

Drawing Implications from Themes

The final step in the self-assessment process involves identifying the career and job implications inherent in a set of themes. The ultimate purpose here is to translate the basic assessment into a more useful form.

It is often possible to identify some job and career implications directly from each theme. If the theme is “short attention span,” then one might reasonably conclude that “a job requiring concentrated attention on one task for long periods might prove unpleasant.” One could approach this final step in the self-assessment process in just this manner—by taking each theme, one at a time, and looking for what it implies regarding job or career.

Having done that, you should then look for overlaps or connections between and among themes that confirm your preliminary list of implications or add to it.

Procedure

First, group together all the themes that overlap or are strongly related. For example, suppose one had three themes that related to one’s way of thinking and approaching problems and tasks: “doesn’t like detail,” “very systematic,” and “future-oriented.” These themes would be grouped together. So would the two themes “needs to be number 1” and “needs people contact,” which speak to what one wants from life. And so should the three themes “dislikes crowded living,” “nature very important,” and

“strong affiliation with family (who live in Oregon),” which all relate to life style preferences.

Some themes, of course, because they overlap a number of other themes in a number of different ways, will end up in more than one grouping. Some themes may not fit into any groups—they seem to be quite independent of the others. The overall grouping shown in Exhibit 21-1 is a sample of the typical kind of result of this process.

You can translate each grouping into an initial set of implications by writing a phrase, sentence, or sentences that seem to capture what is being expressed in the themes. For example:

Themes	Implication
1. Likes immediate feedback.	This person should seek work that rewards systematic approaches to practical problems and that does not require initiative or creative responses to a lot of uncertainty.
2. Prefers planning ahead.	
3. Pragmatic.	
4. Has disciplined responses to uncertainty.	

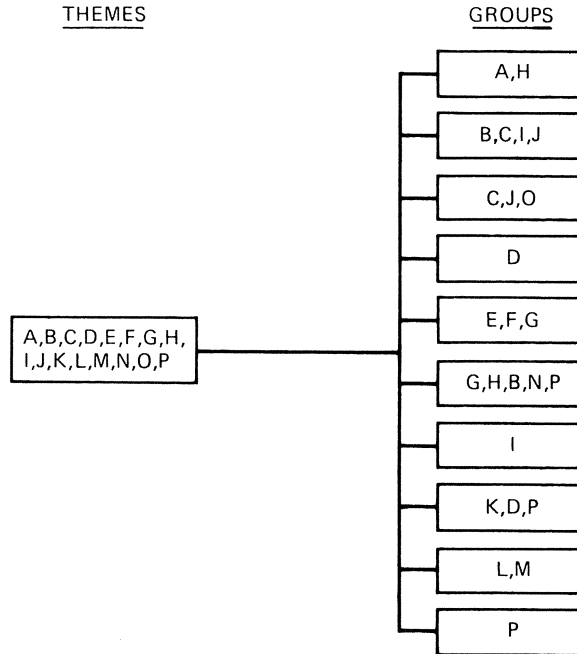
Guidelines

Some people find the process of grouping themes together and identifying their implications difficult. Here is a step-by-step method that may help such people:

1. Generate an initial set of implications, even if the process seems awkward and uncomfortable.

Exhibit 21-1

Typical First Grouping of Themes



2. Evaluate your results in light of three criteria: (a) Do the implications overlap to a minimum and yet take into account the overlap inherent in the themes? (b) Do the implications speak about all the characteristics and behavior that are obviously relevant to job and career questions? (c) Do the implications take into account all the information in the themes? If your implications satisfy these criteria, your task is over. More often than not they won't, and you will have to continue in an iterative process of making modifications until they do.

3. If your implications have ignored a theme or themes correcting this is easy. Take the theme and see if it fits into any of the groupings. If it does, change the implication based on this new addition. If it doesn't fit into any existing grouping, identify and add a new implication directly from the theme itself.

4. If some implications still seem to overlap significantly, the problem probably lies in a poor grouping of themes. By going back and trying different theme groupings, you can eliminate the problem by trial and error.

5. If the implications don't seem to speak to some career and job issues, clearly identify what those issues are and then go back to see if any of the themes speak to them. If you can find one or more relevant themes, group them together and add a new implication.

To aid in assessing whether an initial set of implications speaks to all the basic job and career issues, we have found questions of the following type to be useful:

1. Does this set of implications tell us anything about what types of people (if any) this person likes to be with and work with?
2. Does it say how he or she likes to relate to people?
3. Does it tell us what types of tasks this person prefers to work on?
4. Does it suggest what types of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards he or she prefers?
5. Does it say what types of environments this person strongly likes or dislikes?

Sometimes you will identify an issue that an initial set of implications does not address, and upon checking find that none of the themes addresses it either. If the themes have been developed properly, then you can do nothing except leave this void in the set of implications. It is very important that you not go back to raw data and try unsystematically to create an implication to fill some void.

