

# An Analytical Report on OD-Tools Trait-Map® Personality

## Assessment: Theories, Traits, and Comparative Standing

### I. Introduction to Personality Assessment in the Workplace

The effective management of human capital is paramount for organizational success. Organizations consistently seek robust methods to understand and optimize their workforce, recognizing that individuals represent both crucial assets and significant costs. While management can rely on quantifiable metrics for other resources, the multifaceted and complex nature of human beings poses a significant challenge to effectively characterizing the workforce. Personality assessments offer a valuable contribution to explaining critical individual differences observed in professional settings (OD-Tools, 2025).

The authors of Trait-Map® see personality as one of several critical determinants of human performance in the workplace. Performance, viewed as behavior over an extended period, is understood as a function of cognitive abilities (IQ), personality, emotional intelligence (EQ), acquired skills, knowledge, motivation, and situational factors (OD-Tools, 2025). This conceptualization underscores that personality, specifically as it pertains to person-job fit, is a vital, yet not singular, variable influencing an individual's effectiveness. This perspective highlights the necessity of integrating personality assessment data with other evaluative components, such as cognitive assessments, emotional intelligence measures, and evaluations of skills, knowledge, and motivational drivers. Such a holistic assessment strategy ensures a comprehensive understanding of an individual's suitability for a role and their overall potential, thereby guiding practitioners toward integrated and more accurate human capital management practices.

In this framework, personality assessments serve as instrumental tools for discerning individual differences in preferred or habitual ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling within the professional sphere. Their application contributes significantly to enhancing decision-making processes in talent acquisition, fostering effective development initiatives, facilitating cohesive team building, and cultivating stronger leadership capabilities.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the OD-Tools Trait-Map® personality assessment. It delves into its theoretical underpinnings, details some of the traits it measures, and offers a structured comparative analysis against other prominent personality inventories, including Wiley's DiSC, SHL OPQ, Facet Five, Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI), and the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R). The objective is to furnish human resources and organizational development professionals with a thorough understanding of Trait-Map®'s unique attributes and its practical utility across various organizational contexts, alongside a discerning comparison with other widely used tools.

### II. OD-Tools Trait-Map®: Theories, Model, and Measurement

#### A. Definition of Personality and Core Theoretical Foundations

Trait-Map® defines personality as "Preferred or habitual ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling" (OD-Tools, 2025). This definition is built upon three fundamental aspects:

- **Internal Origin:** This aspect posits that an individual's behaviors, actions, thoughts, and feelings partly stem from internal predispositions rather than being solely dictated by

external circumstances. For instance, experiencing fear before a routine business meeting is considered a manifestation of a personality trait, whereas fear in response to an earthquake is primarily a situational reaction (OD-Tools, 2025).

- **Enduring Tendencies:** Personality is characterized by consistent patterns that persist over time and across diverse situations. While behavior changes all the time, there are some patterns more or less stable. These patterns manifest as recognizable repetitions and continuities in an individual's behavior, thought processes, and emotional responses. For example, a person who consistently exhibits talkative behavior in various social and professional settings demonstrates an enduring personality tendency. Measuring personality essentially means identifying relatively stable patterns in an individual. (OD-Tools, 2025).
- **Work-Related Focus:** Trait-Map® is specifically tailored to measure individual personality differences within the context of the workplace, focusing on working-aged adults. It is explicitly designed for use with "mentally normal people" and is not intended for clinical diagnostic applications (OD-Tools, 2025). This specialized focus ensures the relevance and applicability of its insights to professional environments.

## B. Basis in Trait Theory and the Big Five Model

Trait-Map® is firmly grounded in trait theory, which conceptualizes personality as a collection of more and less stable patterns, where a numerical score represents the consistency across various situations (OD-Tools, 2025). This approach contrasts sharply with older "type-based" models, such as horoscopes or ancient temperament theories, which categorize individuals into distinct, often sharply bounded, groups. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that personality traits are distributed along a continuum, typically following a normal (bell curve) distribution, with most individuals exhibiting moderate levels of traits rather than falling into extreme categories (OD-Tools, 2025).

The Trait-Map® assessment is "strongly influenced by the 'Big Five' personality dimensions," which are widely recognized as the fundamental structure of human personality traits in contemporary psychology (OD-Tools, 2024). These five broad factors—Emotional Stability, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Focus, and Openness to Experience—are distinguished by their remarkable stability over extended periods (e.g., 45 years from young adulthood), their partial heritability, their likely adaptive value in evolutionary contexts, and their universality across diverse linguistic and cultural groups (OD-Tools, 2025).

