

INCLUDES EXTENSIVE PROFILE MATCHING SECTION

3rd edition

Career, aptitude and selection tests

Match your IQ,
personality and
abilities to your
ideal career

Jim Barrett



Career, aptitude and selection tests

THIS PAGE HAS BEEN
INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Career, aptitude and selection tests

Match your IQ, personality and
abilities to your ideal career

3rd edition

Jim Barrett



London and Philadelphia

Whilst the author has made every effort to ensure that the content of this book is accurate, please note that occasional errors can occur in books of this kind. If you suspect that an error has been made in any of the tests included in this book, please inform the publishers at the address printed below so that it can be corrected at the next reprint.

Publisher's note

Every possible effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate at the time of going to press, and the publishers and author cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, however caused. No responsibility for loss or damage occasioned to any person acting, or refraining from action, as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by the editor, the publisher or the author.

First published in 1998 by Kogan Page Limited

Second edition 2006

Third edition 2009

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms and licences issued by the CLA. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside these terms should be sent to the publishers at the undermentioned addresses:

120 Pentonville Road
London N1 9JN
United Kingdom
www.koganpage.com

525 South 4th Street, #241
Philadelphia PA 19147
USA

© Jim Barrett, 1998, 2006, 2009

The right of Jim Barrett to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

ISBN 978 0 7494 5695 5

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Barrett, Jim.

Career, aptitude and selection tests : match your IQ, personality and abilities to your ideal career / Jim Barrett. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-7494-5695-5

1. Occupational aptitude tests. 2. Vocational interests—Testing. I. Title.

HF5381.7.B673 2009

153.9'4—dc22

2009016882

Typeset by Saxon Graphics Ltd, Derby

Printed and bound in India by Replika Press Pvt Ltd

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
Introduction	1
Section 1 – Motivation	15
Introduction	15
Questionnaire 1. Job titles	20
Questionnaire 2. Job activities	28
Interpretation	35
Section 2 – Aptitudes	54
Introduction	54
Verification	58
Formation	66
Physical analysis	75
Verbal penetration	99
Numerical deduction	104
Observation	107
Critical dissection	127
Interpreting your profile	134
IQ	143
Section 3 – Personality	147
Introduction	147
Personality	147
Personality questionnaire	149
Interpretation	157
Section 4 – Profile matching	173
Explanation of test items	187

THIS PAGE HAS BEEN
INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Preface

To help readers benefit as much as possible from this book, I have provided explanations for the aptitude test questions. Where readers may have previously thought items were ‘too difficult’, I hope that, having understood those items better and having gained in confidence, they will feel enabled to perform at their best in future tests. I have altered some items where I have thought clarity in test items might be improved.

THIS PAGE HAS BEEN
INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Introduction

This book has several aims:

1. To give career guidance

I believe that the more you know about yourself, the better your career choices are likely to be. In an increasingly competitive world, it seems sensible to know where you want to get to.

As far as this book is concerned, what is meant by ‘knowing yourself’ are those aspects which are relevant to work. It is thus a practical book, which presents a structured way to relate your various characteristics to career opportunities.

A word of warning here, right at the outset: although the book has a scientific basis, relating characteristics to career success is still something of an art. There are, of course, definite trends: in just the same way that people with certain likes or talents are better at one sport or game than another, so people’s characteristics suit one occupation more than another. However, there are some people – and you may be one – who successfully go against the trend. Therefore, you should treat this book as a guide for your own thinking about your career. In no way does this book aim to provide a definitive solution as to what you can or cannot do.

I have provided some tests and questionnaires, relating these as best I can to different occupations. If you find that your results on the tests and questionnaires do not correspond with a career you believe would suit you, I trust you will not give up your own aspirations. For example, you may be suited to a career on the basis of combinations of characteristics that are different from but just as 'correct' as my own suggestions.

The combinations of motivational, aptitude and personality characteristics which can determine success in any job are enormous. Therefore, I have only listed those which have seemed sensible to me from my own experience. You will see the scheme presented in Section 4, Profile Matching. Use it to provoke your own thinking about your own characteristics, not as a check as to whether you have 'passed' or 'failed'.

The more you clarify your own ideas for yourself the better. Even though you may seek career guidance in this book, it can only be guidance. In the end, it is you who has to decide what makes sense to you, and it is you who has to take responsibility for the choices you make.

