1. Introduction

The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) is a globally recognised tool for improving relationships and managing conflict. It is used in businesses for leadership training, team building, conflict management and a host of other applications. It is used in counselling for understanding motivations, conflict triggers and interpersonal communications among many other issues. It is completed by approximately 650,000 people worldwide each year.

The objectives of this document are to introduce the SDI to those interested in improving relations and managing conflict and to present several case studies showing how the SDI can be used as a tool for understanding and predicting behaviour as well as understanding and managing conflict.

2. Relationship Awareness Theory

Relationship Awareness Theory, the theoretical basis of the SDI, was created and developed in the mid-twentieth century by Elias H. Porter, colleague of Carl Rogers. Porter was a clinical psychologist and worked at the University of Chicago before moving to UCLA where he spent the rest of his academic career. He founded Personal Strengths Publishing in 1972 and was owner and CEO until his death in 1987.

Porter's work aligns with the humanistic movement in psychology represented by Rogers, Tolman, Maslow and others. His goals in his work were to provide a means for continuing development of the 'healthy individual'. That is to say, while traditional psychotherapeutic counselling focused more on pathological behaviour, Porter wished to give all individuals tools for self-actualisation. Porter's development of a psychometric tool is a departure from the pure humanistic psychological movement in that he has shown that we have much in common with other humans and understanding motivations as well as the differences in motivations between individuals can help us to communicate better, to recognise and avoid conflict, or if already involved in a conflictual situation, to give us tools for managing it.
The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI®): A Tool for Understanding and Improving Relationships

2.1 The Four Basic Principles

Porter's theory is based on four principles that he observed throughout his career as a counsellor and clinician:

1. We do what we do in order to feel good about ourselves (to gain self-esteem).
2. We have two approaches to dealing with the outside world: one when all is going well and we feel good about ourselves and the second, when we are in conflict or opposition.
3. A personal weakness is nothing more than an overdone strength, or a misapplied strength.
4. We see the world through our own filter that influences our interpretation of all we observe.

2.1.1 The First Principle

This principle is related to the Maslow self-esteem theory that has been taken up as a general principle in Humanistic Psychology. One of our basic needs is that of self-esteem and also the esteem of others. In order to satisfy this need, we are able to choose particular behaviours. The idea that we have choice in our behaviour is one of the pillars of the theory.

2.1.2 The Second Principle

This principle is based on Porter's clinical and counselling experiences. He observed that we have one set of means (motivations) by which we direct our behaviour if all is going well. One might try to think of many different life situations where different motivations might come into play, but Porter noticed that the only situation that produced another approach to our own behaviour management was when we found ourselves in conflict. Thus, we have one set of internal rules, that guide us in all of life's situations when we are not in conflict (see also 'Purposive Behaviour' by Tolman), and potentially another set of internal rules that would take over in times of conflict.
The first set of internal rules we call the Motivational Value System® (MVS) and the guiding principles therein (we will see many examples later) are considered to be our strengths. These strengths, for example compassion and the need to help others, are generally needed in society, appreciated by others, and give us a sense of positive self-esteem.

The second set of internal rules we call the conflict sequence (CS). This set of rules is not required to change with respect to the MVS, but in most cases it does depart from the MVS. That is to say, we potentially use another set of internal rules when we are in conflict with the objective of resolving the conflict and returning to our MVS (and peace).

2.1.3 The Third Principle

In observing his clients, Porter noticed that some behaviours were not necessarily appreciated by others and thus were not successful in creating or increasing our self-esteem. When a strength is exaggerated, or overdone, it can become a weakness. Thus, the person who wishes to help but overdoes it by imposing their help on another will not be appreciated by the other. Similarly, if we try to use a strength that is not really in our nature, we risk not applying the strength properly. So, the helpful person who may not naturally like to give orders, but finds himself in a situation that calls for it, may possibly not have the effectiveness of one whose nature it is to give orders.