Trait-Map® applies this framework by further subdividing each of the five Big Five dimensions into five specific, highly correlated yet independent traits, resulting in a detailed model of 25 traits (OD-Tools, 2024). This granular approach allows for a significantly broader range of possible personality profiles and provides a more nuanced and sophisticated representation of individual differences than broader categorical models.

## C. Development History and Influences

The evolution of Trait-Map® has been a multi-decade process, commencing in Shanghai in early 2002 under the leadership of Friedemann Demmer and Gabor Nagy (OD-Tools, 2024). The initial conceptualization and development were significantly inspired by Dr. Lewis R. Goldberg's International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) and the scoring algorithms and narrative descriptions of the IPIP-NEO, contributed by Prof. John A. Johnson (OD-Tools, 2024).

The initial idea driving the development of Trait-Map® was to transform the generic IPIP-NEO questionnaire into a business application. The development team replaced personal content with work-related content, adapting trait names and items to align with the contemporary business lexicon and the specific demands of the professional world (OD-Tools, 2024). Early iterations of the assessment initially employed a Likert-type scale format. However, in late 2002, the assessment transitioned to an innovative forced-choice format and moved to an online platform. This shift not only streamlined report generation but also facilitated the integration of feedback interviews into the ongoing refinement process. The multilingual developer team created the questionnaire in two languages, English and Chinese, from the very beginning. Although this is not an efficient development method, it ensures that the questionnaire only includes content that makes sense in distant cultures, thus selecting more universal elements of work experience (OD-Tools, 2025).

A significant breakthrough occurred in 2013 with the introduction of the current 5-item/block ranking questionnaire format. Concurrently, the total number of traits was refined from 26 to 25. This adjustment was crucial to enable the application of a combinatorial optimization method, which dramatically reduced the assessment completion time from an average of 29 minutes to a median of 18 minutes, all while maintaining accuracy (OD-Tools, 2024). This efficiency was a key objective in its development, aiming to balance accuracy, granularity, and speed (OD-Tools, 2025). The assessment's name was also changed from "FiT In" or "Five Trait Inventory" to "Trait-Map®" to reflect its expanded reporting capabilities (OD-Tools, 2024).

The psychometric quality of Trait-Map® received formal certification from the Psychometric Committee of the Shanghai Psychological Association in 2006 (OD-Tools, 2024). Since then, the tool has undergone continuous monitoring, improvement, and minor item updates to ensure its ongoing relevance and validity. A primary focus of recent development has been the expansion of its global reach through the creation of new language versions, including German, Italian, Hungarian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Polish and Thai (OD-Tools, 2024).

## **D. The Innovative Forced-Choice Questionnaire Format**

### **1. Rationale and Advantages (e.g., Faking Reduction)**

Trait-Map® employs a unique forced-choice ranking questionnaire format, a deliberate design choice aimed at mitigating common distortions associated with traditional Likert-type scales. These distortions include acquiescence bias (a tendency to agree regardless of content), extremity/midpoint bias (preference for extreme or middle responses), leniency/severity tendencies (overly lenient or strict self-evaluation), and attempts at faking (OD-Tools, 2024). The forced-choice format effectively eliminates or reduces these biases, enhancing the integrity of the assessment results (OD-Tools, 2024).

A significant advantage of the forced-choice format is its demonstrated effectiveness in reducing faking, a critical concern in high-stakes assessment contexts such as recruitment. While faking cannot be completely eliminated in the self-report measures, meta-analytic reviews support the efficacy of forced-choice measures in this regard (OD-Tools, 2024). The mechanism for faking reduction lies in the design: participants are presented with five items within a block and must rank them from "More like me" to "Less like me." This structure makes it difficult for individuals to manipulate their responses to present a universally "perfect" profile, as any given ranking inherently implies both advantages and disadvantages. This complexity forces participants to consider multiple dimensions simultaneously, making strategic alteration of responses challenging (OD-Tools, 2024).

Furthermore, the proper application of Trait-Map® facilitates the identification of potential faking during subsequent assessment stages. Candidates who attempt to "pass the test" by inflating scores on traits like Confidence and Assertiveness exhibit inconsistencies that are relatively easy to observe during behavioral event interviews (BEI) and through non-verbal cues, allowing assessment facilitators to readily detect discrepancies between self-reported scores and observed behavior (OD-Tools, 2025). To further deter dishonest responding, OD-Tools advises safeguarding technical materials to prevent public circulation, refraining from disclosing ideal candidate profiles to applicants, and clearly communicating that assessment results serve as reference points only, subject to validation through follow-up interviews (OD-Tools, 2025).

## **2. Understanding Ipsative Data and its Implications**

A defining characteristic of forced-choice questionnaires, including Trait-Map®, is the generation of "ipsative data." This means that the total score across all scales is mathematically constrained to be identical for every participant (OD-Tools, 2024). Ipsative data is generally considered unsuitable for factor analysis, which is commonly employed in academic psychology research, consequently forced-choice questionnaires are not favored in academic work (OD-Tools, 2024).

