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A Salute to  
Universal DISC Behavioral Model

persolog GmbH, March 2007

## **A Salute to Universal DISC Behavioral Model**

persolog GmbH joins in the celebration that marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Health Ecology Division, University of Minnesota by Dr. John Geier and Dr. Lawrence Meskin. The division's mission stimulated Dr. Geier to develop the original DISC assessment model, Personal Profile (1970). All DISC assessment formats in use today are based on his early DISC model.

persolog® DISC has the exclusive, world-wide license to publish Geier's DISC products, including the Personality Factor Profile™. These are the only DISC products on the market that reflect Geier's work over the past forty years in advancing DISC theory, concepts, and methodology that infuse the Universal DISC Behavioral Model. Committed to Geier's vision of an ever-evolving DISC to increase performance in a changing world, persolog® DISC has established the standard for statistical investigations and designed educational formats that optimize their usage.

## **A Brief Historical Overview**

In 1967, health institutions in the United States were confronted with a major challenge: To move from a primarily curative orientation to an inclusion of prevention and health promotion. This required major changes in behavior not only for professors and students in higher education but also for those professionals already practicing in the field, and even – patients.

The challenge of developing innovative models to facilitate changes in behavior was a natural for social scientists at the University of Minnesota, particularly for two researchers with dual appointments in both the Health Sciences and the Graduate School. Dr. John Geier, following on the heels of Dr. Starke Hathaway, a co-author of the world-renowned Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), went on to develop the DISC assessment inventory that also spread around the world. Hathaway (1951) developed an assessment tool that provided a systematic way to distinguish abnormal psychological conditions in order to improve diagnosis and treatment. In contrast, Geier's DISC assessment focused on normal people – and a much wider usage. Both models earned the university an international reputation in personality assessment.

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## Normal Population Assessment

## University Recognition of DISC Assessment

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Mental health practitioners were enthralled with Hathaway's MMPI and the research team, including Dr. Paul Meehl, Dr. J. Charnley McKinley, and Dr. David Lykken. However, Geier faced the larger task: Converting a new generation of health professionals to change their behavior so as to deal with health concerns in a different way.

Geier began his efforts in the fledging department of Health Ecology (1967) with Dr. Lawrence Meskin, who had completed his graduate work at the University of Michigan. Geier, the social scientist, and Meskin, the physical scientist had a common bond; both had grown up in the Detroit, Michigan area. Now, they worked together to enlist the cooperation of their academic peer reviewers to examine grant proposals that requested significant funding for the development of "simulated health manpower training teams," and Geier's proposal for a scientifically-based assessment instrument designed for a normal population. The first order of business was to gain credibility for such an assessment both inside and outside of the reputable university.

Efforts to develop a scientific assessment instrument for the normal population in the 20th Century had proceeded in fits and starts. A few commercial efforts, notably Walter Clark and John Cleaver, had attempted assessment for the specific purpose of employee selection. Both utilized a short-lived theory (William Marston, 1928), which was neither fully developed nor considered credible by scientists in prestigious research institutions such as the University of Minnesota. The efforts of these early hopefuls would have died long ago, except for the vision of John Geier and Lawrence Meskin, and the respect and assistance from colleagues that included the developers of the MMPI, Strong Vocational Test, and the Miller Analogy Test.

Basic research and development is expensive and time consuming. The president of the University of Minnesota, O. Meredith Wilson, was prescient about the needs of a changing world. Wilson had immediate knowledge of Geier's capacity as an administrator when he reported directly to him as a Dean of Continuing Education and also knew of his research as a behavioral scientist. He had encouraged Geier to assist in the effort to bring health care into a new era. The mission was underway with a vote of confidence and additional university funding that supplemented the federal grant.

However, a basic question had to be solved: How do you convince a normal person, an entire body of normal people, that an introspective view is essential? This required a strategy that would gain the attention of professionals across the country. Geier, in an audacious move, set out to develop an assessment inventory that would have the same stature for the normal population as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory had achieved with professionals dealing with an abnormal population.

The assessment must 1) spark the person's interest in the process of introspection and 2) provide a means to develop a new concept of health manpower. Remember that health professionals were accustomed to assessing others – not themselves. Geier began by arousing their curiosity, a quality in existence since creation, and developed a corollary with an important linkage: “DISC Assessing and Achieving.”

*People desire to make sense of personal mystery  
to ensure what each person hopes to be.*

Geier tantalized students with a means to identify their normal behavior and gain their acceptance by coining a truism: “You cannot motivate people; you must create an environment in which people motivate themselves.” As a consequence, each person desired to learn how to create that environment and readily added these terms to their language: Dominance (D), Influencing (I), Steadiness (S), and Compliance (C). Geier's DISC assessment inventory was the first of its kind: A learning tool that was self-responding, self-scoring, and self-interpreting. It could be administered in a classroom setting with groups of students. Later, it would be administered to groups of participants in workplace settings.

