

Wanted and Expressed Interpersonal Needs & the FIRO-B[®] Assessment

FIRO-B[®] stands for Fundamental Interpersonal Relation Orientation - Behavior and was originally created for use with high-stress naval warship teams to help them work together most effectively.

Scores in each of the interpersonal need areas not only objectively measure interpersonal needs, but also provide key insights into behaviors and motivations.

In the FIRO-B[®] personality framework, everyone has three interpersonal needs in two dimensions:

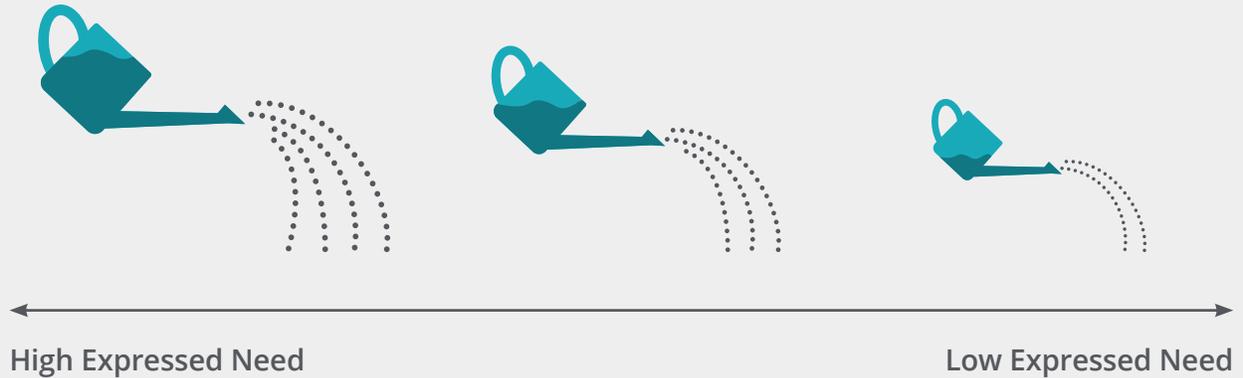
- Wanted Inclusion
- Wanted Control
- Wanted Affection
- Expressed Inclusion
- Expressed Control
- Expressed Affection

For each of the six interpersonal need areas listed above, people can score low, medium, or high.

Watering Plants Analogy

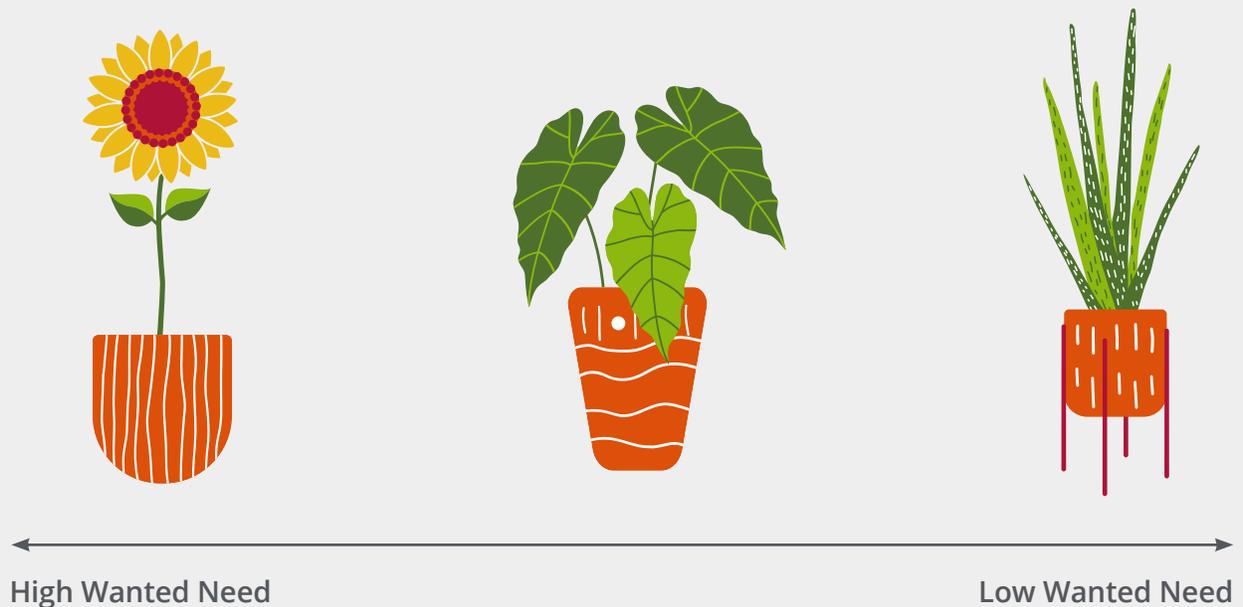
Another way to think about interpersonal needs uses the analogy of plants that need different amounts of water.