2. To prepare for selection situations

It is routine for organizations to give applicants for positions tests and questionnaires similar to those included in this book. They are also given to existing job holders in order to create awareness of potential development in the person's present job, or as a means of assessing suitability for other opportunities within the same organization.

By 'organizations', I mean many industries, businesses, public sector services and authorities, business schools, and so on. In short, it is almost impossible to get through your working life without some exposure to tests and questionnaires. The use of assessment processes based upon tests and questionnaires is expanding. Nowadays, they are administered by the majority of

organizations. If you enjoy them, that is fine, but you are most unlikely to avoid them.

This being the case, there is every reason to become familiar with these various tools and processes. You should try to make them work for you as much as possible. The obvious way to start is to break down any fears you may have about the ‘assessment’ situation. The more familiar you become with these tools, the less likely you are to ‘underperform’ or to give an impression of yourself that is not the ‘real you’. Putting yourself across in the way that allows assessors to perceive you clearly is as important in all assessment processes as it is at an interview.

Why do organizations use these tools? Quite simply, it is to reduce the risks attached to hiring or developing people who turn out to be unsuitable. The financial costs attached to wrong decisions on employment can be considerable. There are usually emotional costs to be taken account of as well. Anything that will increase the probability of success will be taken seriously by organizations.

3. To assist with performance at work

Broadly, there are two ways this book may assist you:

(a) To increase your personal effectiveness

Whatever career you are presently engaged in, or intend to join, you may want to use the opportunities that will exist in the organization to get the most satisfaction you can from your work. For example, your work may not always be just the way you want it. Perhaps the Motivation questionnaires will suggest that you should aim to get more of one type of activity in your work than another. Perhaps you have a personality which will suit doing the job one way rather than another. Perhaps you have a talent for which you do not have enough scope.

Changes in your career may often be achieved without changing the career itself. In many cases, it is seeking an adaptation to the present task, altering the balance of work responsibilities to create the preferred quality of work, rather than radically changing the entire career.

This book is based upon the premise that you are most effective when you are doing what you want and what you are capable of. Like everybody else, you are not fixed, and as you learn more about yourself and your potential, you will seek ways to fulfil yourself at work. The intention is therefore to provide a scheme which enables you to ask yourself whether there are things you want to do and can do that you are not yet achieving. Equally, the book might assist you to ask yourself what you would have to do to achieve what you want.

(b) To increase your effectiveness in working with others

Very few careers are purely technical these days. Although appropriate skills are as essential as they ever were, organizations place a great deal of emphasis upon how employees relate to each other. They know that good relationships at work can affect the speed at which tasks are accomplished as well as the quality of the task. These have a great impact upon the profitability of the organization and are therefore important to organizations, especially those that seek to remain ahead of their rivals.

Organizations which might assess you in this respect are generally far too sophisticated to want everybody to be sociable. Sometimes, they want people to be less sociable, because they have found that the job is done better this way. Salesmen might not need to be sociable, but may need to be socially assertive. Many highly effective leaders of companies that have thousands of employees are independent rather than sociable. What the organization wants is that you relate to others in a way which makes you an asset.

If you would like to read more about how to develop your personal and interpersonal skills in order to influence people, my book *Total Leadership*, is also available through Kogan Page.

Job suitability

One way of looking at personal effectiveness is to use this book to ensure that you get yourself into a situation that accords with your motivation, aptitudes and personality. Although people are sometimes reasonably satisfied simply to have a job, it is difficult to give it your best unless you are really doing what you want to do and can do best. In the short term, you may turn your hand to many activities, but in the long term it is frustrating if what you thought was a broad highway of career satisfaction turns out to be a cul-de-sac.

It is almost inevitable that you will seek to extend yourself as your career progresses. Don't wait until you become bored or frustrated. Don't blame others for not giving you opportunities. If this book enables you to pinpoint what it is that you want to achieve, then it is up to you to find a way to do what you want. If you are already in an organization, this adjustment is almost bound to be beneficial for the organization as much as yourself.

Teamwork

Due to the importance placed upon team working by organizations, this book presents you with a way of examining your personality and how your own 'style' may connect with others. There is no doubt that you have a style, and thus your behaviour has an effect upon others. Whether your behaviour always has the effect you wish, is for you to judge.

One way to understand your effectiveness is to see how your own style is different from those of other people. You may well become more effective as you learn to value people for their different styles, so that you see ways of complementing and compensating for each other.

