

FIT and Sales Performance

How much does an individual's FIT Science profile contribute to work performance? This is the topic of this brief paper. If FIT and sales are related, this is important because it would suggest that developing FIT – which our research has shown is eminently trainable – is a key to improving productivity. Previous research has not linked real monetary performance at the individual level with personality or any individual difference factors. This is difficult because in most jobs it is not possible to measure real actual performance measures.

FIT thinking and behaving seem especially important within the field of sales where the individual needs to be responsive and adaptive to the customer's needs. Therefore the current study sought to examine how FIT – a person based factor – relates to prospective sales performance over a 5 month period. It was expected that 'FITter' employees in an international company would have superior sales performances. FIT dimensions – including both inner and outer FITness (5 Constancies and Behavioural Flexibility) were measured with The FIT Profiler. Sales performance was evaluated on a monthly basis by the fee earnings of each individual. Employees were also rated by their managers on their future potential within the organisation.

Participants

Fifty-three operational sales staff at a large international company participated in this study.

Procedure

- The employees completed the FIT Profiler online and received feedback on their personal Profiler reports.
- The sales performance of each employee was recorded for the following 5 consecutive months.
- The researchers received a month-by-month analysis of each employee's fee earnings over the 5 month period.
- The organisation rated each employee on a 1-5 scale of 'Potential' – with higher scores indicating greater potential within the organisation.

Outcomes

The monthly sales performances differed considerably between employees from month to month.

Such large variability in sales performances makes it very difficult to find an association between FITness and sales performance (because so many market and external factors are likely to weigh heavily on whether a contract is signed and fees paid). In such a context, finding a relationship between FIT and sales would be highly suggestive of a direct link.

The sales performances of the low, average and high FIT groups are displayed in Table 1. The average fee incomes for each group show a noticeable beneficial effect of FITness. The fee incomes for the high FIT group are 10 times greater than the fee incomes for the low FIT group and this substantial difference in performance is achieved with less than 2 times the overall FIT score.

Table 1: Average 5 month fee incomes for low, average and high FIT groups.

FIT Group	Overall FIT Score	Behavioural Flexibility	FIT Integrity	Average fee
Low FIT	97	16.9%	60%	£15k
Average FIT	145	22.5%	63%	£72k
High FIT	183	27.9%	65%	£156k

‘Potential’ scores – as rated by the organisation – directly related to FITness albeit inversely. Employees given lower ‘Potential’ scores had higher FIT scores and conversely employees with higher ‘Potential’ scores were less FIT. This is probably due to unfit managers being somewhat negative about successful and flexibly competent people. Table 2 displays the ‘Potential’ scores as they relate to overall FITness.

Table 2: Potential ratings and overall FIT scores.

Potential Score	Overall FIT Score
2	176
3	154
4	141
5	83

Conclusions

The results to this study show that FITness factors may have a significant effect upon sales performance and are therefore of great potential importance for company income/sales. It is worth noting that the FIT Profiler scores of the employees in this study were, overall, on the low side of average and therefore with FIT training the sales performances could yield even greater returns.

Similarly, FIT may present as an effective independent tool for identifying employees who have greater sales potential. An interesting finding from this study and one that managers might want to reflect on was that FIT scores were much better at predicting 'Potential' than managers' scores of the same staff. The results suggest that one must be wary of managers' ratings of staff 'Potential' as these appear to discriminate against FITter individuals despite the fact that these have greater actual sales potential. Perhaps managers like people like themselves and therefore their ratings are subjectively biased. FIT Profiler scores are likely to be a better objective metric of potential and the FIT dimensions can also be trained (as we have shown in previous research).