Executive Assessment in Practice: Tools, Ethics, and Perspectives

SIOP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NEW ORLEANS • April 29–May 2, 2026

Participants

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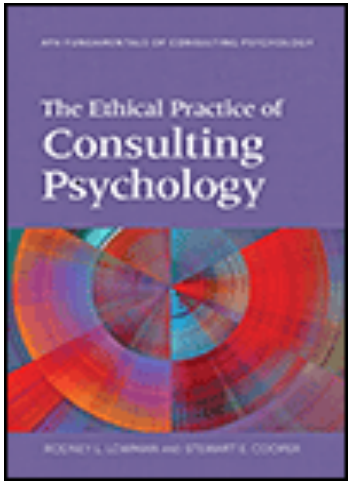
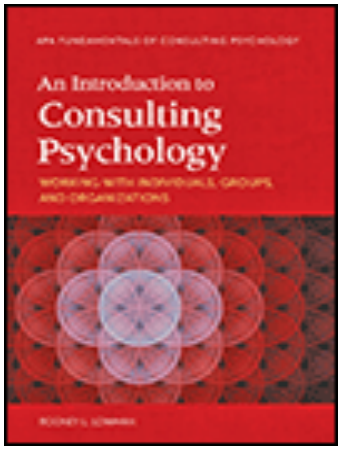
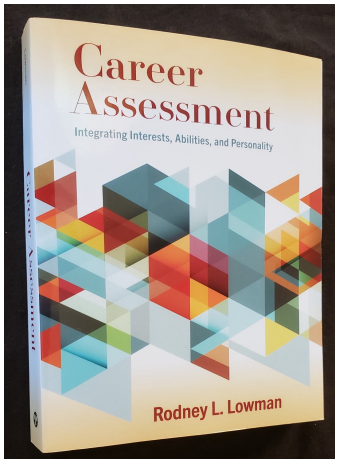


Rodney Lowman, Ph.D., ABAP

- President, Lowman & Richardson/ Consulting Psychologists, PC
- Distinguished Professor Emeritus, California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant University, San Diego
- Visiting Professor, Dept. of Industrial Psychology and People Management, U. of Johannesburg, South Africa
- Member-at-Large, American Psychological Association Board of Directors



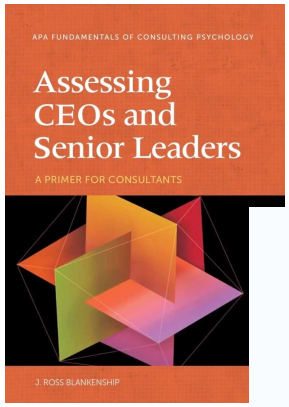


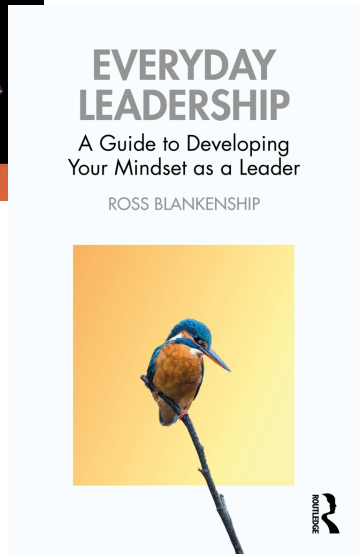
Most Recent Books

Executive Assessment in Practice: Tools, Ethics, and Perspectives

Ross Blankenship

- Founder of Tuesday Advisors, partnering with CEOs and senior leadership teams on executive assessment, succession planning, and leadership development in high-stakes environments
- Leadership coach for senior leaders of public companies and fast growing VC-backed startups
- Author of Everyday Leadership (Routledge, 2024), Assessing CEOs and Senior Leaders (APA, 2021), and co-author of the forthcoming book Friction (Talentsmart, August 2026)