However, Trait-Map® adopts a distinct theoretical position regarding ipsative data. Rather than attempting to overcome this phenomenon through methods like Item Response Theory (IRT)-based scoring (as some other forced-choice assessment providers do), Trait-Map®'s developers embrace ipsative results as an inherently suitable model for personality (OD-Tools, 2024). This approach is rooted in the philosophical premise that personality is something universally possessed to the same overall extent by all individuals, unlike cognitive abilities (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), knowledge, or skills, where quantitative differences are evident. While individuals certainly differ in the degree to which they possess specific traits, the cumulative "amount of personality" is considered constant across all individuals. Therefore, the forced-choice format is deemed the appropriate methodology for measuring this internal distribution of traits (OD-Tools, 2024).

This unique philosophical stance fundamentally differentiates Trait-Map® from assessments designed for normative comparisons. It implies that Trait-Map® primarily reveals an individual's *internal composition* of traits—how dominant one trait is relative to others *within that specific person's profile*—rather than how much of a trait they possess compared to a broader population. This self-referenced nature means that scores reflect proportions and personality structure, not absolute competency levels benchmarked against a norm group (OD-Tools, 2025).

To mitigate other inherent disadvantages of forced-choice formats, such as reduced internal consistency and potential interference between items, Trait-Map® incorporates innovative measures. These include its efficient 5-item/block ranking format and a proprietary combinatorial optimization method used in item grouping. This optimization ensures that any existing interference among traits is minimized and distributed uniformly, leading to errors that largely cancel each other out and do not introduce significant distortion into the results (OD-Tools, 2024).

Trait-Map® scores range from 1 to 10. These scores indicate the relative dominance, or internal proclivity, of specific traits within an individual's unique personality composition. Particular emphasis is placed on extreme scores (1, 2, or 3 for low tendencies; 8, 9, or 10 for high tendencies), as these represent the most distinctive or "cardinal traits" and offer the most valuable insights into an individual's behavioral predispositions (OD-Tools, 2025).

## **3. Psychometric Properties (Reliability and Validity Overview)**

The psychometric robustness of Trait-Map® is supported by various studies focusing on its reliability and validity. While forced-choice formats inherently lead to lower Cronbach Alpha values (a measure of internal consistency) compared to Likert scales due to the nature of item interaction, Trait-Map®'s reported values are comparable to those of other established personality inventories. This is a notable achievement given the assessment's emphasis on efficiency (OD-Tools, 2024).

The assessment demonstrates strong test-retest reliability, indicating stability of results over time. An average reliability coefficient of 0.81 was observed for primary scales and 0.86 for secondary scales over a 3-week interval. These figures are consistent with those reported for other significant psychometric tests, including the 16PF, OPQ32r, and Facet5 (OD-Tools, 2024).

Trait-Map® has undergone several validity studies to establish its predictive power and fairness in various contexts:

- **Gender Effects Analysis:** A large-scale analysis involving 28,718 anonymous Trait-Map® responses across multiple languages revealed statistically significant differences between genders on certain personality traits. For instance, female respondents consistently scored higher in Aesthetic Sense and Observation, while male respondents scored higher in Competitiveness and Abstractedness across all data sets (OD-Tools, 2024). Crucially, however, the magnitude of these differences was not substantial; no difference exceeded 53% of the scale standard deviation. This is less than the legal threshold of 80% of one standard deviation, which is commonly used to determine adverse impact in recruitment and selection processes (OD-Tools, 2024). This empirical finding provides evidence for the ethical and legal defensibility of Trait-Map® in employment contexts, demonstrating that despite observed gender differences, the assessment is unlikely to result in negative impact based on gender (OD-Tools, 2024).
- **Job Performance Correlation (Study 1):** A study involving 1,000 employees correlated Trait-Map® scores with supervisor performance appraisals. Significant positive correlations were found for traits such as Assertiveness, Competitiveness, Drive, and Persuasiveness, aligning with expectations for leadership potential and professional ambition (OD-Tools, 2024). Conversely, traits like Networking, Cooperation, Altruism, Emotional Control, Health Management, and Optimism showed significant negative correlations. The developers acknowledge that these unexpected negative correlations might be an artifact of the forced-choice questionnaire format, which is known to potentially magnify negative correlations between scales and external criteria, or could be influenced by specific local cultural factors (OD-Tools, 2024). This transparent discussion of potential methodological or contextual influences on correlation data is important for expert users. It encourages a nuanced interpretation of results, moving beyond simplistic conclusions and emphasizing the importance of considering the inherent complexities of measurement methodologies and cultural contexts in validity research.
- **Manager vs. Non-Manager Differences (Study 1, Results 3):** A comparison of Trait-Map® scores between 213 managers and 560 non-managers revealed statistically significant differences, providing empirical evidence for the tool's ability to capture meaningful personality distinctions relevant to leadership roles. Managers consistently scored higher on traits such as Assertiveness, Drive, Confidence, Calmness, and Persuasiveness. They also showed tendencies towards higher Abstractedness and Methodicalness. Conversely, managers appeared less emotionally restrained, more inclined towards work, less "nice," less detail-oriented, more conservative, and more pragmatic than their non-managerial counterparts. These findings are consistent with common practitioner experience and established leadership theories (OD-Tools, 2024).