You may also wish to change your style. This is perfectly possible. 'But', you may ask, 'does not this run counter to the view

that personality is fixed and unchangeable?’ Not at all. Though it is true that personality does not usually change over time – after all, people come to ‘know us’ and rely upon our continuing personal effectiveness – it is only awareness that is necessary to bring about change. Thus, if you see some aspects of your style as disadvantageous, you can certainly change these if you wish. Awareness of where you are now, and where you want to go, is the vital requirement.

In this book, Section 3 – Personality will show you a way to become more aware of your personal and interpersonal impact. Again, if you are keen to develop your awareness of your team effectiveness to a much greater degree, you should find my book *Total Leadership* provides you with the insights you need to do what you want.

Issues concerning testing

Here I would like to address some of the controversies which sometimes arise concerning testing, rather than in Section 2 – Aptitudes, where I would prefer you to be concentrating upon the tests. It is not at all necessary for you to read these comments before taking the tests, so miss this part out if you would prefer to get on.

The value of such a book as this is sometimes questioned, particularly with regard to the validity of aptitude testing. As with all sciences, there are contrasting theories and protagonists take up opposing positions, sometimes vociferously, often denying through their own behaviour the supposed rationality of science. The debates are occasionally reported in the press. Some theorists assert that there is no such thing as an aptitude, and that it is more proper to speak of learned responses. Others make the opposite assertion, that limits upon our achievements are determined by what we are born with.

The literature on learned versus inherited characteristics runs into tens of thousands of volumes. Recently, the evidence has been on the side of the genetic view which is that intelligence, and even specific types of intelligence, do not change over time. I do not intend to revisit all the research. In any case, from my point of view, it really does not matter.

I assume that people do have aptitudes which lead them to become better in one area of study or area of work than others. No other explanation suits my own experience of discovering people's potential. My job as a psychologist has only been to provide some suggestions as to how they might use it, if they want.

Many people are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes people are not sure what they can do. Maybe they have had an education which has not exposed them equally to all those experiences that might have developed their awareness of what they can do. Maybe they have specifically been 'turned off' the pursuit of studies which suit their nature, perhaps by pedagogic limitations, parental expectations, geographic or circumstantial disadvantages.

I may have to remind you of what this book is trying to achieve. It is an invitation to people to think through their aptitudes and relate them to work opportunities. Everybody does this in any case. I am merely trying to provide a scheme – a 'tool', if you like – to assist their thinking. The scheme has limits; for example, there is not a test for musical potential. Those tests I have devised are representative of a universe of other possible tests.

The book does not intend in any way to be prescriptive. It suggests that, if you obtain a certain score on a particular test, you may have a leaning towards this or that career which is believed to have some relationship to the test. That is what is believed. It cannot be asserted with any finality, especially in the individual case, since there will always be some people who become successful in a career, contrary to any test result. This is the nature of statistics, where we are dealing with probabilities, not certainties. Thus, some mathematicians will be better with

words than with numbers, even though we would assert that, as a general rule, more mathematicians will be better with numbers than words.

Therefore, care must be taken to allow for the point that, just because someone has not obtained a certain level on a test, or has a pattern contrary to that given in Section 4 – the Profile Matching section, it does not mean that they cannot succeed in that career. If they are determined and believe in themselves, and really do have the potential, though it may be different from what is presented in this section, they will be successful. Perhaps they will be more successful for having different aptitudes. Section 4 is only a guide; it serves as a basis for thinking through the issues; it may be altered over time if experience shows that other characteristics or scores are more suitable.

What happens if a person does not obtain an above average score on anything? It means that the process has not elicited an aptitude which is superior to other aptitudes within the person, or superior to the aptitudes of other people. This does not mean that the person does not possess aptitudes for different careers. Perhaps other tests might detect them. Perhaps the person might work hard in an area that motivates them, enabling them to perform at a level in ‘real life’ which is above that which is predicted by a short, timed test.

The tests are not, in the end, the ‘real world’ where ‘success’ depends upon so many factors that cannot be predicted by tests, such as a ‘lucky break’ or ‘unique talent’. They are just tests. But that does not mean that they have no purpose either. In just the same way that we might at some point test the depth of the Pacific Ocean, we may gain some information which is more useful to us than simply accepting that it is useless to measure the depth of the Pacific because everybody knows that it is deep!

