38	0.44	0.32	0.11	0.11	-0.07	-0.04	0.31	0.24	0.30	0.19

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- High *I want to control* people and Individualistic
- Low *I control people* and Harmonizer, Arranger & Developer
- High *People control me* and Harmony

Because of the small sample size, these results should be taken with caution.

Psychometrics. During the past decade I have conducted a series of psychometric analyses on FIRO Elements B, F and S in preparation for creating a FIRO Element B Psychometrics Manual. The results are somewhat technical and will not be presented here to conserve space.

Physical Proximity

Group Closeness. FIRO theory suggests that there is a relationship between scores on the behavioral scales (I, C & O) and physical proximity during interpersonal interaction. Thompson (2002a) found that high Inclusion groups stood/sat much closer together during group exercises than low Inclusion groups. This effect was exacerbated by high Openness scores. In fact, high Inclusion combined with high Openness tends to make groups want to stand rather than sit when working together—they can get closer when standing.

Group Photos. A three-year study of group photos taken of participants on the first day of training sessions revealed that high Inclusion people tended to move to the center of the group and those with low Inclusion positioned themselves on the outer edges of the group (Thompson, 2002d). This effect held true even when controlled for gender and height.

Stress. Thompson (2003a) studied the influence of a “Normal” versus “Stressed” mindset on reported Element B scores. Phase I of this study looked at how behavior and reported Element B scores change under high stress.

- Inclusion and Openness behaviors and scores, in general, tend to be significantly reduced under

high stress. Sample averages: In = 4.91 vs. Is = 1.97; Cn = 3.66 vs. Cs = 3.73; On = 4.81 vs. Os = 3.18).

- Control behaviors and scores tended to remain relatively constant with only an increase in the *I want to control people* scale (C22n = 3.44 vs. C22s = 4.40).
- For specific individuals, however, you might find significant behavior and score changes in the opposite direction of the sample averages.

These results suggest that a person’s mindset at the time they complete Element B could significantly impact how they respond to the Element B questions.

Phase II of this project is ongoing and will look at more detailed aspects of the Element B Stress Response™ and the relationship of psychological type (as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument) and the Element B Stress Response.

Teams. The Team Compatibility Model was tested with a four-year study of stranger groups in training sessions (Thompson, 2002b). This study found that general predictions could be made based on group Atmosphere Compatibility. Some examples are:

- ILCHOL: Low interaction; fast starting; business-like; productive
- IHCHOH: High interaction; fast starting; friendly; productive
- IHCLOH: High interaction; slow starting, friendly; low productivity
- ILCLOL: Low interaction; slow starting, business-like; very low productivity

NOTE: I have often said, “If I were contracted to do a teambuilding session and told that the team was willing to complete only one instrument, I would choose Element B.” It provides more accurate information on the behaviors I am likely to see the team exhibit than any other instrument I have used.

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Miscellaneous

FIRO Element B, IQ and Cognitive Ability. Thompson (2006c) looked at the relationship of FIRO Element B scores with IQ and Cognitive Ability of 120 leaders. The results did not show any statistically significant relationships between FIRO Element B scores and either IQ or Cognitive Ability when the leadership Role and Level were controlled. (The higher the leadership Level, the higher the average IQ, Cognitive Ability and Control Score.)

Current Projects

The Next Generation of the Team Compatibility Model. I am continuing to refine and develop the FIRO Team Compatibility Model. This model is being used successfully with High Performing Systems, Inc., clients to create “designer” teams, for example. We are continuing to collect data for future studies.

Asperger Syndrome and FIRO Element B (work in progress). Thompson and Griswold are currently collecting data on patients with Asperger’s Disorder. Two things that distinguish Asperger’s Disorder from autism are the severity of the symptoms and the absence of language delays. Children with Asperger’s Disorder may be only mildly affected and frequently have good language and cognitive skills. To the untrained observer, a child with Asperger’s Disorder may just seem different. The study also uses the Adolescent/Adult Sensory Profile and The Asperger Syndrome Diagnostic Scale.

Can FIRO Element B Scores Predict Health Issues?


I have a pilot study with 30 leaders participating in an executive Level leadership program in progress. The study will examine the relationship between ICO and health issues as measured by variables such as blood pressure, stress, cardiac problems, etc., with the purpose of determining whether Element B dissatisfaction scores predict health issues.

Conclusions

As stated in the beginning, the purpose of this paper is to provide HE practitioners and/or salespeople with some basic examples that have scientific validity to enable them to answer confidently and accurately “frequently asked questions.” Obviously, understanding these examples requires a much deeper knowledge of the sciences than can be presented in a short paper—but it is a start.

Some general thoughts to keep in mind:

- When Will confidently said, “Trust the process,” he knew the process was built on sound science—and that it would work
- THE process was built on scientific principles, thus, all activities, interventions, etc., are placed in the process to coincide with psychological readiness to participate, hear and take action.
- Leading a group or making a sale can be accomplished easier if you have some understanding of the science.

There are very few people doing research on FIRO Element B or other aspects of THE. A colleague of mine recently told me that she was doing her dissertation on FIRO-B because she could not find enough research on FIRO Element B. Lack of research on Element B is a problem in the academic community. Professors do not want their students spending time on dissertations that might not have enough research available to support the students’ hypotheses and, consequently, help assure a successful outcome. My point is that we as a FIRO/THE community must conduct and/or encourage others to conduct research with our tools and processes. This was one of Will’s last requests of me—of us. 

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Selling The Human Element® With Science

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