Executive Assessment in Practice: Tools, Ethics, and Perspectives

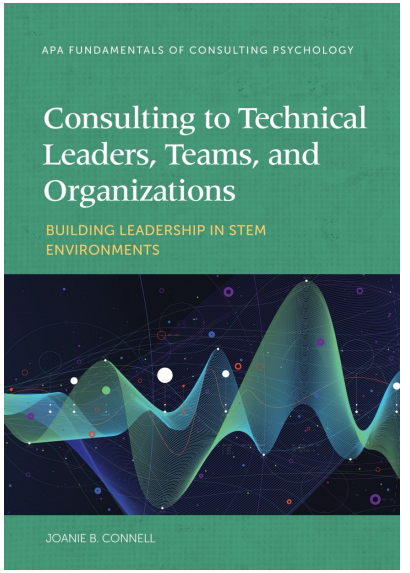
Reece Akhtar

- Co-founder and CEO at Deeper Signals.
- Specialized in talent assessment, leadership, and computational psychometrics.
- Teaches algorithmic responsibility at NYU, published scientific articles on personality and machine-learning, innovation, and talent management.
- Authored "The Future of Recruitment: Using the New Science of Talent Analytics to Get Your Hiring Right".
- Previously led product innovation at RHR International and Hogan Assessments Systems.

Executive Assessment in Practice: Tools, Ethics, and Perspectives

Joanie B. Connell, PhD

- President of Flexible Work Solutions. Organizational consultant, author, and leadership coach with 20+ years of experience.
- Specializes in consulting to technical leaders. Former engineer, author of *Consulting to Technical Leaders, Teams, and Organizations: Building Leadership in STEM Environments*.
- President of the Society of Consulting Psychology, Fellow of the American Psychological Association.
- San Diego, CA



Flexible
Work Solutions

Executive Assessment in Practice: Tools, Ethics, and Perspectives

Olaf Ringelband

- Managing Director of *md management diagnostics*, a consultancy based in Hamburg, Germany; 35 years of experience with executive assessments; conducting about 400 – 500 Executive Assessments globally per year as company
- Teaching at University of Hamburg and NWU Potchefstroom, South Africa
- Expert for the European Commission on AI and Behavioral Economics
- Ph.D. in Cognitive Science

Executive Assessment in Practice: Tools, Ethics, and Perspectives

Agenda

0. Introduction of the topic and the participants (*Olaf Ringelband*)
1. Ethics of Executive Assessment (*Rodney Lowman*)
2. Executive Assessment and Organizational Politics (*Ross Blankenship*)
3. Tools and instruments (*Reece Akhtar*)
4. Executive Assessment for Development (*Joanie Connell*)
5. International and Intercultural Differences in Executive Assessments (*Olaf Ringelband*)
6. Wrap up, Q&A3

Ethics of Executive Assessment

Rodney Lowman

SIOP Training Guidelines – Individual Assessment

General Knowledge And Skills –

1. Ethical, Legal, Diversity, and International Issues

…I-O psychologists should have knowledge of and should behave in accord with relevant ethical guidelines when consulting as well as conducting research (e.g., *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*…and the *Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants*…). I-O psychologists should maintain integrity at all times and across situations.

I-O psychologists seek to **understand relevant federal, state, and local laws, statutes, regulations, and legal precedents** (e.g., the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures).

Source: SIOP, 2016.; apa.org, 2016

SIOP Training Guidelines – Ethical & Legal

12. Individual Assessment –

This domain refers to a **set of skills that are needed for assessing, interpreting, and communicating distinguishing characteristics of individuals** for a variety of work-related purposes…

Individual assessment also requires identifying, developing, selecting, and/or using the appropriate means for such assessment, taking into consideration any important individual differences **including those associated with identity and cultural domains and providing accommodations as needed** …

Source: SIOP, 2016.; apa.org, 2016

Assessment Ethical Issues of the Day

1. **Use of AI in assessment**

2. **Consideration of cultural differences in our current political environment**

3. **Staying ethical when facing pressures to behave unethically**

1. Use of AI in Assessment

APA Ethics Code 9.02 Use of Assessments

(a) Psychologists administer, adapt, score, interpret, or use assessment techniques, interviews, tests, or instruments in a manner and for **purposes that are appropriate in light of the research on or evidence** of the usefulness and proper application of the techniques.

Major Point: Duties of psychologists do not change.

Source: APA 2017.

1. Use of AI in Assessment

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3.04 Avoiding Harm

Psychologists **take reasonable steps to avoid harming** their clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, *organizational clients*, and others with whom they work, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable.

****Major Point: Duties of psychologists do not change when using AI.***

Source: APA 2017.