- **Hiring Decision Accuracy (Study 2):** A case study within the service industry explored Trait-Map®'s utility in differentiating between successful and unsuccessful employees for specific job profiles. While the assessment is not recommended as the sole basis for hiring decisions, simulations demonstrated that adjusting "passing scores" could optimize decision accuracy. This indicates a systematic and predictable relationship between the traits measured by Trait-Map® and success on the job (OD-Tools, 2024).
- **Correlation with Assessment Center Results (Study 3):** A study involving 111 junior and middle managers correlated Trait-Map® scores with performance in a leadership Assessment Center (AC). The analysis revealed significant differences between higher and lower-scoring groups in the AC. Individuals with higher AC scores exhibited elevated scores on Extroversion-related traits (Confidence, Assertiveness, Persuasiveness, Networking) and Creativity. Conversely, lower AC scorers showed higher scores on Emotional Steadiness traits (Emotional Control, Health Management, Optimism) and Deliberation, suggesting that a greater sense of urgency and quicker decision-making were associated with superior AC performance. This study provides external validation for Trait-Map®'s predictive power within a robust, multi-faceted assessment context (OD-Tools, 2024).

### III. The Traits and Reports of Trait-Map®

#### A. Structure: Big Five Dimensions and their Corresponding Traits

Trait-Map® provides a high-resolution personality profile by organizing its 25 traits into five broad dimensions, which are direct workplace applications of the universally accepted Big Five model. Each of these Big Five dimensions is further elaborated through five specific traits, offering a detailed and nuanced understanding of an individual's personality (OD-Tools, 2024). The Big Five dimensions, as adapted and named within the Trait-Map® framework, are: Emotional Stability, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Focus, and Openness (OD-Tools, 2025).

#### B. Summary Description of Example Traits (Definition, Left/Right Score Pointers)

Some example traits are presented here with a definition and corresponding "Left Score Pointer" and "Right Score Pointer." These pointers delineate the behavioral tendencies associated with the extremes of the scale, enabling a nuanced interpretation of an individual's predispositions (OD-Tools, 2024). An important aspect of the Trait-Map® system is its emphasis on the potential "shadow sides" or downsides that can emerge even from high scores on a trait. For instance, while assertiveness is generally beneficial, excessive self-assertion might manifest as aggression or insensitivity. Similarly, high emotional control, while often positive, could lead to difficulties in expressing positive emotions like enthusiasm (OD-Tools, 2025). This integrated approach, which highlights both the strengths and potential limitations of each trait, reflects a balanced, well-rounded perspective on personality. It acknowledges that traits are not inherently "good" or "bad" but can become problematic when expressed in excess or in inappropriate contexts. This makes Trait-Map® particularly valuable for coaching and development programs, as it provides a holistic understanding that fosters self-awareness and encourages targeted behavioral adjustment, effectively positioning it as a tool for identifying both strengths and areas for development (OD-Tools, 2025).

Some example traits measured by Trait-Map®:

Trait Name	Definition	Left Score Pointer	Right Score Pointer
<b>Emotional Control</b>	Tendency to avoid outbursts of anger or frustration and maintain emotional restraint.	Expressive	Controlled
<b>Health Management</b>	Maintaining work-life balance and a healthy lifestyle.	Self-exhausting	Self-protecting
<b>Assertiveness</b>	Acting decisively and taking control of situations.	Passive	Assertive
<b>Aesthetic Sense</b>	Tendency to notice and be inspired by aesthetic qualities of things.	Common	Inspired
<b>Observation</b>	Affinity for detecting and decoding nonverbal messages.	Detached	Sensitive

*Table 1: Trait-Map® Personality Traits Examples: Definitions and Score Pointers* (OD-Tools, 2024; OD-Tools, 2025). The Health Management and Observation traits are rarely seen in other personality assessments. The remaining 23 traits, however, overlap significantly with other tools.