Finalizing a Set of Implications

One final task should be completed before you stop working on your implications. Insofar as possible, you want to try to differentiate the implications in terms of importance. In a typical self-assessment, some implications are more important than others. The more clearly this is specified, the more the assessment will help you to choose among different "good" job and career options.

To differentiate implication statements by importance, you need only work backward to trace the information each is based on. For example, an implication statement derived from three themes, each based on fifteen data from five different data-generating devices, probably is speaking to a more central and important issue than one derived from a single theme based on eight data from three devices. Your own judgment is crucial here, of course, and it cannot be replaced by mechanical rules.

The best test of whether you are finished writing your self-assessment, or whether it still needs some work, is your own opinion of it. If you feel that your set of implications is sound, accurate, and useful—your task is done. If you don't feel that way, you need to keep working until you do. *You are the one who will have to use your self-assessment, and if you don't believe it, you won't use it.* We have found that when people really believe in their self-assessment, not only do they use it, but their belief heightens their energy and motivation to overcome job and career obstacles that frustrate and stop many others. Accurate self-

knowledge in which one has confidence can be a tremendous source of power for an individual.

Assignment

The themes that Steven and Carrie developed in their Self-Assessment Papers are listed below. Choose one list or the other and develop a set of implications for the kind of work each should be seeking.

Next, consider how this list of implications might be prioritized. What criteria could one use? Which would you use? Why?

Then reread your list to see if you have addressed the major aspects of life. Do you have implications for work? Play? Personal style? Cognitive style? Interpersonal style? Life style? Recreation? Educational activity? Family activity? Financial activity? Job tasks? and so on. Do not accept this list as exhaustive; rather consider other dimensions of life that seem important to you, and look for any implications that their themes lists may have on that dimension.

Steven Taylor's Themes List

Self-Assessment Themes (Plus Three)

Steven Taylor is a person who:

1. Requires a balance in work and personal life.
2. Plays a little fast and loose with traditional customs.
3. Thrives in an unstructured environment.
4. Is demanding of self—a drive for continuous improvement.
5. Has a need for intellectual stimulation.
6. For whom family is important.
7. Can be pompous, but is usually conscious of it.
8. Needs to spend time in outdoor activities.
9. Values independence and self-sufficiency.
10. Cares more deeply about a smaller number of people.
11. Enjoys external confirmation of success.
12. Is demanding of friends.
13. Prefers an active environment.
14. For whom playing music is missing as a part of my life.

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15. Handles crises well.
16. Learns from setbacks.
17. Adapts well.
18. Is restless; likes to get on to the next project.
19. Is willing to take risks to gain greater rewards.

Plus three!

20. Would like to see more of the world and its variety.
21. Senses the emergence of a more contemplative me.
22. Would like to find a place to call home, somewhere I will always come back to.

Carrie Baugh's Life Themes

A summary code word for each theme is given in capital letters after each theme and then the name of the theme cluster to which each theme belongs.

NO. THEME

1. Family is my source of strength and support. (FAMILY/Personal Identity)
2. Carrie values her independence and family over having lasting friendships. (INDEPENDENCE/Personal Identity)
3. Although independent, Carrie needs contact with people. (CONTACT/People-Oriented)
4. Carrie wants to maintain a balanced lifestyle. (BALANCE/Control)
5. Carrie wants to be seen as special and talented. (SPECIAL/Achievement-Oriented)
6. Carrie seeks to learn from new situations. (LEARN/Diversity)
7. Carrie enjoys jobs that utilize both people skills and Analytical/Quantitative analyses. (SKILLS/Diversity)
8. Carrie consults those people she trusts and respects, then makes her own decisions. (TRUST/People-Oriented)
9. Carrie strives to improve herself. (IMPROVE/Achievement-Oriented)
10. Carrie enjoys working in teams. (TEAMS/People-Oriented)
11. Carrie is practical. (PRACTICAL/Personal Identity)
12. Carrie sets goals, then works hard to accomplish them. (GOALS/Achievement-Oriented)
13. Carrie tends to make unstructured environments more structured. (STRUCTURES/Control)

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14. Carrie enjoys competition and thrives on challenges. (COMPETITION/Achievement-Oriented)
15. Carrie is results-oriented. (RESULTS/Achievement-Oriented)
16. Carrie likes to feel in control of her time and actions. (CONTROL/Control)
17. Carrie has a hidden passion for performing. (PERFORMING/Achievement-Oriented)
18. Carrie enjoyed living in San Francisco and likes the culture and diversity of a larger city. (URBAN/Diversity)
19. Carrie enjoys helping others. (HELPING/People-Oriented)
20. Carrie enjoys participating in sports. (SPORTS/Diversity)
21. Carrie enjoys playing the piano. (PIANO/Diversity)
22. Carrie tries to be tolerant of different types of people. (TOLERANCE/People-Oriented)
23. Carrie dislikes long commutes to work. (COMMUTING/Control)
24. Carrie is prideful. (PRIDE/Personal Identity)