Some Resources - 1

- **APA Guidelines for Psychological Assessment and Evaluation – 2020**
  https://www.apa.org/about/policy/guidelines-psychological-assessment-evaluation.pdf

- **SIOP Statements - Considerations and Recommendations for the Validation and Use of AI-Based Assessments for Employee Selection January 2023** iop.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Considerations-and-Recommendations-for-the-Validation-and-Use-of-AI-Based-Assessments-for-Employee-Selection-January-2023.pdf

- **-Ethics Committee - Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Ethical Issues Related to the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Social Media in Psychology -** https://www.apa.org/ethics/socialmedia-artificial-intelligence.pdf

- Lowman, R.L., & Connell, J.B. (2025). **Ethical and legal issues in Artificial Intelligence for organizational consultants and managers.** Special Issue of the *Consulting Psychology Journal*. *https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/special/cpb-ethical-legal-issues-ai-organizational-pdf*

- **-Opportunity and Challenge: The Ethical Implications of Artificial Intelligence for Consulting Psychologists (video) -** https://www.apa.org/education-career/training/ethical-implications-ai-consulting-psychologists

2) Consideration of cultural differences in our current political environment

2) Consideration of cultural differences in our current political environment

9.02 Use of Assessments
(b) **Psychologists use assessment instruments whose validity and reliability have been established for use with members of the population tested.** When such validity or reliability has not been established, psychologists describe the strengths and limitations of test results and interpretation.

2.01 (b) Boundaries of Competence Where scientific or professional knowledge in the discipline of psychology establishes that an understanding of factors associated with age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status is essential for effective implementation of their services or research, psychologists have or obtain the training, experience, consultation, or supervision necessary to ensure the competence of their services, or they make appropriate referrals,

3.01 Unfair Discrimination

In their work-related activities, psychologists do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law.

Source: APA 2017.

3. Staying Ethical When Facing Pressures To Behave Unethically

1.02. Conflicts Between Ethics and Law, Regulations, or Other Governing Legal Authority

If psychologists' ethical **responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or other governing legal authority**, psychologists **clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code and take reasonable steps to resolve** the conflict consistent with the General Principles and Ethical Standards of the Ethics Code. Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights.

1.03. Conflicts Between Ethics and Organizational Demands

If the **demands of an organization** with which psychologists are affiliated or for whom they are working are in conflict with this Ethics Code, psychologists **clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code, and take reasonable steps to resolve the conflict** consistent with the General Principles and Ethical Standards of the Ethics Code. Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights.

Source: APA 2017.

Some Resources - 3

- **APA Ethics Committee FAQ: Maintaining Our Ethics in a Shifting National Landscape July 2025** https://updates.apaservices.org/ethics-committee-faq
- Lefkowitz, J. (2023). **Values and Ethics of Industrial-Organizational Psychology** (3rd ed.)**.** Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003212577
- Lowman, R.L. (2011). **Risking your Job: On Striving to be an Ethical Leader in Difficult Organizational Circumstances.** In W. B. Johnson & G.P. Koocher (Eds.), *Casebook on ethically challenging work settings in mental health and the behavioral sciences* (pp. 215-222). Oxford University Press.
- Lowman, R.L. (Ed.) (2006**). The Ethical Practice of Psychology in Organizations (2nd Ed.).** American Psychological Association and Society of Industrial/Organizational Psychology.
- **Editorials: Using I-O Psychology to Advance DEI in the Workplace** https://www.siop.org/tip-article/editorials-using-i-o-psychology-to-advance-dei-in-the-workplace/

Some Resources - 2

- ***Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations***
  https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/policy/provider-guidelines

- ***APA Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality, 2017*** **[in revision]**
  https://www.apa.org/about/policy/multicultural-guidelines.pdf

- ***Testing and Assessment with Persons & Communities of Color*** **https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/testing-assessment-monograph.pdf**