2.1.4 The Fourth Principle

This fourth principle yields some of the most valuable lessons of the theory and is quite useful in helping to improve interpersonal relationships. The principle says that we do 'see the world through our own glasses' and that this view could potentially be distorted by our natural prejudices. For example, someone who is forceful and directive may have a natural disdain for those who are not forceful and directive.
Thus, when confronted by someone whose nature it is not to assert themselves strongly and immediately, the forceful person could see the other as weak and cowardly. In truth, this prejudice is not necessarily justified and could be no more than a difference in preferences. Awareness of this judgemental tendency can help us to avoid judging too quickly and can encourage us to investigate the nature of the other person before drawing conclusions.

2.2 Graphical-Visual Representation of the Results

Porter identified three basic tendencies that people may have. Some individuals, however, can appear as blends of two of these tendencies or of all three. He also used a colour scheme to identify the tendencies and make them easier to assimilate and use. Thanks to this facility of integration and understanding, clients who are working with the SDI will pick it up and use it immediately to understand all of their relationships, both personal and professional.

The three tendencies correspond to three basic Motivational Value Systems which we will see in more detail later. Essentially, the three basic tendencies are:

- Blue – the altruistic-nurturing type
- Red – the assertive-directing type
- Green – the analytic-autonomising type.

As indicated above, some individuals will not fall completely into one of these categories, but will be a blend of two or even all three.

Finally, the results will be shown on a coloured triangle with a blue, a red and a green axis. We will see all of these profiles in detail in section 3.2.
3. The SDI

3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire that allows us to apply Relationship Awareness Theory to understand and improve our relationships, and to identify the types discussed in the preceding section, is the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI®). Porter developed this instrument himself from the 1940s to the 1970s when it was refined, validated and reliable enough to be in demand commercially. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions, 10 about the person in times of peace, when all is going well, and 10 about the person in times of conflict and opposition.

Each question begins with a 'stem' and is followed by three different ways of finishing the sentence. The respondent must take 10 points and distribute them among the three endings corresponding to the frequency with which each ending would apply to their life. For example:

*I usually gain the most for myself by being........
  a. friendly and outgoing as much as possible.
  b. alert to any and all opportunites.
  c. very careful as to what I commit myself to.*

The respondent then distributes a total of 10 points among the endings, for example 3 for a, 7 for b and 0 for c. Notice that $3 + 7 + 0 = 10$, and that 0 would indicate that the ending would never be a motivation for this person.

There is a total of 10 questions, so 100 points in times of peace, and similarly 100 points in time of conflict. The results are presented as 'points' on a triangle that we will see in the next section.
3.2 The Motivational Value System®

The results from the questionnaire yield a 'blue total' a 'red total' and a 'green total'. An important aspect of this theory is that we are dealing with traits – characteristics that exist more or less permanently in our personality with varying degrees of importance (or frequency). The collection of frequencies of these motivational traits is called the Motivational Value System® (MVS) for the individual and remains rather constant throughout life. Of course, our values and behaviours may change, but the underlying MVS that drives our behaviour is always looking for the same type of gratification for our self-esteem.

Since there are three basic components that are measured on a continuous scale and the totals sum to 100, the results may be represented on a triangle ('blue + red + green = 100' in the three dimensional space of (blue, red, green)). Since we have two such sets of 10 questions, one in peace and one in conflict, there are two points in the triangle. The first point is the Motivational Value System, our way of dealing with the world when all is going well. The second point (the pointed end of the arrow) is the Conflict Sequence (CS) and represents our way of dealing with conflict. Here is what we have so far:

