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The "I Opt" Effect on Values and Beliefs

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Abstract

"I Opt" technology has been historically focused on behavior. It has proven itself a reliable tool to explain, predict and guide this aspect of corporate life. However, the theory that underlies "I Opt" reports and assessments is not limited to this narrow but important area. It has far greater reach.

This article outlines how the processes measured by "I Opt" can generate individual values and beliefs. Just as "I Opt" is able to predict behaviors, their derivative values and beliefs can also be foretold with probabilistic accuracy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"I Opt" technology is most often seen as a tool for explaining, predicting and guiding behavior. It has been very successful in this arena. It has been used at individual and group levels in tens of thousands of cases. It is being applied worldwide organizations of all sizes and descriptions. It has been validated in one of the most extensive academic studies published in the field (Soltysik, 2000). The ability of "I Opt" to work at a behavioral level is well demonstrated.

This article moves "I Opt" technology to the next level. It shows how “I Opt” elections help set personal values and beliefs. The first step in this extension is to give a brief overview of how “I Opt” works to explain and predict behavior.

2. BEHAVIORS

Information processing, as defined and measured by "I Opt," can restrict or facilitate behavioral choices. This happens because each stage of the “input-process-output” model has a direct effect on behavioral options.

For example, "method" defines the character of the input. A person might choose a structured method (an input option) for navigating life. A structured method uses some kind of mapping scheme to govern the kind of input to sought or accepted. One function of structure is to make sure that all of the important aspects of a situation are considered. Anyone using a structured input method will be more detail sensitive than a counterpart who is willing to accept anything available (an unpatterned method). Thus one observable behavior of a structured input method will be a detail orientation. The more structure used, the more detail acquired.

The output side of the equation also causes predictable behaviors. Here the concept of "mode" controls. Mode governs the kind of outcome that a person is likely to seek in addressing an issue. The choice of mode will influence the input method as well as the process applied to that input.

For example, a person can elect an action output mode. This involves resolving an issue through direct action (vs. planning or assessing). This causes a person to focus on operational (vs. theoretical) matters. "How" rather than "why" will dominate the person's interest. A person using an action strategy will always be more "responsive" than an equivalent person using a more thoughtful strategy. The greater the focus on action, the more responsive a person will appear.

Process combines method (input) and mode (output). It generates its own behaviors. For example, anyone using an action orientation will encounter risk, the "chance of loss or damage" (American Heritage, 2000). This damage is potentially painful. Thought can be confined but action will always ramify through an environment and can rebound to "bite" the person initiating it. Life is a serious business for action oriented people.

If an action-orientation is combined with structured method (input) detail will be available. This means the extent of risk is likely to be known in advance. The awareness of risk (input) as well as intent to act (output) is likely to create a cautious posture. This posture repeats over many transactions. Caution will not only apply in a specific instance, it will come to apply generally. A general risk adverse attitude has been created. Thus "process" has created an observable and enduring behavior pattern.

"Input-process-output" elections form stable patterns of behavior. This pattern becomes a strategy for navigating life. Within the "I Opt" paradigm it is referred to as a Strategic Profile. It tends to be "sticky" because it works for the person every day of his or her life. People are reluctant to change things that work.

Other forces are also working to stabilize strategic profiles. For example, practice makes perfect. The more a person uses a strategy the better they get using it. The better they get, the more likely they are to apply it again. The more it is applied, the greater the behavioral stability. The greater the stability, the more predictable is behavior.

On a social level, other people expect a certain kind of performance from those with whom they work. They depend on it. If it disappears they will exercise their influence to reestablish it. They do this because their own behavioral options are partially defined by what other people do. If a co-worker does not do something that was expected, you may have to do it. It is in your interest to see that those around you remain dependable. Your success depends on it. You can be expected to protect your own interest. So will everyone else.

Finally, history has a role. Prior decisions confine the direction of future ones. Someone who has created a wealth of detail on a subject is unlikely to abandon it when addressing another aspect of an issue. Most likely a detailed, cautious stance will be continued. History tends to stabilize profiles into the future as well as in the present.

The interactions built into the input-process-output paradigm combine with the effects of practice, social forces and history to make human behavior stable. This stability is not inherent in humans themselves. It is the outcome of explicit processes that must be used to navigate life. These universal processes make "I Opt" predictions both possible and accurate.

This article is not a textbook on "I Opt" technology. It can only offer the briefest summary of the theory and its derivatives. However, this outline is enough to allow us to proceed to the next step; showing how values can arise from the choice of a particular strategic profile.

3. VALUES

"I Opt" uses ratio measurement to quantify behavioral probabilities. In other words, it has a built-in ruler. It can calculate an exact level of strategy commitment. But, any ratio scale can be reduced to a categorical one. Categorical scales define particular combinations of method (input) and mode (output) as names.

