Work Cultures : how professions form subcultures
Comparing an iWAM sample for a profession with a sample for a culture

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Over the last months I got several requests from the kind "we are doing a study about marketing our products in the UK. Can you give me a profile of the work attitude of marketing executives who work in the distribution sector?" This paper describes how such a question can be answered by applying our modeling principles on the iWAM questionnaire.

Collecting the data

While since December 2001 we added some limited occupational categories to the iWAM public database, we currently don't have the amount of data to give a full answer to a question as described above. The best answer would come from selecting a strict sample of people matching the query. In the sample above that would mean getting 20 or more senior sales executives working in what that customer means by "the distribution sector" to fill out the iWAM questionnaire. Given that we know that metaprograms are context specific, it would be even better to give the instruction to fill out the questionnaire for the specific context of making purchases. Lacking that amount of detail and not having the necessary data means that at this moment the correct answer is: "Sorry, I can't help you with that question."

However, our iWAM database has categories such as "Executive/senior management" and "sales/marketing/advertising". For this paper we mined 4 samples from our database. First we'll look at US executives & senior managers, compared with the US cultural profile. Next we'll do the same comparison for the UK. Thirdly, we'll compare sales/marketing/advertising professionals from the US and the UK to their respective cultures.

Making a model

Once we have a group of people, making is model is done as described in the paper I published on September 11th 2002 in the LAB Profile discussion Forum (see web site LABprofile.org). Given we do not know whether the persons who filled out the iWAM questionnaire are successful in their profession, we are limited to building a standard group of that profession (approach 1 as described in the paper mentioned above). In summary, that means computing the average and standard deviation for each of the 48 iWAM parameters. The standard group is then defined as the area between `mean - 1 stdev` and `mean + 1 stdev`. If we presume that the population can be interpreted as a "normal distribution", we know that approximately 2 thirds of the persons tested fall into the area defined as standard group.
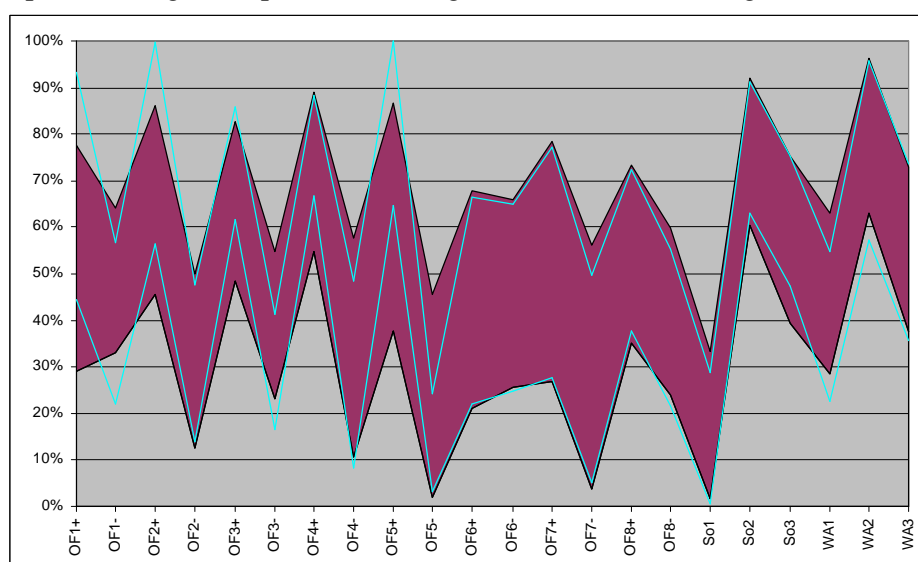
Explaining the models

To make sense of the resulting standard group, we can compare this standard group to standard group representing the country's culture as a whole. The average sample size is only 25, which is a bit on the small side for drawing general conclusions, but which is enough to give a good indication of the kind of observations one can make, especially when our findings are confirmed by other studies. Where our findings are different from other studies, the results should be looked at with some precaution.

