BEST PRACTICE
Establishing Group Compatibility

Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) is a technique to build group compatibility. This theory was created by W.C. Schutz to explain an individual's orientation toward others based on his or her interpersonal behavior. Understanding FIRO will help the QA analyst select a good mix of people for a group activity, or to better understand the interpersonal relationships occurring in a group. The concept explains people orienting themselves toward others in certain characteristic patterns. Similar patterns among group members yield a group that is more compatible and efficient.

To understand the potential compatibility of group members, the interpersonal characteristics of each individual must be understood first. Characteristics of an individual can be explained in terms of the three interpersonal needs below:

- **Inclusion**

  Inclusion is the need to associate with others and the need for togetherness. This need manifests itself through behaviors designed to attract attention. A person with a strong need for inclusion may be overly friendly, amiable, and possessive. They may punish friends who attempt to establish friendships with others.

- **Control**

  Control refers to the decision-making process between people. The need for control varies from the need to dominate others versus being dominated by others. A person with a high need to be controlled is compliant and submissive to others; a person with a high need to control displays rebellion and refusal to be controlled.

- **Affection**

  Affection refers to close personal and emotional feelings between two individuals. Love and hate represent the two extremes. A person with a strong need for affection will be friendly, make overtures to others, and generally tries to establish close emotional ties with others. A low-need person will avoid close interpersonal relations.

When two or more people interact, each one typically enacts in the need area of the characteristic behavior pattern that was developed in childhood. These patterns are often a direct result of the way a child was treated by his or her

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parents or other adults and how that child reacted. The interaction patterns of any two given individuals may be either compatible or incompatible. If they are compatible, then the interaction is likely to be easy and productive. If they are incompatible, the interaction is likely to be difficult and unproductive.

Three types of compatibility-incompatibility have been identified that could occur in each of the three need areas:

- **Interchange Compatibility**

  This is based upon the mutual expression of inclusion, control, or affection. Interchange compatibility depends upon the degree to which those interacting agree on the desired amount of mutual interaction. Some people prefer a great deal of behavior exchange relevant to the need, while others prefer not to receive, or to send inclusion, control, or affection. Interchange compatibility exists when the two persons interacting desire a similar amount of exchange. People are incompatible when one prefers a high rate of exchange in the area of affection and the other prefers a low rate of exchange.

- **Originator Compatibility**

  This derives from the originator-receiver dimension of interaction. Two persons are compatible to the degree that the expression of inclusion, control, or affection corresponds to that which the other person wishes to receive. For example, if one person needs to control and tries to dominate another person that needs to be submissive, they will be compatible. If both need to control and try dominating each other, they will be incompatible. Similarly, if one person initiates group activities for another person who wants to be included in the activities, they will be compatible. However, initiating group activities for a person who does not want to be included leads to incompatibility. The degree to which the activities originated by one person are in accord with the needs of the other member is important.

- **Reciprocal Compatibility**

  This reflects the degree to which two persons reciprocally satisfy each other's behavior preferences (the degree to which each person's behavior is in accord with the other's needs). If one person wants the other to express much affection and the other does so, there is compatibility in the area of affection. But if one member is frustrated because the other doesn't express enough affection, incompatibility results.

The general assumption of Shutz's theory is that compatible groups will be more efficient than incompatible groups. This effect is reflected in the initial formation of groups, in the degree to which the groups are likely to continue to function, and in the productivity of groups.

References

Guide – CSQA Common Body Of Knowledge, V6.2