### C. Practical Interpretation of Trait-Map® Scores

Trait-Map® scores are presented on a scale of 1 to 10, indicating the relative frequency or intensity of behavioral patterns associated with each trait *within an individual's unique personality profile* (OD-Tools, 2025). The interpretation of these scores emphasizes those that deviate significantly from the midpoint (scores of 1, 2, or 3 for low tendencies; 8, 9, or 10 for high tendencies). These extreme scores are considered the most distinctive or "cardinal traits" and yield the most valuable insights into an individual's predispositions (OD-Tools, 2025).

High scores on a particular trait suggest that the individual strongly possesses that characteristic, finds tasks requiring it easier and more natural, and can more readily acquire related competencies. However, a high score also carries the potential for a "shadow side" to manifest, where the trait is overexpressed or becomes counterproductive in certain contexts (OD-Tools, 2025).

Conversely, low scores indicate that an individual possesses less of that trait, finds tasks requiring the "right score behavior" more challenging and effortful, and may exhibit less inherent interest or motivation for such tasks. These low scores also highlight specific benefits and potential downsides associated with a lower manifestation of the trait (OD-Tools, 2025).

Scores falling in the middle range (5-6) suggest that the trait is not a particularly defining characteristic for the individual, and behavior related to it is more situational, influenced by external factors rather than strong internal personality predispositions (OD-Tools, 2025).

Given the self-descriptive nature of the Trait-Map® questionnaire, its developers consistently advocate for the validation of results through additional assessment methods. This multi-method approach is particularly crucial in selection contexts. Recommended validation techniques include follow-up interviews, such as Behavioral Event Interviews (BEI), and direct observation of non-verbal cues (OD-Tools, 2025). This practice underscores that Trait-Map® is designed not as a standalone diagnostic tool, but as an integral component of a comprehensive assessment process. By systematically cross-referencing self-report data with observed behaviors and contextual information, the overall validity and reliability of hiring or development decisions are significantly enhanced. This strategy effectively mitigates the inherent limitations and potential biases, such as faking, associated with relying on any single assessment method, thereby providing a more robust and accurate portrayal of an individual's personality and potential.

## Trait-Map® Reports

The individual reports consist of sections, which can be freely combined to generate a report that fits the use case. Report sections: Narrative Report, Big Five Report, Highlights, Personality Profile, Work Attributes Report, Team Role Report, Conflict Style Report, Skill Affinity Reports (Collaboration, Presentation, Negotiation, Sales), Leadership Style Report, Development Report. There are also various group reports, as well as job-fit match and gap analysis reports.

## IV. Comparative Analysis of Leading Personality Assessments

### A. Overview of Compared Instruments: DiSC, SHL OPQ, Facet Five, Hogan HPI, NEO PI-R

This section provides a comparative analysis of Trait-Map® against five other widely recognized personality assessment tools. These instruments represent diverse theoretical foundations, measurement methodologies, and primary applications within the field of personality assessment, offering a comprehensive landscape for comparison.

### B. Framework for Comparison: Personality Model, Underlying Theories, Measurement Method, and Use Cases

The comparative analysis employs a structured framework, focusing on four key dimensions for each assessment:

1. **Personality Model:** The fundamental structure or framework used to describe personality.
2. **Underlying Theories:** The psychological theories that inform the development and interpretation of the assessment.
3. **Measurement Method:** The specific approach used to collect and score data from individuals.
4. **Suitable Use Cases:** The primary contexts and applications for which the assessment is designed and most effective.

This systematic approach allows for a clear articulation of both commonalities and critical distinctions between Trait-Map® and its counterparts.

### C. Detailed Comparison of Assessments

#### 1. Wiley's DiSC

- **Personality Model:** DiSC is built upon a four-quadrant behavioral model, categorizing individuals into Dominance (D), Influence (i), Steadiness (S), and Conscientiousness (C).

While individuals are understood to exhibit a blend of these styles, one or two typically emerge as their "comfort zone." The model emphasizes that no single style is inherently superior to another (Wiley, n.d.b).