I have chosen to represent the results graphically, comparing the models for the profession with their cultural model. An explanation of the parameter names below the graphs can be found in Appendix 1.
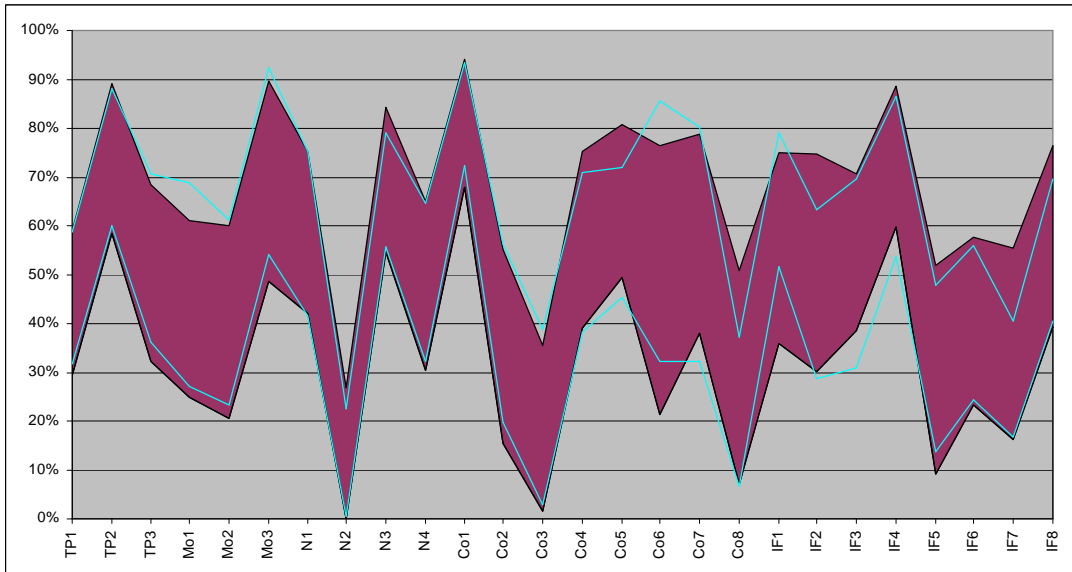
Model 1: US Executives & Senior Managers

Figure 1 represents the first 22 parameters from the iWAM questionnaire. The purple area indicates the US Standard Group commonly used by the iWAM software (built in October 2001, n=231). The blue lines indicates the standard group for the executive/senior management group (consisting of 26 persons working in the US, tested during 2002).

First notice that for many parameters the group for the model is quite different from the US standard group and often the group for the model is much smaller. From looking at these differences, we can conclude how executives and managers differ from the average population. Especially when the differences are large, these would be confirmed when comparing the means of both samples (using T-tests). Parameters only showing small differences would probably show up as not being significantly different when using T-tests.
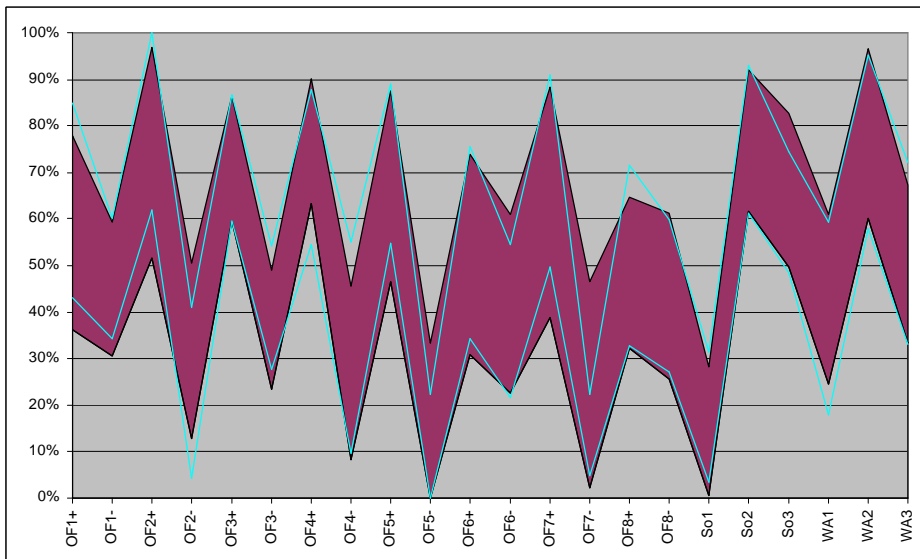
From our visual analysis we learn that the executives and senior managers are much proactive than the average population (OF1+), have less patience (OF1-), are more goal oriented (OF2-), are more internally referenced (OF3+) and listen less to other persons (external reference, OF3-). Furthermore, they are more options oriented (OF4+) and are less likely to follow procedures (OF4-). They look at the big picture (OF5+) and are less concerned with details (OF5-). Finally, in their work approach there is less willingness to do things themselves (see WA1: "use"), which is consistent with the notion that managers should delegate in stead of doing things themselves. These findings are confirmed by other studies.