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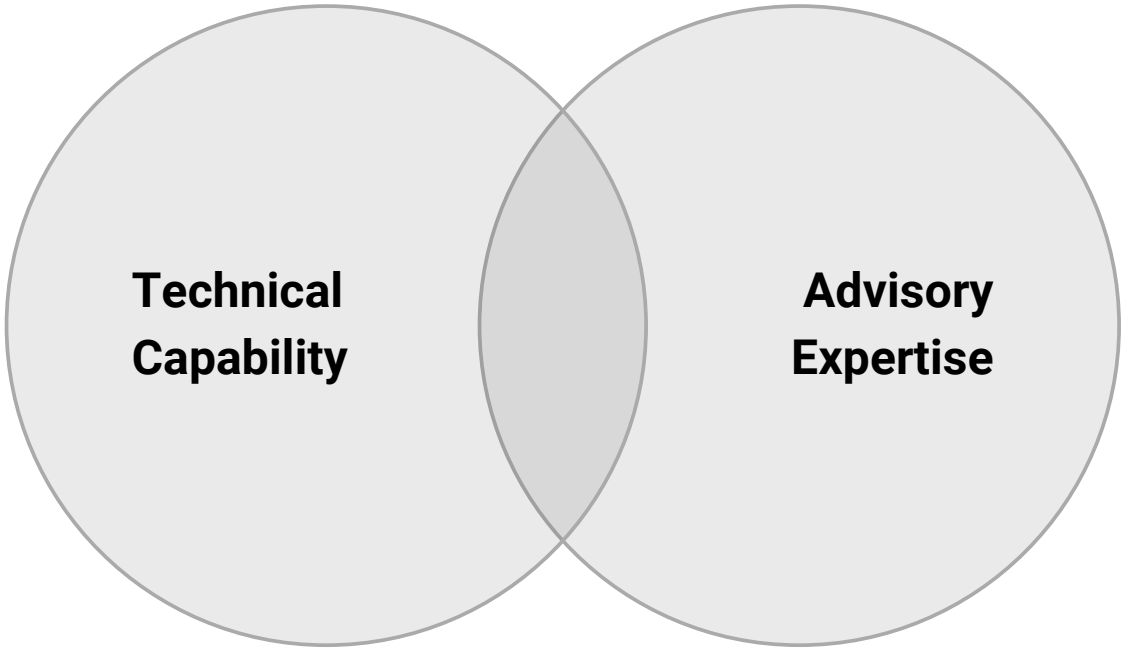
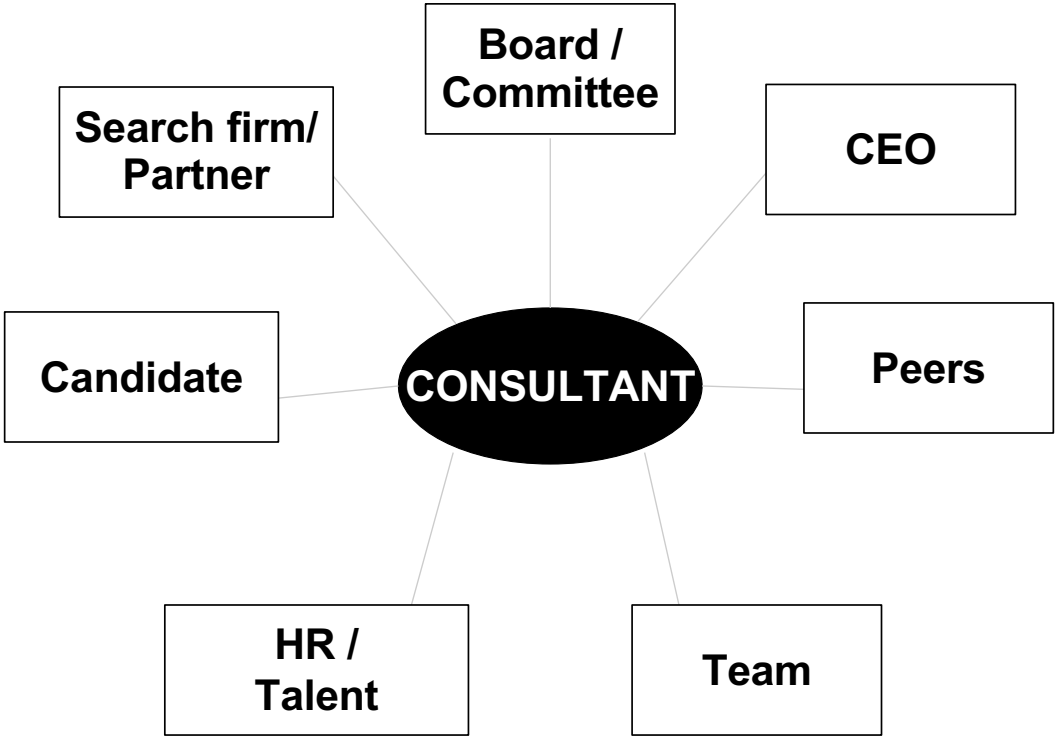
Executive Assessment and Organizational Politics

Ross Blankenship

Effective executive assessment



Assessments happen in political environments



Key consultant questions

- Who is my client?
- When are results expected and in what form?
- What gets communicated to whom?
- How transparent can I be?
- What if I’m asked to alter a report?