For example, if "I Opt" measures the strongest commitment as "structured action" the person is declared to "be" a Logical Processor. This has the advantage of simplicity at the cost of accuracy. In reality everyone is a combination of everything. However, this simplification gives an easy access to the world of values.

Values are the importance or worth that we attach to things. People tend to exhibit certain behaviors more frequently than others. This suggests that they are favored or more "valued" than their alternatives. A question is "why?" The answer to that question lies in the way the "I Opt" profile is constructed.

The "I Opt" profile quantifies a mix of four distinct categorical elements. These are called Strategic Styles. They represent short-run strategies a person uses to navigate life. People try to use the style to which they are most committed. However, that style will not apply to every situation. When this happens people move to the next strongest strategy. They keep doing this

until they find one that works. This flexibility is what allows people to confront the variety of situations that life presents.

Over time the strategic style with the highest level of commitment will come to characterize a person's behavior. It is the one tried most often and thus has the greatest chance of being displayed. This style will carry with it a particular central focus. That focus will be repeatedly displayed and will come to be seen as a "value" held by the person displaying it.

For example, the structured input and action output of a Logical Processor (LP) creates risk sensitivity. This awareness tends to focus the LP on certainty of outcome—the minimization of risk. Thus a strong LP will come to "value" certainty of outcome as decision making standard. This example shows how "values" can flow from the processes measured by "I Opt." Table 1 shows the likely central focus of people strongly committed to each strategic style.

Table 1
PRIMARY ORIENTATION OF STRATEGIC STYLES

Strategic Style	Input Method	Output Mode	Central Focus
Logical Processor	Structured	Action	Certainty of Outcome
Hypothetical Analyzer	Structured	Thought	Understanding
Relational Innovator	Unpatterned	Thought	Creativity
Reactive Stimulator	Unpatterned	Action	Rapid Resolution

Having a particular focus does not mean that the others completely discounted. Everyone agrees that certainty, understanding, creativity and speed of resolution are all good things. It is only the rank order (i.e., the relative value) that is assigned to these “good” qualities that differs. This rank ordering of values is what is commonly described as a "value system."

Issues naturally arise as people favoring different strategic styles try to work together for a common purpose. In seeking to satisfy their central focus people can frustrate the central focus of others in the group. This condition is graphically shown in Table 2.

Table 2
RANK ORDER PRIMACY OF VALUES

Reactive Stimulator (RS) Unpatterned Action	Logical Processor (LP) Structured Action	Hypothetical Analyzer (HA) Structured Thought	Relational Innovator (RI) Unpatterned Thought
Rapid Resolution	Certainty	Understanding	Creativity
Creativity	Understanding	Certainty	Rapid Resolution
Certainty	Rapid Resolution	Creativity	Understanding
Understanding	Creativity	Rapid Resolution	Certainty

Strategic styles that differ on both method and mode dimensions reverse the ordering of these values. For example, Reactive Stimulator (RS) in Column 1 places understanding last on the rank ordered list. This quality is the least valuable in forwarding the RS's primary focus of speed of resolution.

The Hypothetical Analyzer (HA) is the opposite of the RS in both method and mode. The HA would place rapid resolution in the lowest rank order. This quality is of least value in forwarding the HA's focus on complete understanding. The same logic applies to the Logical Processor (LP) versus the Relational Innovator (RI). They also differ on both method and mode and the rank ordering of their values is similarly reversed. A reversed value list means that satisfying one party will frustrate the other. A natural tension is created.

For example, the rapid resolution sought by the RS will necessarily bar the HA from full understanding. Understanding takes time and quick resolution robs the HA of that needed commodity. Likewise, the creativity valued by the RI will involve new things. New things have yet to be tested and always carry a degree of uncertainty. Creativity thus prevents the LP from realizing their most valued quality. Tension is thus built into any group whose members differ in their strategic styles.

Decisions of any consequence will require the contribution of differing styles. The mix will vary but any mix will generate some degree of tension. The absence of tension indicates that the common effort will probably fail or at least fall short. Organizations are systems of tension and these strains are to be managed, not eliminated.

Each strategic style creates its own behavioral cascade (Salton, 2004). These are sequences of behaviors that typically follow from an initial strategic style response. For example, the more detail that is acquired the more a person will have to rely on logic to keep it sorted out. The more logic that is applied, the greater will be the reliance on “facts”. Logic requires a definitive subject on which to operate. Impressions and possibilities tend to be a bit “squishy.” Thus it is predictable that logic will become “valued” (i.e., a matter of high worth) to a person employing this strategy. With this insight a second level value has been created.