![Motivational Value System Diagram](image)
To simplify the interpretation, we identify seven regions of the triangle that we call the Motivational Value Systems. Strictly speaking, there are an infinite number of possibilities, but the grouping into regions allows us enough similarity among those persons in the region:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3.2.1 Blue | The altruistic-nurturing type  
Protection, growth and welfare of others; motivated by helping others, do not want to be a burden, support a strong leader |
| 3.2.2 Red | The assertive-directing type  
Task accomplishment, organisation of people, time, money and any other resources to achieve desired results; motivated by winning, making progress, fixed on goals |
| 3.3.3 Green | The analytic-autonomising type  
Assurance that things have been properly thought out; meaningful order being established and maintained; motivated by logic, structure, principles, details, completeness |
| 3.3.4 Hub | The flexible-cohering  
Flexibility, welfare of the group, concern for the members of the group and for belonging in the group; motivated by team work, options, flexibility, variety, will “fill in the missing gap” |
| 3.3.5 Red-Blue | The assertive-nurturing type  
Protection, growth and welfare of others through task accomplishment and leadership; motivated by helping others achieve their goals, mentors, coaches |
| 3.3.6 Red-Green | The judicious-competing type  
Intelligent assertiveness, justice, leadership, order and fairness in competition; motivated by strategy, principles, winning |
| 3.3.7 Blue-Green | The cautious-supporting type  
Affirming and developing self-sufficiency in self and others, thoughtful helpfulness with regard for justice; motivated by helping others help themselves |
3.3 The Conflict Sequence

Conflict does not always take the same form from one person to another, even for people with the same Motivational Value System. This is observable and shown by Porter's theory and the SDI. The detailed analysis of conflict is one aspect that sets the SDI apart from other instruments of this type.

According to the theory, conflict, if left unresolved, escalates through three stages. In the first stage, the person tries to take into account the other person, the problem and himself. If the conflict is not resolved in the first stage and escalates to the second stage, the person will concentrate on the problem and himself. The 'other person' drops out of their consideration. This phenomenon is why conflict is best resolved in the first stage – while the person is still trying to take the other into account. If escalated to the third stage, the person will only be concerned with self-preservation. Both the problem and the other have dropped out of the considerations altogether.

How does one go into conflict? Usually, conflict is triggered when one of the person's cherished values (from the Motivational Value System) has been compromised, threatened or otherwise perceived as attacked. For example, in a meeting, the group is about to make a decision to proceed knowing that some perhaps important information is missing, but the team is under time pressure. The 'Green' person in the group, who is motivated by completeness and careful consideration before making a decision, protests and is told 'Sorry, we don't have time for that. We've got to get the project underway.' This disdain for the Green's most cherished values will most likely send him into conflict.
3.4 Arrow Dynamics

3.4.1 Simple Arrow Dynamics

The example on page 7 is of someone who is Blue in times when things are going well. As we discussed earlier, Blues (altruistic-nurturing types) are usually concerned with the welfare of others, do not want to be a burden to others, like to support a strong leader etc. If this particular person (whose arrow is on page 7) goes into conflict, the first stage is red – the person will rise to the challenge to defend himself. The theory (shown below) continues to say that, if the person were to be pushed into the second stage, he would use 'green' techniques to continue to try to resolve the conflict, that is to say, pull back and analyse the situation. He would not be concerned with the other person, but with the problem and himself. Finally, if the person was pushed into the third stage, he would surrender completely. The third stage conflict should be taken seriously; some believe that experiencing it can cause psychological damage. At least, it is an experience that will mark the person for a long time to come.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFLICT STAGE</th>
<th>FOCUS ON</th>
<th>BLUE</th>
<th>RED</th>
<th>GREEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Self Problem</td>
<td>Simply being accommodating</td>
<td>Simply rising to the challenge being</td>
<td>Simply being prudently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>to the needs of others</td>
<td>offered</td>
<td>cautious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self Problem</td>
<td>Giving in and letting</td>
<td>Having to fight off the opposition</td>
<td>Trying to escape from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>the opposition have its</td>
<td></td>
<td>opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having been completely</td>
<td>Having to fight for one's life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>defeated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another aspect of arrow dynamics is the length if the arrow. Generally, a change in arrow length is accompanied by a corresponding change in behaviour and it becomes evident to those in the person's entourage that the person is in conflict. On the other hand, someone with a very short arrow will not change perceptibly on the exterior in conflict, but the person's internal emotions are showing no doubt whatsoever that the person is in conflict. The person sometimes wonders why the others cannot tell that he is in conflict. Good advice to such a person is to develop ways to signal to others when he is in conflict.