It would be arrogant to assert that the tests are absolute predictors of anything. They are tests, not final judgements about what people actually can or cannot do. They are intended to provoke thinking about possibilities in what is, after all, an

eminently sensible, natural way – ‘What are my strengths and weaknesses, how do they relate to a career?’ and ‘Do I have aptitudes which I am not taking account of?’

There is a view held by some experts involved with testing that it is unwise to allow people access to tests, since they might reach uninformed conclusions which might in some way be dangerous. I regard it to be a patronizing arrogance to withhold from people information about themselves, which they are perfectly capable of understanding and entitled to use as they wish. I suspect that many ‘experts’ are more intent upon protecting their own interests than the interests of the public.

Remember also that aptitude tests draw attention to the intellectual and practical potential of people who have failed in the education system. For example, the British Armed Forces routinely select and train educational ‘failures’ on the basis of aptitude testing, and continue to use this method because it is seen to work. So do many of our major industries.

It seems to me that a book that contains tests of aptitude fulfils a need many people have for information about themselves, which they often feel denied them during their education.

The mere experience of taking aptitude tests can be beneficial. This is because most people will be exposed to them at some time or other. The sooner they get used to them and understand something about them the better. This should help to dispel any fears and help them to do their best in what might be selection situations. On this side of the Atlantic, the use of aptitude tests to complement, or to replace, examination results, is increasing exponentially.

The process is, admittedly, far from perfect. This is why it must be clear that the guides given in Section 4 – Profile Matching, as well as in other sections, are only guides. In relation to the Profiles, I trust readers to work out for themselves how their own relative aptitudes relate to a career in a way that has as much credibility as my own suggestion.

Aptitudes and abilities

Aptitudes should not be confused with abilities. I admit these are often difficult to tease apart. Present-day capabilities are not aptitudes. Aptitudes are about ‘potential’, which is not necessarily realized at the present time.

To assert that aptitude testing is not useful at predicting anything seems to me to be a limiting, even dangerous opinion. If we adopt this view, we will never discover people with potential beyond the skills that have emerged thus far. Personally, I perceive the genetic view as the more positive one. There is much, much more in our genes than we are aware of. And, for me, the most valuable gene is the gene for imagination, because what we can imagine ourselves doing, we no doubt will.

Many people ask themselves if they have potential for things that they are not aware of at present. For the same reason as I would want to look at skills, which have emerged through experience, remembering that some people’s experience is very different from that of others, so I would want to have an opportunity to look at potential in a similar way for everybody.

Aptitude testing is a way of attempting to put everybody on a level playing field. Even though there may never be such a thing, because life may never be like that, there are advantages in seeing what happens when we do. It is a way of attempting to ‘take stock’ of something which is usually affected, contaminated and distorted by so many other variables, in particular educational disadvantage or prejudice. It is a means of trying to ensure that there is some means to provide an opportunity for people to demonstrate the resources they have.

It is correct to say that, from day to day, people rely upon present-day knowledge and skills, but investigating whether there is potential that people are not aware of, is also correct. Often, the discovery of potential leads to the development of new interests. There is no need to rule one or the other out: they should be complementary.

Sometimes, there is a fear that test-takers may become discouraged, because they do not obtain the high scores they would like. If we treat tools as highly sensitive we may 'project' this sensitivity on to the test-taker. The more we can 'desensitize' the better.

The issue is often whether an average result on a test is lower than is expected. In the first place, the person may come to accept a realistic view of his or her potential. Thus, it may be better to succeed at a career which is just sufficiently demanding, than to continue to fail to obtain entry into a career which really is beyond their potential. Overambition can be stressful. However, there is nothing to stop them attempting, if that is their choice, to carry on and confound everybody's expectations.

In the second place, a low score may indeed mean that their potential has not been revealed by the tests. This will be due to the failure of the test to find that potential, either because the test does not detect their unique potential or because they did not impress themselves upon the test on that occasion. They may do so at another time or seek evidence from other tests, or from alternative sources.

If a person thinks that aptitude tests do not detect his or her true potential, there always remain the conventional tests – examinations, interviews and work appraisal systems. Fortunately, in the end, whatever methods we might use to assist them, people do what they do. Some will find aptitude tests give them useful pointers, others will not.

Comparison

An individual's relative aptitudes make sense only in relation to others. To explain: you cannot say a person is better at words than numbers, unless that person is better at words than numbers when compared with others. Put another way, an individual is too few people upon which to obtain any meaningful information.