Geier's DISC assessment inventory turned the world of psychology and personality testing on its head. Remember that the results of the MMPI were given to professionals, a psychiatrist or psychotherapist, not directly to a patient. The results of Clark's and Cleaver's early assessments for the purpose of selection were given directly to the employer, not the employee. Even Geier's distinguished colleagues, peer reviewers, and international scholars were confounded by a behavioral-based and university-based inventory that constituted a first – a discovery process and direct results developed and used by the respondent.

## Success and Its Complications

Yes, Geier's DISC inventory, Personal Profile (1970), was a phenomenal success. It was, indeed, a workable model and made its way into every work/life segment throughout the world. Here, the story of the two assessment inventories that emanated from the University of Minnesota diverges. The MMPI was an assessment inventory administered by professionals for professionals and was developed for a limited, abnormal population. In contrast, Geier's Personal Profile was intended for a normal population and was applicable to many settings. The needs of a changing world created the demand and transformed it into a commercial product.

Geier's early DISC assessment inventory has imitators and promoters who make fallacious claims of having engaged in the Minnesota research. If pressed, not one "publisher" or training organization can verify that self-promoting testimony. The existing, unauthorized users have merely copied Geier's rudimentary first version and, much to the chagrin of those reputable university researchers, have simply added a variety of sentences to interpretive print-out reports. Their alleged research is the work of a single statistician often based at a research center that does testing of the same items, most often those used forty years ago.

Only one version of Geier's early work, DiSC Classic (formerly the Personal Profile System), has a legitimate claim. Inscape, the authorized publisher, pursues a path without Geier's scholarship, influence, and ingenuity.

All DISC inventories, both the authorized Inscape version as well as all the unauthorized DISC developers, including Target Training, Thomas International, Extended DISC, and DISC Discernment, as well as other claimants would not exist had it not been for the development of Health Ecology and the credibility of the University of Minnesota. Geier gained credibility first from astute colleagues and then gained the trust of countless organizations in business and industry. These early clients would have quickly rejected the nature of DISC assessment had it not originated in an institution of integrity with world-renowned researchers.

## The persolog® DISC

However, Geier has continued to develop that early skeletal DISC model and has guided its unfolding over the past forty years. Recognized as the Universal DISC® Behavioral Model, these advanced DISC constructs are found in all Geier products published by persolog® DISC.

Currently, Geier's university-based efforts in advancing DISC theory and application are shared with persolog® DISC. Their joint mission constitutes a significant link in the continuing service that originated in Health Ecology with Dr. Geier and Dr. Meskin and with others that include Professor Dorothy Downey, a university colleague and co-author of the multiple inventories, books, and DISC materials.

persolog® DISC is fulfilling the vision to reach every continent in the world with these advanced DISC products. In consultation with Dr. Geier, persolog® engages in continual research, the life-line of credibility. persolog® is the only supplier that has established appropriate standards for all of the statistical investigations during the translating process. The number of translations is now \_\_\_\_ and still counting.

Geier's development of two separate response fields enabled a switch of methodology from the forced-choice format to the Likert Scale. The reliability of each and every item can be investigated. All other DISC models (in so far as they are investigated at all) with their forced-choice formats reflect Geier's early rudimentary DISC construct and cannot make the claim to that extent.

With regard to validity, persolog® DISC conducts investigations that utilize the NEO P-IR, a globally acknowledged non-clinical, big-five instrument. The demographic data are not drawn from the existing online system. Instead, every statistical investigation receives its own investigative format and must satisfy educational and psychological standards of the APA (American Psychological Association).

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### Acknowledgement and Support

persolog® DISC receives the wholehearted support of all those who contributed to Geier's work in developing DISC assessment both in the early period at the University of Minnesota and in the years that followed. Lawrence Meskin went on to become Chancellor at the University of Colorado, Health Sciences. Michael Johnson who joined Geier and Downey in founding Performax/Carlson Learning to distribute the early Geier products is currently a Professor in the Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota. Katie Szczech, former President of Rasmussen College System in Minnesota, now serves as President and CEO of Geier Learning in Minneapolis.

### All Aboard!!

The beneficiaries of the authentic DISC materials are clients who desire the "real thing," the use of proven training which incorporates an understanding of good news, a cycle from top performance and quality product. persolog® DISC gives people a new start where each focus leads to expansion. Plus, there is a way to deal with and retain the success equation.

The dynamic of the Universal DISC Behavioral Model is representative of practical tools and methods that are resources for the exceptional work organization. Catch an "eye" view of a flow that will provide a high-energy charge and a new burst of performance and delivery.

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