3.4.2 Composite Arrow Dynamics

A particularly useful application of the SDI is to plot all the arrows of the team on the same triangle. From the MVS, we see what is important to each person – and we have a good idea of the best way to communicate with them: that is to say, by concentrating on the issues that are of the most importance for the person. In the same vein, we also see what the potential conflict triggers are. They are those behaviours that will threaten one of the values in the MVS, or be perceived as threatened, violated or attacked.

When looking at the arrows for an entire group, we see first whether there are any 'blind spots' in the group; i.e. any missing colours or MVSs. A team with no redness will find it more difficult to push forward toward the goals and may risk long, perhaps too long, discussions of options, alternatives, peripheral subjects, principles etc. A mangement group, for example, with little or no 'blueness' will risk making decisions that do not take the human element into account, or that focus on the logic, strategic or goal-orientation aspects of the decision.
4. Application of the SDI

4.1 Introduction

One of the original applications of the SDI was in teambuilding. After each team member has filled out the SDI and had the feedback, including a personal validation of the results, we plot the arrows of the entire team to see the 'big picture'. Using the results from the SDI, we can see where potential misunderstandings might arise. We can see how the team members will act in conflict and what methods they will most likely use to resolve the conflict.

The following examples show what this might look like in practice.

4.2 Case Studies

The following examples are showing how SDI can be used with family teams, in this section we present case studies for several family firm counselling projects. The families and businesses are real as are their arrows. But the names, locations and stories have been changed enough to protect the confidentiality of the clients.

4.2.1 The French Real Estate Entrepreneur

4.2.1.1 The Family Firm Background

Fernand left the Basque territories to move to Bordeaux, France in 1970. He had only an apprenticeship as an electrician, but he was ambitious and started buying properties, renovating them and re-selling them.

He met and married Renee in 1975 and they had their daughter, Anne, in 1978 and son, Anthony in 1986. Renee had a career as administrative assistant to a bank president, but since Fernand's business was doing so well, she stopped working after Anthony's birth.
Over the past 30 years, Fernand has bought and sold properties in Bordeaux and amassed a fortune invested in rental properties, commercial properties, and other investments. He just turned 60 and has started planning his retirement.

Anne finished secondary school and decided not to go further in formal education. For the last ten years, she has worked for the Club Med in many capacities, guide, office worker, etc. She tried working with her father right after school but decided it wasn't for her. She seems dissatisfied with her life of a nomad, but hasn't yet found a way out.

Anthony finished secondary school three years ago and is now in his third year of law school. He has worked from time to time with his father, but complains that his father is 'there for himself' and does not spend time with Anthony, although Anthony claims that his father is a 'great teacher' when he does take the time. Anthony feels a bit neglected by his father, who never seemed to be present, despite the fact that he has always worked from home. With his degree in Law, Anthony would be a natural choice to take over his father's company, as long as the interest in real estate is there. When asked, he seems very positive and optimistic about the option of taking over the business, but he, as well as the rest of the family, feels that they have talked without making any definite plans about the succession of the company. Fernand is currently selling out large portions of the company in anticipation of his retirement, but is also anticipating that neither of the children would be interested in taking over his activities. It seems that he is right with respect to Anne, but he does not seem to take Anthony's option seriously.
4.2.1.2 The Family Chart

