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Which Assertiveness Competencies Count Most? Assessing Assertiveness, Passiveness, and Aggressiveness with a Large Online Sample

Robert Epstein (re@aibrt.org), Krystie Mei, Amanda Newland, Leah Rivera, Shreya Singhi, & Ning Wang

American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology

Abstract

Data collected online from a convenience sample of 16,033 people from 83 countries (57.7% from the US and Canada) were analyzed to determine (a) which of four empirically-derived assertiveness competencies – Communicating Proactively, Expressing Your Needs and Desires, Standing Up for Yourself, and Presenting Yourself Confidently – best predicted four self-reported positive life outcomes and (b) how well those life outcomes were predicted by measures of assertiveness, passiveness, and aggressiveness. The self-reported life outcomes we predicted were Personal Success, Professional Success, Happiness, and the size of one's Circle of Friends. Regression analyses showed that the competency "Presenting Yourself Confidently" was the best predictor of four of the five desirable outcomes. Assertiveness was positively correlated with those life outcomes; passiveness was negatively correlated with those outcomes; and the relationship between aggressiveness and those variables was orderly and complex, suggesting that aggressiveness has both benefits and costs. Effects were found for gender and sexual orientation. Our results also confirmed the value of assertiveness training.