Expressed Interpersonal Needs – Watering cans



A high Expressed need is like a large watering can with a lot of water to give. Conversely, a low Expressed need is like a small watering can, with much less to give before it's empty.

Wanted Interpersonal Needs - Plants



A high Wanted need is like a plant that thrives on a lot of water, such as a sunflower. Conversely, a low Wanted need is like a plant that doesn't need much water to do well, such as a cactus.

If someone has a high Wanted interpersonal need, it takes more behaviors directed towards them before that need is met. In other words, they're a plant that requires a significant amount of water to thrive.

On the other hand, a low Wanted score is like a plant that needs less water – say for example a cactus. Similarly, people with a low Wanted need don't need much before that interpersonal need is met.

Having a high Expressed need (for Inclusion, Control or Affection) is similar to having a large watering can. Conversely, having a low Expressed need (for Inclusion, Control or Affection) is like having a much smaller watering can to pour from.

Need for Inclusion

This is how an individual relates to a group—especially useful in hybrid working environments. Wanted Inclusion is how much an individual wants to feel included by others in the group. Expressed Inclusion is how much that individual works to make sure others in the group feel included.

“When we look at the scores on the FIRO tool, they're at the intersection of selectivity and frequency,” says Dr. Marta Koonz, Depth Psychologist and Principal Consultant & certification faculty member at The Myers-Briggs Company. “High Wanted Inclusion is about high frequency, low selectivity. I want to be included most of the time, by most of the people.”

Leaders with high Wanted Inclusion

Here's an example of a leader with high Wanted Inclusion in a hybrid workplace: “In the workplace, high Wanted Inclusion can feel to others like micromanagement. This leader wants to be included in things, but when working virtually or in a hybrid workplace, they don't usually have a chance to drop by people's desks or check-in with people around the table,” says Dr. Koonz.

“For employees of managers with high Wanted Inclusion, it could feel like, ‘...the boss is calling AGAIN? Why can't they just let me do my job?’ But the manager with this score is only doing this because they want to feel included in the group or even sub-group. In this case, the manager isn't trying to run any meetings or control the situation, but rather is making sure they're included.”

This situation could work well when the employees under this manager have high Expressed Inclusion scores. Expressed Inclusion is how much someone makes sure that other members are part of the group (not how much they themselves want to be part of the group).

If the manager has high Wanted Inclusion and the team has high Expressed Inclusion, both groups are getting their interpersonal needs met by the other. Remember, though, that needs don't always match up as easily as this. If the rest of the group has a low Expressed Inclusion score, they're less likely to reach out as often as might be desired by the leader.

On top of that, the fact that some of the team is working remotely means that it's even harder for a manager with high Wanted Inclusion to connect with that part of the team unless they schedule a meeting ahead of time. In addition to this behavior being perceived by others as micromanaging, it can also erode trust between the team and the manager.

If the team members don't know that their boss has interpersonal needs for high Wanted Inclusion, they're likely to assume (negativity bias) that the behavior stems from the boss not being confident in team members' abilities. They might think the boss doesn't trust them to handle the problem themselves.

On the other hand, when the team is aware and knowledgeable about the psychology of interpersonal needs, they can instead reflect and respond to the needs of the situation and their team, mitigating a negativity bias.

Additionally, the boss would better understand the behaviors and interpersonal needs of the team. The boss would also know that this difference in Inclusion scores is a possible point of contention between themselves and the team. Perhaps they'd be more thoughtful before jumping into all the team's meetings.

Leaders with low Wanted Inclusion

Let's look at another example—a leader with low scores for Wanted Inclusion. What does behavior look like in this case?

"Leaders with low Wanted Inclusion may find that working from home means it can be all too easy to stay disconnected from others. Too much disconnect can have a negative impact by reducing peer feedback opportunities, among other things. Intentional scheduling of regular connection points with team members, colleagues and other leaders would be essential for maintaining a leadership edge for leaders with these interpersonal needs," says Dr. Koonz.

"This leader is fine doing their own thing—they don't feel the need to be invited to things. They're fine working on their own projects, not connecting with people, etc. Now there may be a few select people they connect with but remember frequency

and selectivity. A leader with low Wanted Inclusion will have a low frequency and high selectivity for group interactions."

How can awareness of interpersonal needs be helpful when it comes to change management and coming back to the office?

"I myself have low Wanted Inclusion," adds Dr. Koonz, "and also have an MBTI® preference for Introversion. And these parts of my personality flavor each other. I know that working remotely works really well for me, and I'd struggle if I had to go into an office every day.

"People with low Wanted Inclusion may find that the whole working from home arrangement works really well for them, and they may be reluctant to want to go back to the office. Those with high Wanted Inclusion may be the opposite—they're missing the face-to-face interaction and want to have that interpersonal need for Inclusion filled."

It's also important that leaders understand the individual needs of their employees (vs. taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Knowing each employee's level of interpersonal needs can help the manager to better understand, and work with, their team.

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