1948

Fernand 60

1950

Renee 58

1978

Anne 30

1986

Anthony 22
4.2.1.3 The Family Triangle
Discussion of the SDI Results

The first aspect of this family triangle is that the parents and the daughter are all Hubs. Notice that there are 8 years between Anne and Anthony. Also, all three move essentially in the same direction in conflict. There is continuing debate and discussion in the psychological community about whether psychological traits are learned or innate (the 'Nature or Nurture' discussion). This family triangle really does make us reflect on the nature or nurture question. Did Anne learn the MVS of her parents during the time that she was an only child? Was Anthony, brought up as the baby of the family allowed to be red in conflict by permissive parents? Of course, the Red, Green and Blue traits are acquired by whatever means in early childhood, and are soon fixed for life. This fact does not solve nor contradict the questions we are asking, but the SDI makes us think about them and allows us to use them in discussions with the family.

Of the three geographically close members of the family, all are Hubs, but one is a 'Blue Hub', one a 'Red Hub' and one a 'Green Hub'. This distribution allows for a balance in styles within the family and provides for a stable family structure. All of these three 'go green' in conflict.

Although this family has no visible conflict, it is true that during our discussions with them, the recognition that Anthony would consider taking over the company after his law studies was a surprise for his father, who has decided somewhat independently that his son did not want to take over. It is felt that using the language SDI, the father can now see his son's 'blueness' not as a weakness but as a strength that can be used as a force in giving the son's own direction to the company. The son can also understand the 'green' style of conflict and respond in like when conflicts arise.
4.2.2 The Los Angeles Convenience Store

4.2.2.1 The Family Firm Background

Ayser came to Los Angeles from Lebanon in 1968 and performed odd jobs while learning English. By 1970, he was enrolled in a college and working on a business degree when he met Felicia, who was studying for her bachelor's in Art History. They were married in 1974 and Ayser began working on his MBA in the same year. During this time, he was working as a concierge in one of the most exclusive hotels in Los Angeles, where he became quite knowledgeable about how to 'get what one wants' in the Big City. He was quite talented in working with people of all walks of life and as a result, he had the idea that became his Business Plan and propelled him into a successful career.

He rented an old dilapidated building in Watts, south Los Angeles, and converted it into a liquor / grocery store. Ayser's image as an Arabic immigrant, along with his pronounced Arabic accent seemed to give him 'diplomatic immunity' in the troubled neighbourhood. He got to know everyone, and everyone knew him. His business grew. But the growth and the location were not without their risks. Ayser was stabbed on three occasions, two involving attempts at armed robbery and one while walking to his car after work one day. On another occasion, he tried to stop a fight in his store and one of the combatants crushed Ayser's skull with a heavy metal weight that was being used as a door stop. He recovered from each of these events without any permanent damage.

For some years now, he has grown his business, using the same plan and opening groceries and restaurants in very impoverished neighbourhoods. His style of being 'Uncle Ayser' to the neighbourhood, and his persistence and honesty in dealing with people, have earned him the respect of each of the neighbourhoods where he has an enterprise. His devotion to his clientele and the time it takes to establish and maintain such relationships has weighed on his family life.
Ten years after their marriage, Ayser and Felicia had a baby girl, Angelique, and three years later, a boy, Farkhad. Thanks to the success of Ayser's businesses, the family was able to live in one of the most prestigious upper middle class neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, some distance from Ayser's work. The children grew up monolingual and immersed in the American culture, primarily due to Felicia's being American and playing the central role in child-rearing.

Angelique will soon be graduating from college with a degree in Arabic Studies. Farkhad is in his last year in high school and is thinking about going to college to study Art. Felicia quit her job as a researcher in an art museum after Angelique's birth and has been involved in Ayser's work as the family firm accountant. Farkhad has tried on several occasions to work for his father, but each time he has expressed some disappointment that his father is usually too busy, even at work, to give him any special training. Ayser answers that he really does not want either of his children taking over his company for fear that they will not have the 'diplomatic immunity' that he does, since neither of them are distinguishable from the 'average American' (in terms of ethnic physiognomy or speech). Ayser fears that the children, who are also not quite as 'tough' as he, would be in too much danger and would be without the skills for coping.