The cascade continues. The more logic is used, the greater the tendency to apply a methodical approach (action output). To do otherwise would be to lose some of the value of the detail collected and its organizing logic. Thus a disciplined, systematic approach is likely to be seen as having a higher worth (i.e., value) than the faster and easier spontaneous option. Still another value is created.

A person using a structured method (input) and action mode (output) would be expected to trade decision time for speed of response. Faster speed would allow more to be done in any amount of time. Thus the person choosing structure is trading quality for quantity. The cascade has thus created still another value—the primacy of quality, an abstract concept denoting a degree of perfection.

Styles are not alone in their ability to create values. It has been noted earlier that most issues involve chains of decisions. They do not yield to a single approach. People will normally shift their style in the order of the strength that each other style is held. Typically the combination of their primary and secondary style is enough to work through an issue. The combination of styles is termed a Strategic Pattern. The dominant pattern is the mix of style behaviors that a person is most likely to display. The patterns created within the “I Opt” paradigm are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3
RANK ORDER PRIMACY OF VALUES

<u>PATTERN</u>	<u>Style Components</u>	<u>Overall Focus</u>
Changer	RS and RI	Implemented creativity
Performer	RS and LP	Completion
Conservator	LP and HA	Perfection in execution
Perfector	HA and RI	Exhaustive evaluation

The style generated cascades that make up a pattern interact with each other. This means that there is a unique combination for each of the “I Opt” patterns. Table 4 shows some of the values and behaviors generated by the Changer pattern (RS and RI combination). Other strategic patterns will generate other value systems components.

TABLE 4
SELECTED CHANGER PATTERN VALUES

<u>VALUE</u>	<u>BEHAVIOR</u>
Expediency	<i>adjusts readily vs. applying fixed principles or standards</i>
Flexibility	<i>adaptable and adroit in handling new and changing situations</i>
Initiative	<i>action without prompting or direction</i>
Inventiveness	<i>produce or contrive something previously unknown</i>
Pace	<i>rate of movement--fast</i>
Passion	<i>personal emotional enthusiasm</i>
Risk taking	<i>comfort in undertakings whose outcome is uncertain</i>
Urgency	<i>earnest and insistent sense of pressing importance</i>

The format of the JOE monograph prevents outlining the values generated by all of the strategic patterns. However, a sense of the range of the values that can be created by processes measured by the “I Opt” profile is shown in Table 5. This is not an exhaustive list. But it does suggest that the reach of these processes in creating values is substantial.

TABLE 5
PARTIAL LIST OF PROFILE SPECIFIC VALUES

Accuracy	Deference	Intensity	Precision
Activeness	Deference	Intuition	Preparedness
Adaptability	Dependability	Intuitiveness	Proactivity
Aggressiveness	Diligence	Inventiveness	Prudence
Agility	Discipline	Liveliness	Realism
Assertiveness	Drive	Logic	Reason
Attentiveness	Duty	Loyalty	Reasonableness
Audacity	Effectiveness	Making a difference	Resolve
Balance	Efficiency	Mastery	Resourcefulness
Boldness	Enthusiasm	Mellowness	Restraint
Calmness	Expediency	Meticulousness	Rigor
Candor	Extroversion	Modesty	Security
Carefulness	Exuberance	Open-mindedness	Self-control
Certainty	Fairness	Openness	Self-reliance
Clarity	Flexibility	Optimism	Sensitivity
Cleverness	Focus	Order	Speed
Concentration	Honor	Originality	Spontaneity
Consistency	Hopefulness	Passion	Stability
Control	Imagination	Perfection	Structure
Creativity	Impartiality	Perseverance	Thoroughness
Curiosity	Ingenuity	Persistence	Understanding
Decisiveness	Inquisitiveness	Persuasiveness	Vitality
	Insightfulness	Pragmatism	

Strategic styles can be held in varying strengths and in different mixes. This means that the value systems that result from them are almost infinite. Since there is no such thing as a bad strategic style, pattern or profile each of the resulting value systems is deserving of respect.

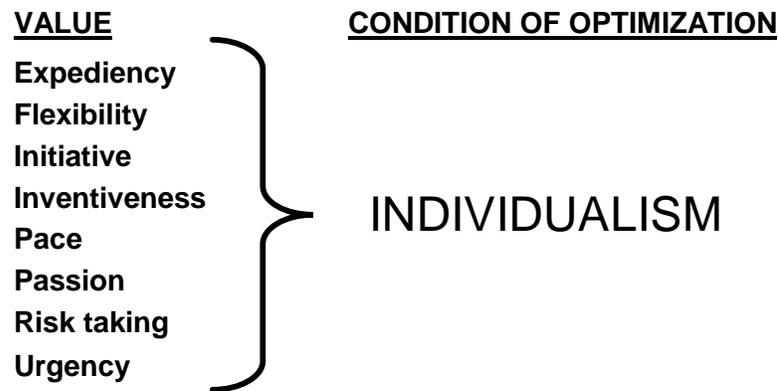
4. BELIEFS

Beliefs are a feeling of certainty that something exists or is true (Cambridge, 2002). A value is one of the things to which a feeling of certainty can attach. For example, the value striving for perfection can easily become a general precept. People come to believe it is the “right” way of doing things—not just for something but for all things. Other values can generate equally valid and appealing beliefs.

