

Ideal Psychological Profiles, Different Professions

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Contents:

1) Preamble

2) Universal Success Predictors

3) Typical Psychological Profiles

3A) Typical Personalities in Engineering

3B) Typical Personalities in Finance/Law/Sales

4) IQ and Social Awkwardness

5) Ideal Psychological Profiles

5A) Ideal Personality for Engineering

5B) Ideal Personality for Finance/Law/Sales

6) Genius and Insanity

7) Drugs (Performance Enhancing)

8) Addendum, Quant Funds

9) Relevant Reading

1) Preamble:

“Analyze what high performers do, and adapt it, copy it, or reverse engineer it.” -Illimitable Man

A question as old as time; why do some succeed while others fail? There is no surefire recipe for success in every domain of performance, but for specific domains of performance there are some factors that reliably increase the probability of success (henceforth referred to as ‘success predictors’).

Within this essay the psychological profiles that are *typical* for people working in Engineering and Finance/Law/Sales will be covered, and the psychological profiles that are *ideal* for succeeding in these professions will also be covered.

You will find that many people at the top of these professions have psychological profiles very close or identical to the ‘ideal’ detailed within this essay; that’s why they were able to make it to the top.

Finance, Law, and Sales (abbreviated as F/L/S) are grouped together because the traits needed to succeed in these professions are very similar; if you are a great banker, chances are you could have also become a great lawyer or a great salesman.

2) Universal Success Predictors:

There are certain success predictors that affect performance in every profession, from banking to farming. They include Energy/Industriousness, Stress Tolerance/Neuroticism, and Physical Attractiveness.

For every profession the ideal for performance is to have incredibly high energy levels so you can work 100 hours a week, a high stress tolerance (low neuroticism) so that you’re calm even when there are bullets flying, and to be as good looking as George Clooney so that you benefit from the ‘halo effect’ (good looking men are more likely to be hired, promoted, and win clients than ugly men).

The probability of meeting this ideal is zero, but get as close as you can.

Do what is within your power to maximize your energy levels, maximize your stress tolerance (minimize your neuroticism), and maximize your physical appearance. No matter what profession you work in,

optimizing these variables will increase your chances of success.

3) Typical Psychological Profiles:

Spend some time in the corporate world and you will notice that there are certain personalities typical of different professions.

3A) Typical Personalities in Engineering

Most engineers have a psychological profile that looks something like:

IQ of 120 - 135: Very smart, but not quite a genius

Low Cunning: Somewhat socially awkward. Bad at charming people. Bad at reading body language and vocal tonality.

Low Extroversion: Engineers tend to be more introverted than average. They aren't nervous or fearful of social interaction, but they are annoyed by it; they don't enjoy vapid conversation about inconsequential matters the way an extroverted person would.

Low Agreeableness: For some reason engineers tend to be less agreeable than most people. They aren't psychopathic, but they are somewhat callous and blunt.

Ugly: For some reason those working in engineering tend to not be very physically attractive. I sense it comes from them not putting effort into keeping up their physical appearance. Perhaps it is an extension of their lack of cunning to not care about such superficialities.

As part of low cunning and low agreeableness being in the same person, engineers tend to be *blunt* with their speech. They use StraightTalk, not PowerTalk. They say what they actually think without filter, even when they know it is likely to offend others.

3B) Typical Personalities in Finance/Law/Sales

Those who work in Finance, Law, and Sales have notably similar personalities:

IQ of 110 - 120: Bright, but not nearly as smart as engineers.

High Cunning: People working in F/L/S have good social skills; they are good at charming people, persuading people, reading body language and vocal tonality, lying, and detecting when someone else is lying. Their basic job duties require an above average level of cunning.

Low Agreeableness: The work in F/L/S involves endless zero sum competition and zero sum negotiation. Highly agreeable people cannot tolerate this (they find it to be demoralizing) and get washed out of these professions.

Low Neuroticism: The work in F/L/S is stressful; cortisol inducing. People who rank high on neuroticism can't tolerate this, and are washed out of these professions.

Good Looking: Those working in F/L/S tend to be good looking. This comes from them putting conscious effort into keeping up their physical appearance; they know they have to look good to charm people effectively.

4) IQ and Social Awkwardness:

You might think that smarter is always better, but this is wrong.

There are ways having an extremely high IQ can affect performance negatively. Most notably, people with off the chart IQ scores tend to be hopelessly socially awkward.

Many works of fiction have been created making fun of this dynamic; the TV show ‘The Big Bang Theory’ is an iconic example. Anecdotally, we have all encountered people (usually men) who are intelligent enough to be great engineers yet who are also incapable of charming people.

In an article entitled [‘The Inappropriately Excluded’](#) The Polymath tells us that the ideal IQ for maximizing income is somewhere in the range of 130-135, and at an IQ of 140+ both income and the probability of attaining professional success dramatically decrease.

At an IQ of 120 a person is smart and socially normal (90th percentile intelligence). At 130, a person is extremely smart and substantially socially awkward (98th percentile intelligence). At 140+ a person is a genius and is also hopelessly socially awkward (99.9th percentile intelligence).

In a profession where technical skills mean everything and people skills mean nothing, more IQ points is always a good thing. 130 is better than 120, and 140 is better than 130. Software engineering is a notable example.