Figure 2 represents the other 26 iWAM parameters in similar fashion. We can see that the group of executives and senior managers is more motivated by power and status than the average population (Mo1). For deciding whether someone is good at the work they do, they require more consistency (Co6) but are less interested in doing things together (Co8). Most executives and senior managers are people oriented (IF1), are less interested in tools (IF2) and a bit less to systems (wider range for IF3, especially downwards) and finally pay less attention to timing and specific deadlines than the average population.
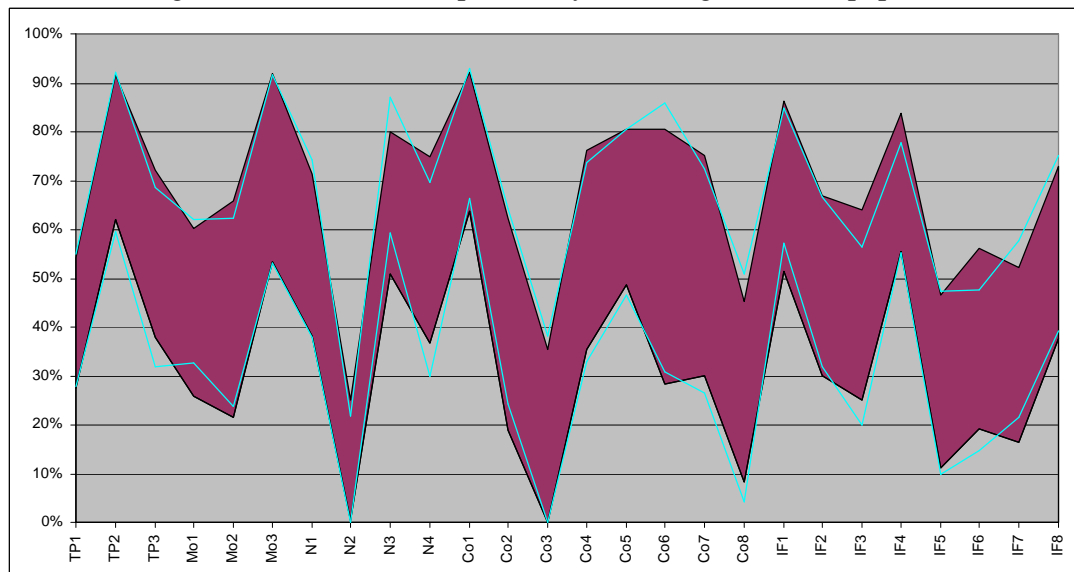
Model 2: UK Executives & Senior Managers

For the second model we proceed in a similar fashion as we did for the model above. Figures 3 and 4 show the comparison of 24 executives and senior managers working in the UK tested in 2002 with our 2001 UK standard group (n=104). In addition, we can also compare this sample to their US counterparts by analyzing how the blue lines on these 2 figures compare to the blue lines on the previous 2 figures.

As was the case for their US counterparts, this group is more proactive than the general work population (OF1+ higher, OF1- lower) and is more goal oriented (OF2+). If we compare the British manager to our previous US sample, they are more willing to wait (OF1- higher) and listen more to others (higher on OF3-). They seem to be less interested to search for alternative ways of doing things (larger standard group for OF4+). Actually, the range for OF4+ is even wider than for the average UK population, as is the range for procedures (OF4-), which means that the sample is more spread out for these 2 parameters. As expected, the group looks more at the big picture (high on breath: OF5+, low on depth OF5-) than the general population, but it's less outspoken than for their US counterparts. Both in comparison to the gene-