Angelique has taken an independent interest in her 'bi-culture'. Since her father usually works from 6am to midnight, she did not have him around the house during her childhood. Thus, she was not taught Arabic as a child and only developed her interest in the language at the university. Indeed, the one time her father forced her to go to Lebanon and visit his family (alone), she hated it and swore never to go back. In the meantime, she has become interested in the Arabic culture, has studied it and the language and is also looking forward to doing an MBA after her bachelor's is finished next year. She is not particularly interested in the 'niche' her father has found, but she does seem to have inherited his entrepreneurial spirit and would like to have a business of her own when her studies are over.
Farkhad seems mostly interested in pursuing his interests which are usually intense and last for some months or years and then are displaced by a new passion that becomes the primary object of a new investigation. He is not particularly interested in interacting with others, but enjoys 'studying them' and does not hesitate to approach others if it serves his current purpose.

He has always had a passion for Art, but also has a long-term love of firearms. Despite the image of the lover of firearms, Farkhad is a pacifist and only seems to be interested in the sporting aspect of firearms (target shooting). His mother is very afraid that, with his name and Arabic heritage, Farkhad's owning firearms could be misunderstood by the press or police. Although he has worked briefly on several occasions with his father in one of his stores, Farkhad does not seem to have any interest in the family enterprise. His parents attribute his lack of interest to his being a teenager and presume that he will start taking active interest in career questions when he gets to the university, if he decides to go (a dream of his mother, but not considered very important by his 'self-made man' father).

Ayser is now nearing 60 and does not seem to think about retirement. When asked questions concerning estate planning and succession of his company, the concept seemed to be rather new to him, other than already having decided that he does not want his children to take over his company with the current business plan. Thanks to the consulting sessions, he is beginning to discuss the future with his children and he is starting to create options for passing the company on to the second generation.
4.2.2.2 The Family Chart

The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI®): A Tool for Understanding and Improving Relationships
The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI®): A Tool for Understanding and Improving Relationships

4.2.2.3 The Family Triangle

[Diagram showing the SDI Group Report with a triangle graph and labels for different strengths and attributes.]
Discussion of the SDI Results

Ayser has long been accustomed to working from dawn until after midnight. Angelique is now at University and Farkhad is still at home. The SDI would predict a certain understanding between Felicia and Farkhad, simply due to having the same MVS. When this was suggested in the feedback, Felicia laughed loudly and said 'He reads my every thought!' We see from the triangle that when Farkhad enters into conflict, he moves into the Red, close to his sister. If they are in conflict with each other, then Angelique remains in the Red as well. Farkhad is slightly more Red in conflict than Angelique and the family confirms that, indeed, in conflict together, Farkhad usually dominates Angelique. Again, we are faced with 'nature or nurture' questions: Did Farkhad 'learn to be red' to protect himself from his big sister? Did the children learn or inherit their father's redness in conflict?

Finally, the family declared that Ayser kept his cool in any crisis situation. As a Hub, he shares an MVS with many emergency room medics, policemen and others who are noted for keeping their cool in crisis. We suggested that he might not have much consideration for the human aspects (very little Blue) when in conflict and the family responded 'When Dad is in conflict, just get out of the way.' We asked Felicia if ever she felt in conflict and no one noticed. She smiled 'Very often.' We suggested that the fact that her arrow remains entirely in the green and thus that her behaviour in conflict may not be differentiated from her non-conflict behaviour enough for others to remark that something has changed. The same holds for Angelique. A last note is that a potential 'blind spot' for the family is the Blue, meaning that helping others, harmonious interpersonal sharing, etc may not be a high priority in this family. This conjecture was also confirmed by the family.