The processes underlying strategic profiles generate belief because they are self-validating. The fact that an approach repeatedly works “confirms” that the belief associated with it is correct. Every time it is used the “feeling of certainty” increases. Any "I Opt" strategic approach can create beliefs that have the same self-validating nature.

Entire philosophies can be created from the beliefs generated by strategic postures. For example, the values shown in Graphic 1 are best realized when individual discretion is given maximum play. A thoughtful person is likely to see this common thread running through these values. They might easily come to hold a strong belief in "individualism"—the primacy of the individual over the group.

**GRAPHIC 1
HOW INFORMATION PROCESSING
CREATES PHILOSOPHIC POSITIONS**



The processes measured by "I Opt" create beliefs at every level. Every time a strategic profile is applied and works the certainty associated with values it generates is reinforced. Bundles of these values can combine to create more abstract beliefs and even philosophies. So long as the strategies continue to work to some threshold level, this system is reinforced.

This section has shown how the processes measured by "I Opt" can become of a self-reinforcing system. However, this system does have a path for change. The path is created because people must have at least some ability in each "I Opt" dimension to conduct life. Everyone can use their less preferred strategies if their favored strategy begins to perform below some acceptable threshold level.

If things change in a way to cause the person to use a less favored strategy, the cascade of behaviors, values and beliefs will respond accordingly. The time needed to adjust will depend on

how heavily committed the person is to a particular approach and how often the less favored strategy is used. But, the system is open to change.

This article has covered many of the behaviors, values and beliefs encountered in the corporate world. Knowledge that this system exists and how it works opens the possibility of managing it for the benefit of all involved. However, any such effort will always fall short of total control. The reason is the existence of global values. This is the subject of the next section.

5. THE LIMITS

There are values that can guide behavior that are not influenced by the processes covered by the "I Opt" strategic profile. These are called global values because they serve all profiles equally. Table 6 offers a partial list of such values.

TABLE 6
PARTIAL LISTING OF GLOBAL VALUES
(values that are independent of strategic profiles)

Ambition	Dignity	Hygiene
Awareness	Expertise	Industry
Brilliance	Friendliness	Intelligence
Charm	Family	Kindness
Cheerfulness	Heroism	Respect
Civility	Hospitality	Skillfulness
Courage	Honesty	Strength

Processes that create global values lie outside those measured by the "I Opt" profile. They can include things like history, teaching, religion and indoctrination among many others. History might include things that have worked in the past are simply reused. Family experience that stresses ambition can be accepted and come to guide decisions. The startup experiences of a firm can install "industry" as a value to be sought in new employees. The sources of global values are endless.

Global values are not created by an information processing elections. But those processes can influence them. Accepting a global value is more probable if that value is framed in a way favored by the profile of the targeted person. For example, a Logical Processor will be receptive to facts presented in a logical and dispassionate fashion. A Reactive Stimulator is more likely to respond favorably if a value is shown to produce positive results quickly. Other styles and

patterns will respond to other approaches. Knowledge of “I Opt” technology is useful in dealing with global values even if the processes it measures do not go into the creation of those values.

6. SUMMARY

This article attempts to show how information-processing elections create behaviors, values and beliefs on an individual level. It did not try to show how these can be changed or “engineered” to some external specification. The reason is that there is no reason to change anything. The qualities the article touched on are not good or bad in any absolute sense. Put in the appropriate situation, they are all good. The focus of Organizational Engineering is the organization, not the individuals that comprise it.

However, the article has left clues on how people themselves can change their approach if they choose. The environment triggers the use of a particular strategic style. Thus, changing the environment in a way that favors another style will cause that style to be used more. The practice makes perfect, social influence and the history processes will begin to work. The new approach will begin to come to characterize the person. This process will take time and will not be fun. But it can be done.

When considering a change, it should be kept in mind that any successful change will affect all areas of a person’s life. Family, friends and other social affiliations will all feel the effects. Values and beliefs will also change. You cannot “cherry pick.” The changes come as a package. They are built into the process being used to navigate life.

Behaviors, values and beliefs are the foundation for Corporate Culture. Only the word “shared” needs to be added to arrive at an accepted definition of culture. The next issue of JOE will show how corporate cultures can be built using the insights gained in this article.

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