ral population and especially when compared to their US counterparts, they tend to pay more attention to the non-verbals (OF6+ higher) and less to how things are said (OF6- lower). Managers tend to appreciate social contact but compared to their US counterparts, they like more working with others (higher OF7+, lower OF7-) and require less that their office door is closed. Some UK managers want more sole responsibility than the general UK population (OF8+).
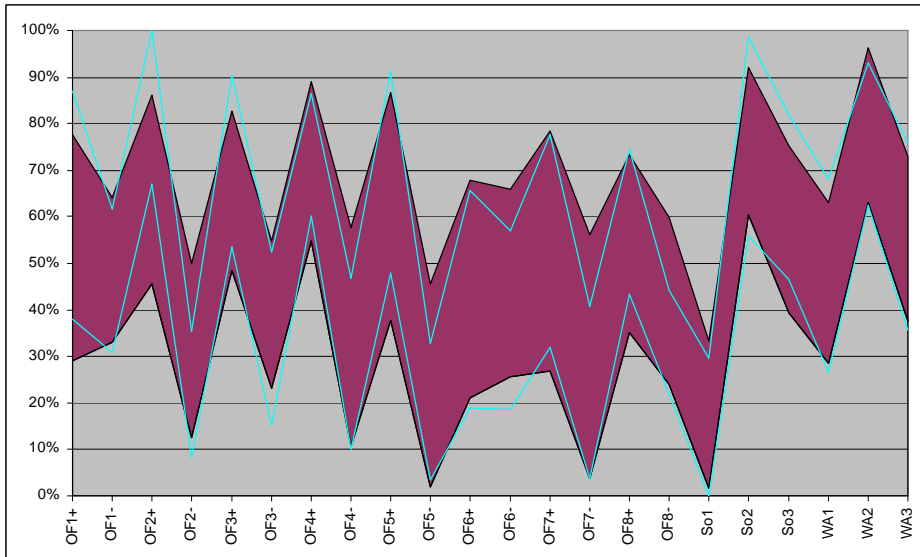

When analyzing figure 4, we learn that while managers are more motivated by power and status than the average UK work population, in comparison to their US counterparts Power (Mo1) is less important for the British. When comparing to the general UK population, we notice a higher willingness to be the kind of person the organization wants (higher N3) and less tolerance for diverging behavior (N4). Their people orientation (IF1) is similar to that of US management, but given cultural differences between the US and the UK, it's more in line with the UK average. Finally, compared to US managers their attention for systems (IF3) is even smaller but they pay more attention to time (IF7) than US executives.
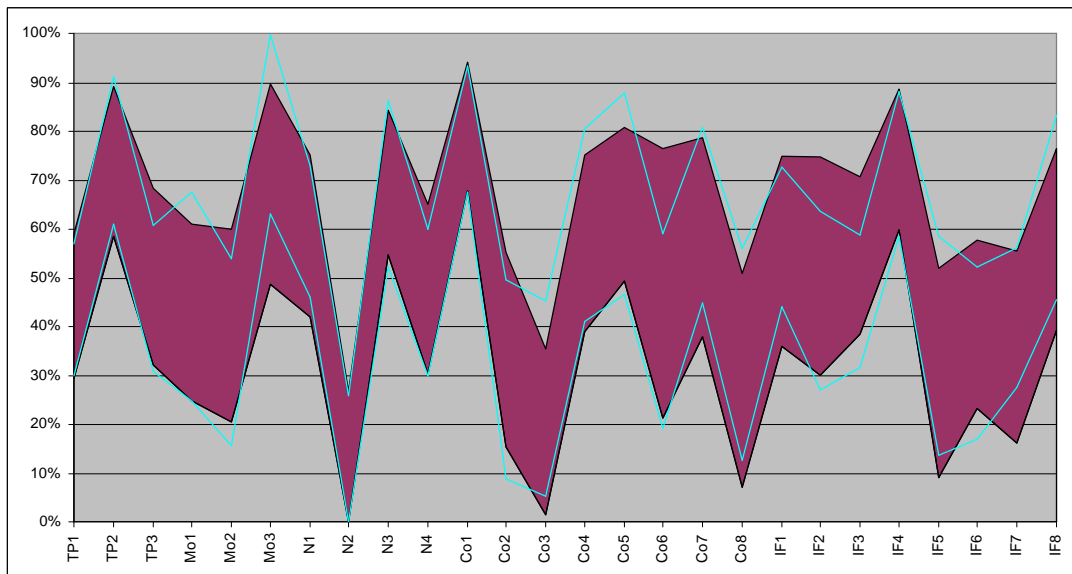
Model 3: US persons active in Sales/Marketing/Advertising

Again we compare a sample of 25 persons to the US standard group. The aggregated group for sales, marketing and advertising is more diverse in terms of attitude than for executives and senior managers. Other studies have concluded that some types of sales may be more procedural (high on OF4-) while marketers and advertising specialists are more options oriented and are known for preferring new things (high on So3). Aggregating these 2 professions in one group may thus balance out typical differences.