Aside from the management of conflict and style of interaction that was learnt by the family in the SDI feedback, there is now a possibility that the father will be able to help the daughter start her own business when she is finished with her studies. This family, as the real estate family, was helped in our discussions by revealing decisions that the father had taken one-sidedly and getting the subject out in the open so that the desires of the children could be expressed to the father. Although this result is not a direct one of the SDI, the openness to introspection during the SDI feedback session surely contributed to the acceptance of the children's wishes by the father.
4.2.3 The Printer

4.2.3.1 The Family Firm Background

Gerard comes from a firmly rooted Alsacian wine family that dates back 14 generations. When the older brother took over the winery, Gerard went to a technical university and learned to use an offset printer. He started a little printing shop to earn a living for himself and his new wife, Madeleine, who was an accounting student in the same technical university. The shop was an instant success since it was one of the first in the area, but soon the competition arrived. Gerard was not one to panic. He kept working hard, late at nights and on the weekends. At first, he was doing all the marketing, customer interface, and managing most of the printing, but he was able to hire Madeleine as his internal accountant. Slowly, with his adaptability to the changing market, and most of all the changing technology, Gerard managed to buy out most of the smaller competitors and now has a comfortable position with a company of about 100 employees.

Gerard and Madeleine have two sons, Marcel and Laurent. Marcel was not very interested in formal learning, became a successful musician and is now living in New York playing in a jazz band. Laurent was quite different to Marcel and was always interested in technical things. Perhaps because of his growing up observing his parents' work, or perhaps independently (he cannot say exactly), Laurent became fascinated with the printing industry and went to a technical university to major in the printing industry. At the age of 25, he is now in a major management role in the company and will certainly take over the family company at the retirement of his parents. He seems very happy, works very well and in a tight relationship with his parents, and seems to have the respect, support and enthusiasm of the employees. He is considered as someone who is very logical, straightforward, technically talented and keeps his promises.
4.2.3.2 The Family Chart

1953

55

Gerard

1958

50

Madeleine

1980

18

Marcel

1983

25

Laurent
4.2.3.3 The Family Triangle
Discussion of the SDI Results

Clearly, the first thing that strikes one in reading this family triangle is that three of the members of the family are almost identical in conflict. Another aspect that stands out is the shortness of Gerard's arrow. This shortness would naturally imply that there would be little change in the behaviour of Gerard when he goes into conflict. In fact, the family and employees of the company could not think of Gerard in conflict (they could not say 'how he was in conflict'). Apparently, he is always 'as steady as a rock'. His 'Hubness' would also imply that he would be interested in diverse activities, keeping options open, team play, all of which were confirmed by the family and employees.

There is a natural complicity between Laurent and his mother which is predicted by the family triangle as well as being confirmed by Laurent and his mother. In conflict, Laurent does have a tendency to 'go Red', and the family can tell that he is in conflict (he does show it) but everyone says that he controls it very well. Although the family members who are in the company form a very tight-knit and cohesive leadership team, without any current conflict, they were very happy to gain the understanding that the SDI offered.

Finally, in terms of potential 'blind spots', there seems to be little 'Red' in the family. The advantage is that there would not be a tendency of anyone in the family to try to push the others. However, the negative side of this is that the pushing of a red can have a very positive effect in moving the family business towards its goal. Understanding and recognising this potential blind spot is a contribution to the family business made possible by the SDI.
4.2.4 The Senegalese Law Firm

4.2.4.1 The Family Firm Background

Magali is an artist. Perhaps it was the 'professional opposites that attract' that led Andre, a young lawyer, to fall in love with Magali. We will see in this example that the SDI shows that they are not as 'opposite' as the old adage and the stereotype of their professions might predict. Andre and Magali were married in 1969. In 1975, Baptiste was born. In 1980 and 1985 came Julien and Jean-Mathieu, respectively.

The family grew, as did Andre's law practice. From courtroom law, he moved on to corporate law and finally settled in real estate law, preferring the less stressful and conflict ridden corporate world.