- **Underlying Theories:** Although DiSC asserts distinct origins, its framework bears a notable resemblance to ancient temperament theories. DiSC's theoretical application primarily focuses on fostering self-knowledge and improving communication and cooperation within workplace settings (Wiley, n.d.b).
- **Measurement Method:** Contemporary online DiSC assessments employ adaptive testing and sophisticated algorithms to analyze responses to a series of self-descriptive statements. This process yields scores across eight specific scales, including D, Di, I, IS, S, SC, C, and CD (Wiley, n.d.a).
- **Similarities with Trait-Map®:** Both assessments aim to enhance self-awareness and improve interpersonal interactions within the workplace. Both also offer various reports tailored for team development and individual growth.
- **Differences with Trait-Map®:** A fundamental distinction lies in their underlying personality models. DiSC, while recognizing variations, employs an essentially type-based model (four styles). Trait-Map®, conversely, is a trait-based model that measures 25 continuous traits, offering a higher resolution and more granular detail compared to DiSC's broader categorizations. This difference in granularity means that while DiSC is intuitive for introductory behavior analysis, particularly in communication and sales training, Trait-Map® provides a more detailed psychometric foundation for deeper insights (OD-Tools, 2025).
- **Suitable Use Cases:** DiSC is utilized for enhancing communication, promoting cooperation within teams, boosting overall team performance, and improving the effectiveness of leaders and managers. It provides a common language that facilitates mutual understanding of behavioral preferences (Wiley, n.d.b). Trait-Map® addresses these use cases with training reports, such as Team Role Report, Collaboration Competency Tendencies, Sales Competency Tendencies, while offering more sophisticated reports for self-development and for use cases not included in DiSC (job fit analysis). DiSC can be viewed as an entry-level tool, while Trait-Map® is more sophisticated, but also more complex.

## 2. SHL Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ)

- **Personality Model:** The OPQ is a comprehensive occupational personality questionnaire. Measuring 32 traits, it is widely recognized as a robust trait-based model, often aligned with a competency-based approach to leadership (SHL, n.d.a).
- **Underlying Theories:** The OPQ is grounded in occupational psychology principles, with a focus on work-related behaviors and preferences, designed to predict occupational success (SHL, n.d.b).
- **Measurement Method:** The OPQ utilizes a forced-choice questionnaire format, similar to Trait-Map®, with a reported completion time of approximately 20 minutes. A key psychometric distinction is its use of Item Response Theory (IRT)-based scoring. This approach is specifically employed to *overcome* the ipsative phenomenon inherent in forced-choice data, thereby producing normative results that enable comparisons against a broader population (SHL, n.d.b).
- **Similarities with Trait-Map®:** Both assessments employ a forced-choice questionnaire format and are explicitly designed for workplace applications, aiming for efficient completion times (OPQ: ~20 min; Trait-Map®: 18 min median time). Both provide insights for both hiring and development purposes and claim to have no adverse impact based on gender (SHL, n.d.b).

- **Differences with Trait-Map®:** The OPQ model predates the emergence of the Big Five as the predominant basic model of human traits, while Trait-Map® is aligned with the Big Five. Another fundamental psychometric divergence lies in their handling of ipsative data. SHL OPQ explicitly uses IRT to *overcome* the ipsative phenomenon and generate normative results, which allows for external comparisons of individuals against a reference group. Trait-Map®, conversely, *embraces* ipsative data as a suitable model for personality, viewing personality as an internal distribution of traits unique to an individual rather than a quantity to be compared normatively against a population (OD-Tools, 2024). This philosophical difference in measurement and interpretation is a critical differentiator. Another difference is that Trait-Map® emphasizes both the potential bright and shadow side of extreme scores.
- **Suitable Use Cases:** Both tools can be applied across the entire talent journey, from talent acquisition (e.g., hiring, interviewing, volume hiring) to talent management (e.g., high-potential programs, development planning, succession planning, talent mobility, workforce development). They have a similar purpose; the difference lies in how they address and support versatile use cases.

### 3. Facet Five

- **Personality Model:** Facet Five is founded on contemporary, trait-based personality theory. It measures five major "building blocks" or factors—Will (Determination), Energy (Vitality), Affection (Altruism), Control (Discipline), and Emotionality (Tension)—which are further broken down into 13 sub-factors. These five factors align closely with the Big Five personality dimensions (Facet5, n.d.a).
- **Underlying Theories:** Its theoretical foundation is explicitly trait-based personality theory, emphasizing how individual differences in motivations, attitudes, and behaviors contribute to unique personal make-ups (Facet5, n.d.a).
- **Measurement Method:** Facet Five utilizes an online questionnaire comprising 106 questions, typically completed in approximately 20 minutes. A key aspect of its measurement is that responses are explicitly compared to a "norm group," enabling a normative interpretation of results (Facet5, n.d.a).
- **Similarities with Trait-Map®:** Both are trait-based models aligned with the Big Five and offer detailed personality profiles (Trait-Map®: 5 factors/25 traits; Facet5: 5 factors/13 sub-factors). Both are widely used for both selection and development purposes, including applications in team and leadership contexts. Both assessments also aim for efficient completion times (~20 minutes).
- **Differences with Trait-Map®:** A significant difference lies in their approach to data interpretation: normative versus ipsative. Facet Five explicitly relies on comparing individual results to a "norm group," indicating a normative measurement approach where an individual's score is understood relative to a larger population. Trait-Map®, in contrast, employs a self-referenced (ipsative) scoring system, where scores reflect the relative dominance of traits *within an individual's unique personality composition* rather than their standing against a norm group (OD-Tools, 2024; Facet5, n.d.a). This distinction is crucial for interpreting and applying assessment results. While both provide detailed insights, Trait-Map® details 25 distinct traits, potentially offering a finer resolution in specific areas compared to Facet Five's 13 sub-factors.
- **Suitable Use Cases:** Facet Five is applied across various talent management functions, including talent acquisition, selection, integration, individual development, team development, and leadership development. Its primary aim is to foster self-awareness and support personal growth (Facet5, n.d.b). Both tools have a similar purpose; the difference lies in how they address and support versatile use cases.

