



## Leadership Personality Feedback: Art Or Science?

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### **Abstract**

In the context of leadership development, individual personality feedback based on a self-scored questionnaire, aims to generate insights into a person's personality, hence into related current or future behaviour that can either be helpful, or poses a risk to someone's professional career. It is generally assumed that this feedback helps people to enhance self-awareness and stimulate personal growth. So far, how people experience the insights obtained from personality feedback, has not been researched thoroughly. In this qualitative study, 1) non-structured (narrative) interviews with leaders who have recently received personality feedback, 2) semi-structured interviews with executive coaches as professional users, and 3) an auto-ethnographic study of several feedback sessions, have been combined to gain insight into meaning-making of the results of a widely used leadership assessment instrument. This study suggests that meaning-making of the results of developmental personality assessment instruments is co-constructed in the moment. Next to standardized explanation, idiosyncratic interpretation plays an important role in meaning-making. This is based on the feedback provider's style, contextual personal experiences solicited during the session and impressions of the feedback recipient. However, when conducted conscientiously, this not necessarily jeopardizes self-reflection and personal growth.

**Keywords:** leadership development; leadership assessment; meaning-making; narratives; self-reflection