Tools & Instruments

Reece Akhtar

01

Augment our methods. Don't replace them.

02

Strengthen the art with AI. Don't pretend it's measurement.

03

Engage actively or we risk ceding this space.

Tools and Instruments

Pre-Read for Panelists

Reece Akhtar | SIOP Annual Conference, New Orleans, May 2, 2026

Framing

For the Tools and Instruments segment of our panel, I plan to discuss three connected propositions about where executive assessment methodology should be heading. The orientation is methodological rather than application-focused. The underlying case is that the field has not meaningfully grown the variance it explains in leadership outcomes for some time, and that recent advances in NLP and generative AI provide a credible, if early, path to do so without abandoning psychometric rigor. I welcome reactions and pushback before the session.

Proposition 1

Augment the multi-trait multi-method approach with NLP and LLM-assisted scoring of unstructured behavioral data, rather than replacing it.

The dominant executive assessment toolkit (psychometrics plus structured interview) has not meaningfully grown its predictive variance in decades. Sackett, Zhang, Berry, and Lievens (2022) have shown that prior validity estimates were inflated by improper range restriction corrections, which makes the gap more visible rather than smaller. NLP and LLM-assisted scoring of unstructured behavioral data, including biographical narratives, behavioral interview transcripts, 360 verbatims, and constructed responses, provide a path to add new method variance to the classic Campbell and Fiske (1959) multi-trait multi-method design without compromising construct validity.

In practice this looks like LLM-assisted scoring of structured behavioral interviews against pre-defined behaviorally anchored rating scales, where humans define the construct and the AI handles signal extraction at scale. Language-derived scores can then be evaluated as a new method within an MTMM design, with convergent and discriminant evidence relative to self-report, observer-report, and behavioral measures.

Proposition 2

Executive assessment will always balance art and science. Persona-grounded LLM agents are an emerging tool to support the art, not to replace measurement.

At the executive level, small samples, contextual heterogeneity, and unreliable performance criteria make pure statistical prediction structurally hard. Expert judgment, the art of the work, will remain core. What is new is that persona-grounded LLM agents (sometimes called digital twins) can strengthen that judgment without claiming to replace measurement.

For example, Park et al. (2024) demonstrated that generative agents grounded in two-hour qualitative interviews replicated participants' General Social Survey responses 85% as accurately as participants replicated their own answers two weeks later. That is a meaningful proof of concept. It opens a path to using such agents as rehearsal environments for assessors and coaches, including stress-testing development hypotheses, designing diagnostic interview probes, and pre-exploring an executive's likely response to organizational scenarios. The standard is whether the simulation usefully informs the human practitioner's preparation, not whether it predicts a behavioral outcome.

Proposition 3

IO psychology should engage actively with new assessment technologies. The alternative is ceding the space to vendors with weaker scientific standards.

When IO has stayed at arm's length from new assessment technology, the market has been filled by vendors operating to weaker standards. There are a growing number of lawsuits and examples where unscientific, AI/ML-enabled assessments have created harmful outcomes. Tippins, Oswald, and McPhail (2021) framed this as an explicit call to action. Active engagement means three concrete things:

- Applying existing professional standards to new tools. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014), SIOP's Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures, and SIOP's 2023 statement on AI-based assessments still apply.

- Partnering with engineers and data scientists rather than commenting from the outside. Test for adverse impact, document construct evidence, build in ongoing monitoring.

- Contributing to standards development. The EU AI Act's high-risk classification for employment, the Illinois AI Video Interview Act, and NYC Local Law 144 are being interpreted now. IO voices belong in those conversations.

Closing thought

These three propositions are connected. Augment our methods with AI for signal extraction. Use AI as a sparring partner for the art of executive judgment. And stay actively engaged so the science of mea

Tools & Instruments

Comment from Olaf Ringelband

Open Stimuli and Responses

Classical Diagnostic Paradigm

Stimulus ➡️ **Subject** ➡️ **Response**

clear **closed**

Open Stimuli and Responses

Open Diagnostic Paradigm

Stimulus ➡️ **Subject** ➡️ **Response**

ambiguous **open**

Example for Response-Open Questionnaire

Name:

Date:

Twenty Statements

Please characterise yourself by formulating a maximum of 20 additions to the sentence „I am…“

time: 10 minutes

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

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Executive Assessment for Development