Yet, even with this warning in mind, figure 5 below allows us to conclude that persons active in sales, marketing & advertising are also more proactive (OF1+) than average and share the goal orientation drive (OF2+) with executives, but have more difficulties dealing with bad news (OF2-) while having more patience (OF1-) than US executives. In contrast to managers, for sales functions it's more important to listen to what the customer thinks, so it doesn't come as a surprise that there is more attention for external reference (OF3-). If the population had been a pure sales population, we would have expected a smaller range for that parameter, higher on the scale. As senior managers, they are less interested in procedures (OF4-) and details (OF5-). They like social contact at work (hate being alone: low OF7-) and want sole responsibility and cannot be considered good team players (high on OF8+, low on OF8-). They tend to like evolution, change and new things (higher on So2 & So3).
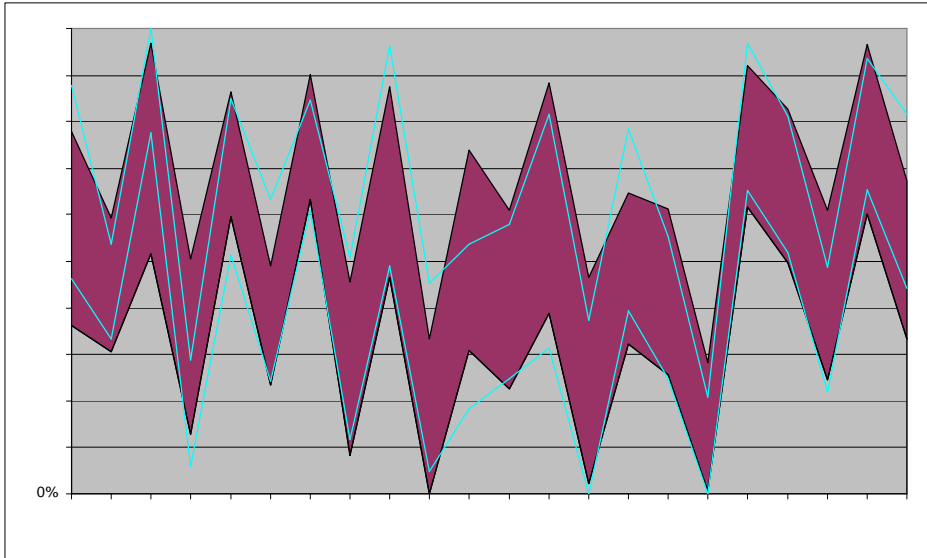
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From Figure 6 we learn that they are less interested in the future (TP3) than the average US work population (and than executives), have a higher status (Mo1) and achievement (Mo3) motivation, have learned to read reports and figures to know whether someone is doing good work (Co3) but in contrast to senior managers they don't think that it needs to proven time after time whether someone is good (low on Co6). They aren't outspoken people oriented as the senior managers were (IF1: within standard group: smaller than the cultural group), but share the lack of interest for tools (IF2) and systems (IF3), while being a bit more money oriented (higher upper limit of standard group for IF5) and more interested in doing things (IF8).

Model 4: UK persons active in Sales/Marketing/Advertising

For this last model we compared 25 persons to the UK 2001 standard group. In addition, comparing the sample to their US counterparts may again bring us some interesting observations.

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the organization needs (N3), as do their US counterparts and do not appreciate deviant behavior (N4). These patterns become especially visible when compared to the UK work culture. Again, we find the same convincer patterns as for their US counterparts, with similar differences from the general population. Their interest for people (IF1), tools (IF2), systems (IF3) and time (IF7) is higher than for their US counterparts, while they are far less concerned by what they are doing (IF8).

Conclusions

This paper has shown how the iWAM database can be used to analyse work cultures, both on a country level as on a job level. Still, this kind of analysis has its limitations. First, the iWAM database is too small to draw "final" conclusions about these differences, especially when the findings aren't similar to what can be found in the literature. Secondly, given that the iWAM questionnaire is context specific, we would like more precise data samples to give detailed answer to questions as the one presented in the introduction to this paper. Even with these warnings, the findings in this article present some learnings. First, it indicates that different professions need to be approached in different manners. Secondly, using an approach that works in the US may not work in the UK, both because of general cultural difference but even because of job specific differences.

References:

Merlevede, Patrick (2002), Models of Reference, published on labprofile.org (sept 11th, 2002)

Appendix 1: iWAM Profile Parameter Overview

Basic Profile: Operating Factors

Note: jobEQ considers the BP patterns as **double patterns**, in stead of the single pattern as they were considered by Rodger Bailey. In contrast to the other patterns (below), Rodger's model does aggregate the + & - patterns as if they are on one scale – given the statistical data collected for iWAM (statistical clustering), we found that the correlation of most of there related patterns was less than 50%.

