

Distinguishing Factors

of The Birkman Method®

What distinguishing factors make The Birkman Method® a superior assessment for selection, executive coaching, leadership development and team building?

A. Situational Variance

Plainly speaking, the more an assessment measures, the more predictive it is and the greater the level of understanding it provides. The literature (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004; Terborg, Richardson, & Pritchard, 1980; Tett & Burnett, 2003; Zaccaro, 2007) strongly demonstrates that the following three distinct factors account for the large majority of variance in job performance, job satisfaction and other workplace criteria:

- 1) *Characteristics of the individual,*
- 2) *Characteristics of the situation and*
- 3) *Interaction of the individual and the situation.*

The Birkman Method® measures all three factors in detail, which maximizes its potential for predicting and understanding performance and job satisfaction (Birkman, et al., 2008). The Birkman Method® also distinguishes both differences of kind and differences of degree, which maximizes its potential to describe the individual within the situation, and the options for dealing with issues or concerns.

Note: Most assessments categorize individuals based solely on personal characteristics and omit all of the situational factors. A few instruments account for the intensity of each trait measured (Pittenger, 2005). Of those, most only measure the characteristics of the individual and predict whether a situation is favorable or non-favorable. This type of situational classification is subjective, too broad, and not useful for practitioners. Birkman International knows of no other instrument other than The Birkman Method®, that provides specific, client-centered, problem-solving prescriptions for the issues most likely to affect the client.



B. Social Desirability/Faking

Social Desirability is defined as “a tendency to create a good impression or to respond, either deliberately or unintentionally, in a socially desirable manner” (Messick, 1960). The Birkman Method® not only acknowledges the existence and influence of social desirability, but applies its influence to prediction and validation (Birkman, 1961; Larkey 2002; Mefferd, 1972). The Birkman Method® defines social desirability and uses it to predict important personal and interpersonal dynamics.

A quick review of the common assessments reveal that few other assessments accurately account for social desirability. They either ignore it, pretend it does not exist, or state that it exists but does not hinder the ability to interpret results (Hogan & Nicholson, 1988; McCaulley, 2000). All three of these approaches to social desirability are insufficient and potentially detrimental to the employee and the organization, according to the empirical findings in organizational psychology (Heggstad, Morrison, Reeve, & McCloy, 2006; Mueller-Hanson, Heggstad, & Thornton, 2003; Pittenger, 2005).

Are social desirability and faking important in assessments? Yes! The literature (Block, 1990; Wash, 1990) strongly demonstrates that social desirability exists and is a factor that influences how employees complete personnel assessments. It also shows that ‘Faking/Integrity’ scales provide very little help in filtering out or correcting for social desirability (Ellingson, Sackett, & Hough, 1999).

In summary, The Birkman Method® was developed based on Dr. Roger Birkman’s “Informed Empirical” approach, which takes into account situational variance and social desirability factors and uses them to increase the validity and predictability of the instrument. As a result, The Birkman Method® does not describe an individual in a vacuum but rather in the complex, dynamic reality of the workplace (Birkman, 1961; Larkey 2002; Mefferd, 1972; Sadler & Mefferd, 1971). By contrast, other assessments do not adequately account for situational variance due to the situation or social desirability.