In the meantime, the children were almost grown – choosing their life work. Of the three sons, Baptiste became a lawyer and chose to work with his father in the now family firm. Julien, the second son, also became a lawyer, but chose not to work with his father. He is working in a law group that helps those who cannot afford legal counsel themselves. Jean-Mathieu is a computer scientist.
4.2.4.2 The Family Chart

1949
Andre

1980
Julien

1985
Jean-Mathieu

1975
Baptiste

1951
Magali

1981
Virginie

2008
Jeanne
4.2.4.3 The Family Triangle

The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI®): A Tool for Understanding and Improving Relationships
Discussion of the SDI Chart

This family triangle shows a very strong similarity among the sons and the father, with a very interesting difference to the mother. Although she is a Hub, she is on the 'Blue' side of the Hub and not that far from Andre. Note that the father and sons in conflict go much more in the green direction and at the same time dramatically lose the blueness that is also so characteristic of them in times of peace. The entire family confirmed these predictions of the SDI, with particular enthusiasm in the confirmation of the MVS of the father. The mother was in agreement with her results but, true to the Hub was a bit ambivalent, saying that 'it depends'. This can be considered as an additional confirmation of her results.

The mother stated that she sometimes felt in conflict when others did not notice it. This kind of comment comes often from an older adult who has learned to recognise their tendencies and to control them, especially those in the Red in conflict. When this possibility was explored, the mother quickly confirmed that she definitely went Red in conflict and had a strong tendency to be explosive, but that the crisis was often over immediately. The rest of the family confirmed the mother's results.

The affinity between the mother and Baptiste is evidenced by the fact that they are both in the Hub. It is not always the case that people of the same MVS get along particularly better, but it is more often than not the case that they do get along.

Finally, Baptiste and his wife, Virginie, both have rather short arrows. Baptiste reports that he sometimes is in conflict and that those around him do not notice it. This situation is common, as we have pointed out, in those with short arrows. When asked about her behaviour in conflict, Virginie said that she was never in conflict. This statement does seem a bit incredible, but we did not challenge her.

Andre and Baptiste work together in Andre's law firm. They get along very well and have a natural affinity, as reported in the Family Chart. Both validated their results and suggested that many of their clients' families would benefit from a session on Relationship Awareness Theory and the SDI.
5. Conclusions

The SDI was shown to be a valuable tool in making the families aware of their different styles of communication, relationship building and conflict. An undeniable value was also the generation of discussion of the topic. The SDI results put the families in a neutral arena, even though they were discussing themselves. It also gave them a 'language' to speak to help them to express their feelings and avoid conflict. For example, the individuals with a particularly short arrow understood why they had been frustrated in their lives at times when they were feeling in conflict but also feeling that it was unnoticed. They were encouraged to use SDI language to develop a sort of 'family code language' to signal their conflict to the other family members ('I'm at the other end of my arrow at the moment!')

Another contribution of the SDI to family dynamics understanding was the idea of the 'blind spot' – a colour, or motivational value system that was systematically missing in the family. This missing motivation helps the family in their relationships with those non-family members as well as giving warning to potential errors in communications, or decisions, etc that may result because no one in the family would have a tendency to take those values into account.

The SDI also gives the family a 'language' and a neutral environment to open discussion of past and present problems. In trying to understand the psychological dynamics and using the results of the SDI, the individuals may win some objectivity as well as insights into how their behaviour may have been playing a role in triggering the conflict in the other person.

So, the SDI may be used to get the 'big picture' of a family in business, to get maximal information concerning the relationships among the family members, to avoid conflict and help resolve it when it arises. It can become an indispensable tool for developing family as well as any other kind of relationships.
6. References


Porter, Elias (1950). An Introduction to Therapeutic Counseling, Houghton Mifflin, Cambridge, MA, USA.


Rogers, Carl (?). Counseling and Psychotherapy. The Riverside Press, Cambridge, MA, USA.

Personal Strengths Website including SDI software: www.personalstrengths.com