		+	- (same in reverse)
BP1	action *level*	**Starts**: (OF1P) has energy for initiation and may be impatient (impulsive / *proactive* / action)	**Follows**: (OF1M) has patience & can wait (serenity, endurance, persistence, reflective, reaction)
BP2	**action** *direction*	**Approach:** (OF2P) is goal oriented & motivated by goals, can maintain focus over time (goal focus/toward)	**Avoid (Prevent)**: (OF2M) focuses on problems and errors (problem focus/away from)
BP3	evaluation reference	**Internal (Individual motives)** (OF3P) internal reference frame for evaluation: decides for him/herself - ignores or interprets feedback, does not want to hear what others think	**external satisfiers or expectations** (OF3M) external reference frame for evaluation: needs outside help to decide - needs feedback, cares what others think
BP4	**task attitude**	(OF4P) creates, generates **alternatives** & new *options*	(OF4M) wants and needs to follow **procedures** Note: possibility / necessity (IPU Profile, MPVI)
BP5	task orientation	**Breadth:** (OF5P) understands the overview and the big picture (overview/*general*/global/)	**Depth**: (OF5M) needs to work with details and sequences / exactly (*specific*/detail) - information
BP6	communication sort	**Nonverbal (Affective)**: (OF6P) communicates nonverbally	**Neutral** (content)**:** (OF6M) assumes that all meaning is in the text / may even disapprove overt emotion
BP7	**work environ- ment type**	**Social Contact (Group)**: (OF7P) needs contact with others	**Social Independence**: (OF7M) doesn't need contact with others, wants to work independent, alone
BP8	work assignment type	(OF8P) Needs to have **sole responsibility** for his/her task (*independent*)	(OF8M) wants **shared responsibility** with the *team*

the patterns in both columns might be seen as pulling the person in the opposite direction

Relationship Sorting (The clock/need for change)

needs to change significant aspects of the job every X years

So1= sameness/**similarities**/stability   So2= **comparison**/improvement/qualification   So3= new, difference/change/**distinctions**

Motivational Types: Hierarchical Criteria - Basic Motive: (McClelland, 1953)

Mo1= motivated by opportunities for control and power, status, competition (winning), politics, **dominance**, preservation, in charge, boss

Mo2= motivated by opportunities to belong (affiliation), connection, relationship, cooperation, **popularity**, harmony, inclusion, respect, friend

Mo3= motivated by opportunities to achieve (success/achievement), competence, **performance**, intelligence, objectives, results, expression, manager

Work Approach (Task Sequence / Distribution of energy)

How does this person sequence their tasks?

Wa1 = % takes action (use) - **activist**

Wa2 = % analyze and theorize / understand (concept) - **theorist**

Wa3 = % organize and establish the relationship between the parts / structure, plan (structure) - **structurist**

Temporal Processing (Time Orientation)

TP1 = % focuses on the **past**, and may tend to be critical

TP2 = % focuses on the here and now (**present**), and may be practical

TP3 = % focuses on the **future**, and may be a dreamer

Norming - Rule Structure (Respect for the norms)

N1 = % needs to tell others how to behave (*my/my*) - rules **assertive** - universalism

N2 = % is indifferent (does not care) about others (*my/.*) - rules **indifference**

N3 = % wants to adapt to the needs of the organization/boss - rules **complacent**

N4 = % tolerates the non-conforming behavior of others (*my/your*) - rules **tolerant** - particularism

Convincer patterns - To be convinced, needs to:

Input Representation	Interpretation process
CO1= *see* (it looks right)	CO5= % needs some *examples* to be convinced
CO2= *hear* (it sounds right)	CO6= % is *automatic*ally convinced
CO3= *read* (it makes sense / list of reasons) - information & instructions	CO7= % is never quite convinced (**consistent**)
CO4= *do* (it feels right)	CO8= % needs some time to be convinced (*period of time*)

Interest Filters (work preference / Focus of attention)

What are the most important things to focus on? (whatever types of things the person focuses on, need to be in the person's environment)

IF1 = % **people** (who)	IF5 = % **money**
IF2 = % **tools** and instruments	IF6 = % **place**, location (where)
IF3 = % **systems** and processes	IF7 = % **time** (when)
IF4 = % **information** / data / facts/ knowledge (What/why)	IF8 = % **activity** / task / do (what/how)