#### 4. Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI)

- **Personality Model:** The HPI measures the "bright side of personality," focusing on how individuals typically relate to others when performing optimally. It comprises seven primary scales and 42 subscales, and it is aligned to the Big Five (Hogan Assessments, n.d.b).
- **Underlying Theories:** The HPI is rooted in socioanalytic theory, which posits that the two dominant themes in social life are "getting along with others and getting ahead in the social hierarchy." The HPI is designed to capture behavioral tendencies relevant to these fundamental social objectives (Hogan Assessments, n.d.b).
- **Measurement Method:** The HPI is a self-report inventory with a completion time of 15 to 20 minutes, offering instantaneous scoring. It is a normative assessment, with established norms available for various demographic and occupational groups, allowing for comparisons against a reference population (Hogan Assessments, n.d.b).
- **Similarities with Trait-Map®:** Both assessments are fundamentally based on the Big Five model and are explicitly designed for workplace applications, aiming for efficient completion times. Both also address the "dual nature" of personality traits, acknowledging that strengths can have potential downsides or "derailers." Trait-Map® integrates the concept of "shadow sides" directly into its trait interpretations and developmental suggestions (OD-Tools, 2025), while Hogan structurally separates the assessment of "bright side" (HPI) from "dark side" or "derailers" (HDS) through complementary assessments (Hogan Assessments, n.d.b). This difference in structural approach to addressing potential liabilities is a key point of comparison.
- **Differences with Trait-Map®:** Hogan structurally separates the assessment of "bright side" (HPI) from "dark side" or "derailers" (HDS) through distinct instruments. Trait-Map®, conversely, integrates the concept of "shadow sides" directly into the interpretation and developmental suggestions for its 25 traits, providing a more unified perspective on an individual's potential strengths and areas for development within a single assessment framework. Furthermore, while Trait-Map® focuses on a broad "person-job fit" and general "work-related behavior," the HPI is explicitly and deeply tied to socioanalytic theory, with a primary emphasis on social interaction and hierarchical advancement. Another key difference is their measurement philosophy: HPI is a normative assessment, comparing individuals to a reference population, whereas Trait-Map® is ipsative, focusing on the internal composition of traits within an individual.
- **Suitable Use Cases:** Both tools are suitable for strengthening various talent processes, including employee selection, leadership development, succession planning, and broader talent management initiatives. The HPI is often complemented by the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), which identifies personality-based performance risks and "derailers"—behaviors that can impede work relationships or productivity, particularly under stress (Hogan Assessments, n.d.b). Both tools have a similar purpose; the difference lies in how they address and support versatile use cases.

#### 5. NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R)

- **Personality Model:** The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) is a comprehensive personality inventory that assesses individuals on the five dimensions of personality consistent with the Big Five model: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C). In addition to these five broad domains, the NEO PI-R also reports on six specific subcategories, or "facets," for each Big Five trait, totaling 30 facets (PAR, n.d.; Wikipedia, n.d.).