Joanie Connell

EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

- IS IT REALLY ONLY FOR DEVELOPMENT?
  - SHARED RESULTS
    - SUCCESSION PLANNING INEVITABLY ARISES
    - EXECUTIVES HAVE LARGE-SCALE IMPACT
  - COACHING OR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
    - CONFIDENTIAL TO EXECUTIVE

EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

- WHICH TOOLS?
  - PERSONALITY, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
    - VALIDITY, CAPTURE NUANCES
    - BESPOKE EXPERIENCE
  - 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK
    - INTERVIEW 360S ARE INCREASINGLY COMMON
    - PROBES, NUANCES

EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

- BROADER CONTEXT?
- TEAM ASSESSMENTS ARE INCREASINGLY COMMON
  - ETHICS CONCERNS
    - CONFIDENTIALITY
    - MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS

EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

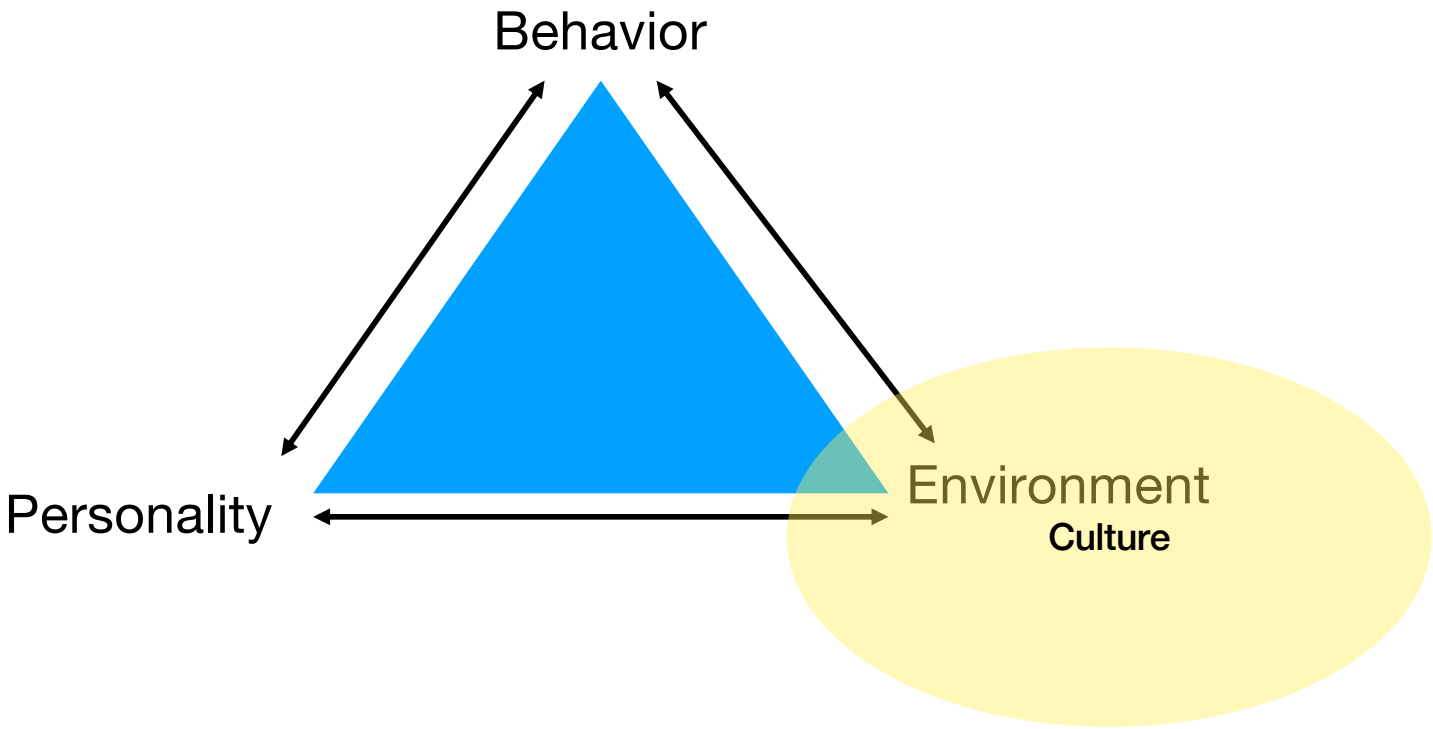
- WHO DELIVERS FEEDBACK?
  - EXPERIENCED, CREDIBLE, UNDERSTAND EXECUTIVE ROLES
  - CONFIDENT, HONEST YET DIPLOMATIC