In a profession where *both* technical skills and people skills matter, a stratospheric IQ is a disadvantage; to have an IQ of 140+ is a liability. An ideal IQ would be in the range of 120-129; smart, but not to the point of being a socially awkward nerd. Finance, Law, and Sales are all examples of such professions.

5) Ideal Psychological Profiles:

5A) Ideal Personality for Engineering

Ultra High IQ (140+): The smarter the better. If having a stratospheric IQ causes one to be hopelessly socially awkward, then so be it. In engineering technical skills are what matter, not people skills.

High Openness: Rigorous engineering work (R&D to design new technology) involves real creativity, not simply following pre-ordained rules.

Low Extroversion: Introverted, comfortable working alone in silence for long periods of time.

Cunning and Agreeableness: Should be irrelevant to the ability to do engineering work effectively, however, high cunning is an advantage for succeeding in job interviews and office politics (venues involved in every profession), and low agreeableness means higher wages in any profession (since disagreeable people negotiate more aggressively when it comes to salary than agreeable people do).

High Energy, Low Neuroticism, Good Looking: Traits that help with success in any profession.

5B) Ideal Personality for Finance/Law/Sales

IQ of 120 – 125: Smart, but not to the point of being socially awkward and incapable of charm.

Ultra High Cunning: A machiavellian mastermind capable of manipulating people the way Mozart manipulated piano keys.

High Extroversion: Helpful for charming people, including clients.

Low Agreeableness: The work in F/L/S involves endless zero sum competition and negotiation; being low on agreeableness makes a person comfortable with this.

High Energy, Low Neuroticism, Good Looking: Traits that help with success in any profession.

6) Genius and Insanity:

“There is no great genius without some touch of insanity.” -Aristotle

“Psychopaths make good soldiers, traders, bankers – anyone with a detached modality and high stress tolerance. Grandiose narcissists make good salesmen, high energy, persuasive, outgoing, they

believe in the product. Autists make good engineers due to their intense systematising.” -Illimitable Man

To be exceptional you must by definition be unusual. People who are psychologically normal do not accomplish great things, since to be great is to be an outlier.

Autism and Psychopathy are both considered to be psychiatric disorders, yet interestingly enough they also seem to improve performance within Engineering and Finance/Law/Sales, respectively.

If you are a highly functional autist with a high IQ, consider going into Engineering; you could excel there.

If you are a highly functional psychopath with a high IQ, consider going into Finance/Law/Sales.

The thinking of autists is marked by intense systemizing and this seems to be what enables them to be over-represented at the highest levels of engineering talent.

Psychopaths experience zero compassion, zero fear, and are unusually good at manipulating people. In the language of this publication they are extremely low on agreeableness and neuroticism, and are high cunning. These 3 separate traits associated with the disorder known as ‘Psychopathy’ all improve performance in Finance, Law, and Sales.

Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos are highly functional autists who excelled in Engineering.

Steve Cohen and Jordan Belfort are highly functional psychopaths who excelled in Finance.

7) Drugs (Performance Enhancing):

Disclaimer: Under no circumstances should you use any drug without the approval and supervision of a doctor.

At the highest levels of any profession use of performance enhancing drugs is the rule, not the exception.

In order to compete and win at the highest levels, use of drugs is necessary (though not sufficient). Why? Because you have competitors who *will* use performance enhancing drugs, and if you don’t the probability you will be able to keep up with them is practically zero.

In Engineering many micro-dose LSD. This helps facilitate divergent thinking; it boosts their creativity.

In Finance/Law/Sales the use of stimulants is common (Modafinil, Ritalin, Adderall). Some use testosterone (TRT/Cypionate Injections).

Most of the work in F/L/S is *not* very creative, so micro-dosing LSD wouldn’t directly enhance performance. However, the hours are long and require one to be completely alert the entire time; a moment’s inattention could result in mistakes with disastrous consequences. For this reason the use of stimulants is helpful.

Some in F/L/S find testosterone injections enhance their performance since more testosterone means less neuroticism (the exact biochemical mechanism being that testosterone suppresses the stress hormone cortisol) and in this way TRT may enhance performance.

Within Finance in particular the work requires a high degree of willingness to take risks; in some sense financiers have the full time job of taking calculated risks. Many men in finance find TRT to be helpful since having increased testosterone levels enhances their comfort with risk taking.

It is by no means impossible that stimulants would be helpful in engineering or that micro-dosing LSD might be helpful in F/L/S. I have simply observed that as a general trend when engineers are looking for a means of performance enhancement they gravitate towards psychedelics such as LSD, whereas financiers, lawyers, and salesmen gravitate towards stimulants.

8) Addendum, Quantitative Hedge Funds:

The traits typical of quant traders and the ideal psychological profile for succeeding as a quant trader directly mirror the typical and ideal psychological profiles of engineers.

Like successful engineers, successful quant traders tend to be ultra high IQ (140+) and very socially awkward.

9) Relevant Reading:

[Understanding Psychopathy](#) (Illimitable Man)

[Systemizing in ASC](#) (ARC)

[CEOs only have IQ of 115](#) (Lion of the Blogosphere)

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