- **Underlying Theories:** The NEO PI-R is a cornerstone of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality, developed by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae. Its development began in 1978, with subsequent updated versions (NEO PI, NEO PI-R, NEO PI-3) refining its vocabulary for broader accessibility (Wikipedia, n.d.). While widely used, the FFM has faced criticism regarding its atheoretical nature and construct validity from some academic perspectives (Wikipedia, n.d.).
- **Measurement Method:** The full NEO PI-R consists of 240 items (descriptions of behavior) answered on a five-point Likert scale. Both self-report (Form S) and observer-report (Form R) versions are available. Shorter versions, such as the 60-item NEO-FFI (NEO Five-Factor Inventory), also exist for quicker assessments. Scores are typically reported to test-takers with brief explanations and strengths-based descriptions of domain levels (Wikipedia, n.d.). The NEO PI-R has been translated into over 40 languages (Wikipedia, n.d.).
- **Similarities with Trait-Map®:** Both assessments are fundamentally based on the Big Five model, utilizing its five broad dimensions as a core framework. Both offer a granular approach to personality, with NEO PI-R measuring 30 facets and Trait-Map® measuring 25 traits. Both have undergone extensive development and validation processes.
- **Differences with Trait-Map®:**
  - **Primary Application:** The NEO PI-R is primarily designed for and widely used in clinical and academic research settings, with some adaptations for HR. Trait-Map® is explicitly developed as a workplace application of the Big Five, with work-related item content and a focus on job-fit (OD-Tools, 2024).
  - **Measurement Format:** NEO PI-R utilizes a Likert-scale format, which Trait-Map®'s forced-choice design aims to overcome due to its susceptibility to faking and response biases (OD-Tools, 2024).
  - **Trait Naming/Content:** While both are Big Five-based, Trait-Map® "substantially revised" the IPIP-NEO (a precursor to NEO PI-R) content to be work-related and introduced two innovative traits (Health Management and Observation) not typically found in standard Big Five models (OD-Tools, 2024).
  - **Ipsative vs. Normative:** The NEO PI-R is a normative assessment, comparing individuals to a reference population. Trait-Map® is ipsative, focusing on the internal composition of traits within an individual's profile.
- **Suitable Use Cases:** Due to its comprehensiveness, the NEO PI-R is applicable in a broad range of clinical settings, including counseling, career counseling, psychotherapy, diagnosing personality disorders, psychological assessment, and psychiatric diagnosing. It is also used at the start of therapy to establish baselines, inform prognoses, and determine optimal therapy forms. Shorter versions (e.g., NEO-FFI-3:4FV) are specifically built for HR and career counseling settings (PAR, n.d.). This is in stark contrast to Trait-Map®'s focus on HR applications in the context of work.

## V. Conclusions

The OD-Tools Trait-Map® personality assessment stands as a sophisticated and empirically supported instrument for understanding individual differences in the workplace. Its foundation in established trait theory and the widely accepted Big Five model provides a robust theoretical framework, while its unique forced-choice questionnaire format addresses critical psychometric challenges, particularly the reduction of faking in high-stakes environments. The developers' philosophical stance on ipsative data—viewing personality as an internal composition rather than a normative quantity—offers a distinct lens for interpreting results, emphasizing an individual's unique trait profile.

The comparative analysis highlights several key distinctions and commonalities among other widely used personality assessments:

- **Model Granularity and Type vs. Trait:** Trait-Map® and assessments like NEO PI-R, Facet Five, and Hogan HPI are rooted in trait theory and the Big Five, offering granular insights (25-42 traits/facets). This contrasts with type-based models like DiSC, which provide broader, more intuitive categorizations but may oversimplify individual differences.
- **Measurement Philosophy (Ipsative vs. Normative):** This is a critical differentiator. Trait-Map® embraces its ipsative nature, focusing on the internal hierarchy of traits within an individual. In contrast, SHL OPQ, Facet Five, Hogan HPI, and NEO PI-R are normative assessments, comparing individuals against a larger population. This difference dictates how results are interpreted and applied, with normative data often preferred for external benchmarking, while ipsative data excels at revealing internal dynamics and self-referenced strengths and weaknesses.
- **Workplace Focus vs. Clinical/Broad Application:** While NEO PI-R has clinical origins and broader applications, Trait-Map®, SHL OPQ, Facet Five, and Hogan HPI are explicitly designed and optimized for workplace contexts, with item content and reports tailored for selection, development, and organizational effectiveness.
- **Handling of "Dark Side" Traits:** Trait-Map® integrates the concept of "shadow sides" directly into its trait interpretations, acknowledging that even strengths can become liabilities when overexpressed. Hogan addresses this through a separate, complementary assessment (HDS) for "derailers." This reflects different approaches to providing a holistic view of an individual's personality.
- **Faking Mitigation:** Trait-Map®'s forced-choice format is a deliberate design choice to reduce faking, a feature also present in SHL OPQ. Likert-scale assessments are more susceptible to such biases, necessitating careful validation strategies.

A unique differentiator of Trait-Map® stems from the fact that it was developed by an international team in multiple languages from the very start, making it cross-cultural at its core. Another practical consideration is that Trait-Map® uses standard business language that is free of slang and psychological jargon.

In conclusion, Trait-Map® offers a compelling solution for organizations seeking a nuanced, efficient, and psychometrically sound personality assessment for workplace applications. Its unique approach to forced-choice methodology, coupled with its detailed 25-trait model derived from the Big Five, positions it as a valuable tool for enhancing self-awareness, informing talent decisions, and supporting developmental initiatives. Practitioners should consider its strength in providing high-resolution personality profiles and complement it with other assessment methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of an individual's job fit and work style preferences.

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