International and Intercultural Differences in Executive Assessments

Olaf Ringelband

Intercultural Aspects in International Assessments

Dynamic Interactionism



Intercultural Aspects

Best to team up with a local consultant

Intercultural Aspects

International Assessments

- In assessing managers, one needs to understand the candidate's culture
- …for understanding "where they come from"
- …and for predicting (managerial) behavior

International Aspects

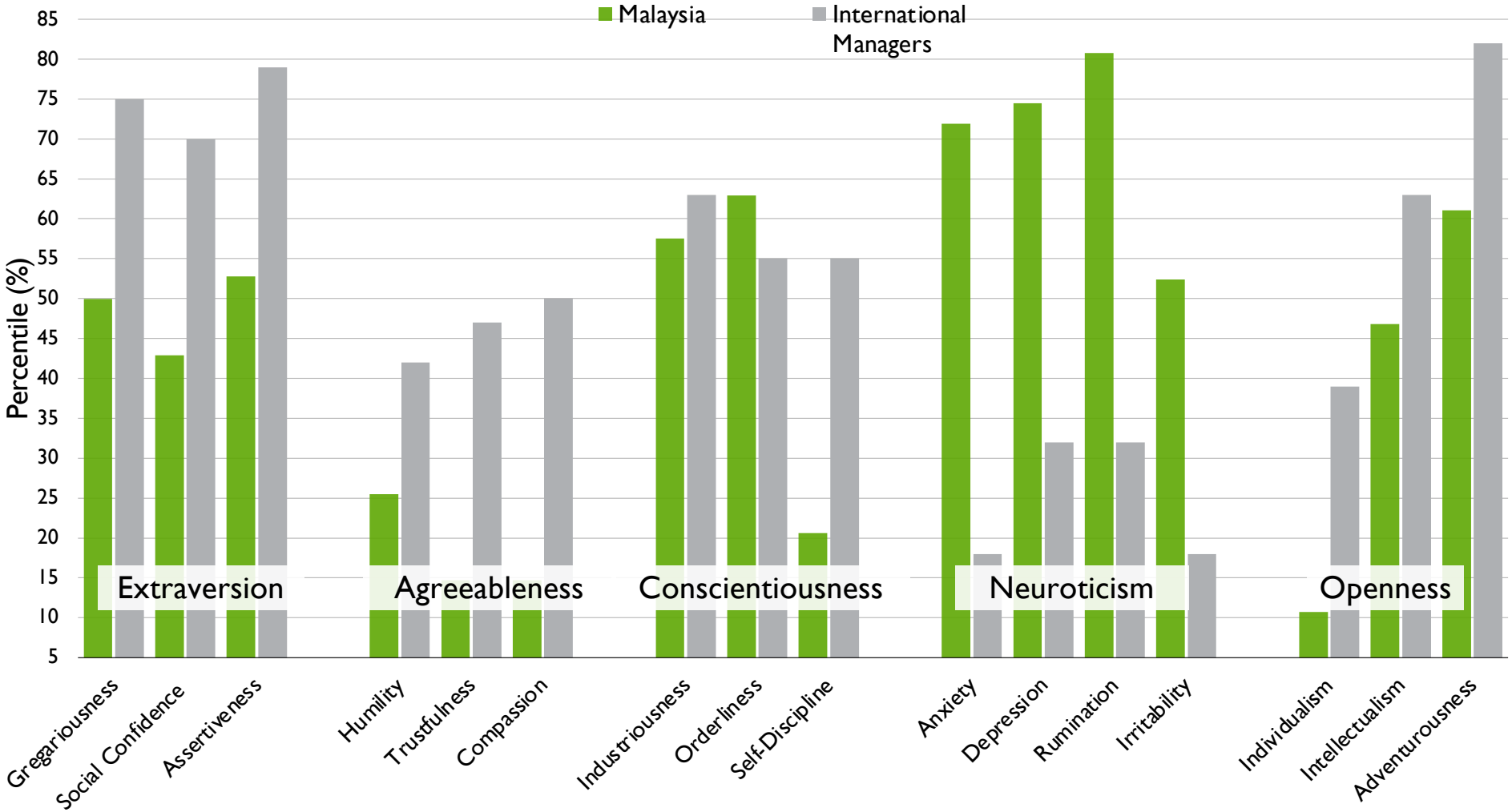
What about local norms?

International Aspects

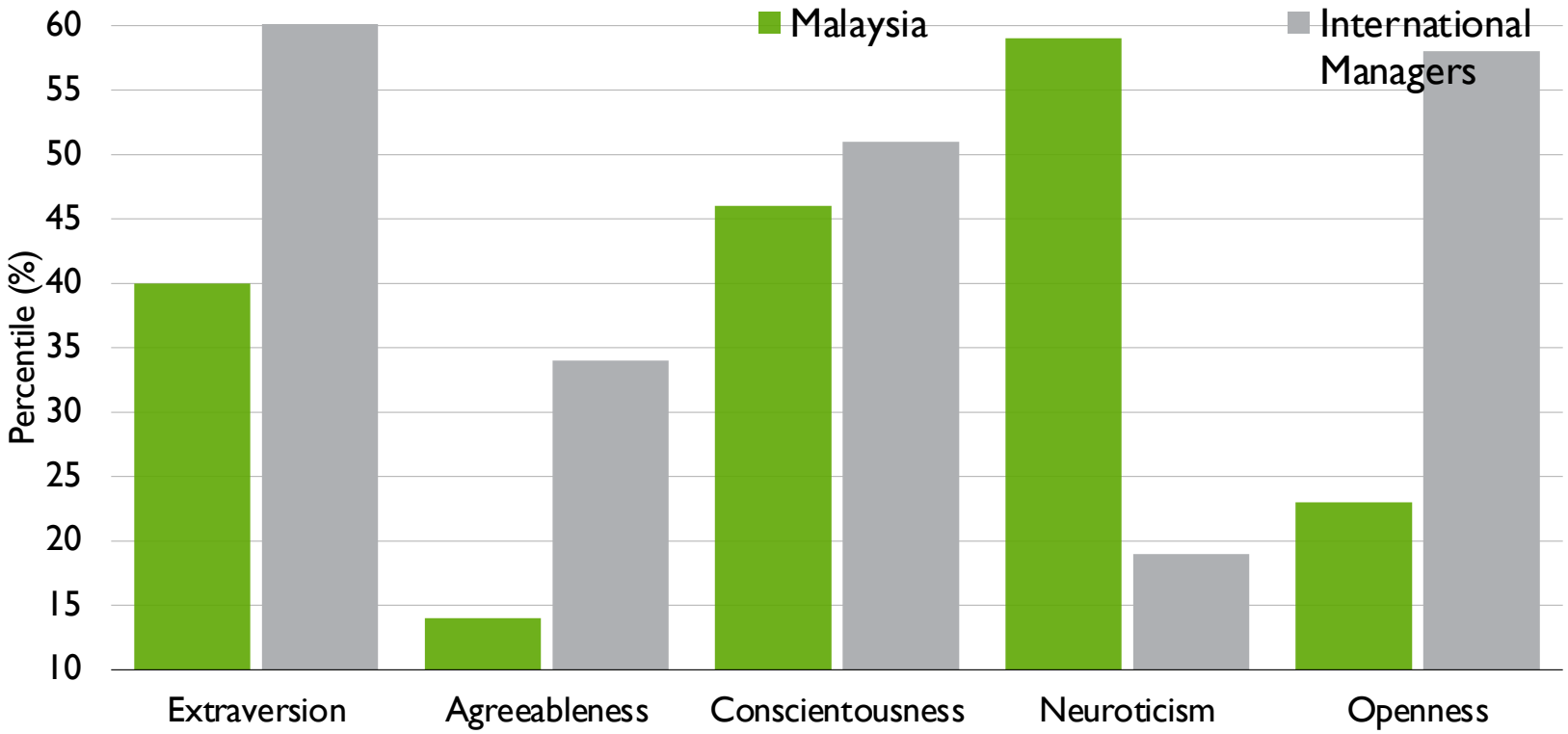
Local Norms

- Local norms are useful when managers are working in a merely local environment
- For local companies working in an international context, things might look different
- An example of a Malaysian international company; based on about 400 executive assessments:

Big-Five Personality Facets



Big-Five Personality Dimensions



Intercultural Aspects

Why you should NOT use local norms in Executive Assessments with international organizations

- Personality dimensions are not only a normative assessment, but also an absolute assessment
- In a global economy, there is an “International Management Standard”
- Western cultural norms have proliferated globally through media

International Assessments

Bottom Line

- When working abroad, consultants need to understand the local culture
- In international organizations, managers should be assessed in comparison to international norms

Thank you !

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