

# **Time Management Effectiveness Feedback Report**

**Sample User**  
**11/5/2009 8:25:57 AM**

# Introduction

The following information is provided to help you navigate the information this is included in your Time Management Effectiveness report.

## **1. Overall summary chart**

The summary results chart provides a quick visual representation of your scores in seven competencies that make up the Time Management Effectiveness profile. The scores to concentrate on are those above 3.5 (strong) and below 2.75 (need further development). Please note that these competency scores are averages; individual question scores can be viewed by clicking on the individual competency link.

## **2. Category description pages**

This report contains three sections for each of the seven competencies. The first of these three sections explains the category, lists average scores, and then provides high and low score interpretation notes. The second section provides a graphical representation of individual question scores. The third section provides broadly-based improvement actions for those individuals wanting to develop their competencies.

## **3. 10/10 Report**

The "10/10" Report page provides the raw scores for the 10 highest scoring questions and the 10 lowest scoring questions out of the 84. It also identifies which competency each question is from.

## **4. Course and Reading suggestions**

Development suggestions for the two lowest scoring competencies, including training courses and specific books that may provide some useful additional information, are included here.

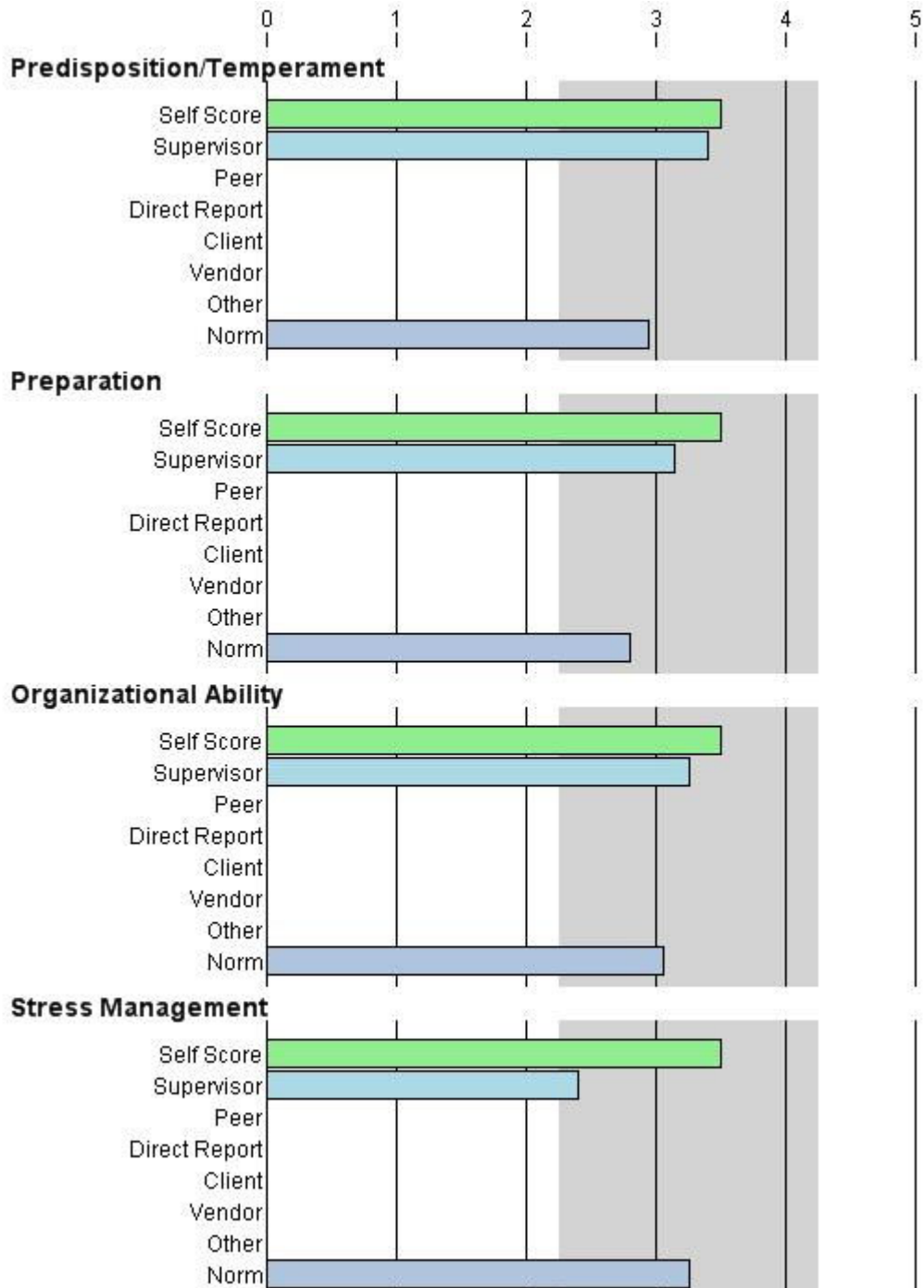
## **5. Development Plan**

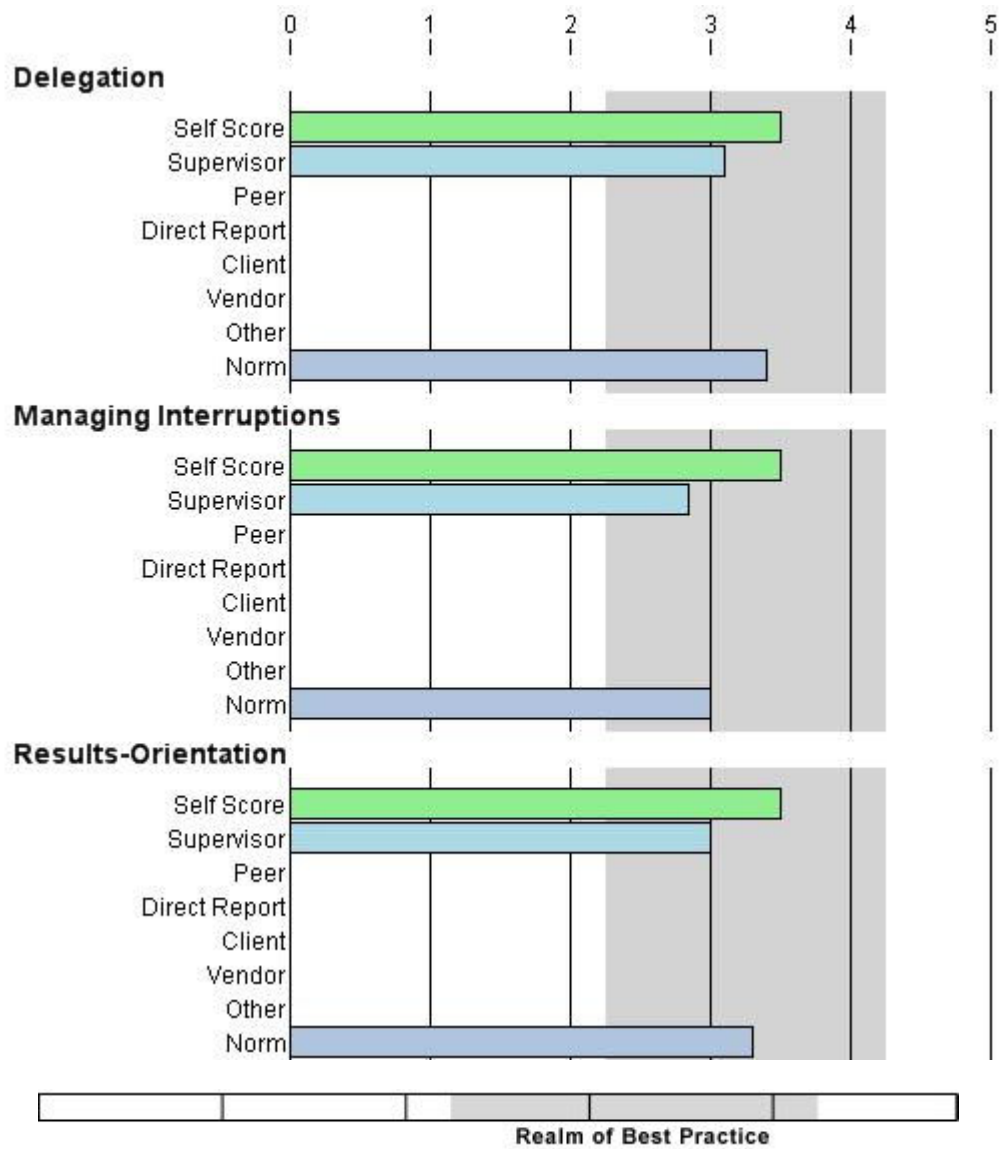
The development plan aggregates the five lowest scoring questions and puts them into a one page template. Individuals can use this template to record the actions they plan to take, as a result of their feedback, over the next twelve months. Individuals may draw upon the general guidance offered in their feedback report, or draw upon the "coaching tips" (see next section).

## **6. Coaching tips**

The overall output report includes detailed coaching tips for the five lowest scoring questions. These coaching tips provide not only information about the particular questions, but provide some specific advice on what individuals might do to improve their skills or learn new behaviors in the future.

# OVERALL SUMMARY



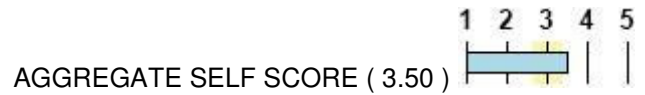


Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

# Time Management Profile

## PREDISPOSITION/TEMPERAMENT

This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition and temperament and internal levels of "drive." It asks the question: "How much do you feel the pressure of time-how hard do you drive yourself?"



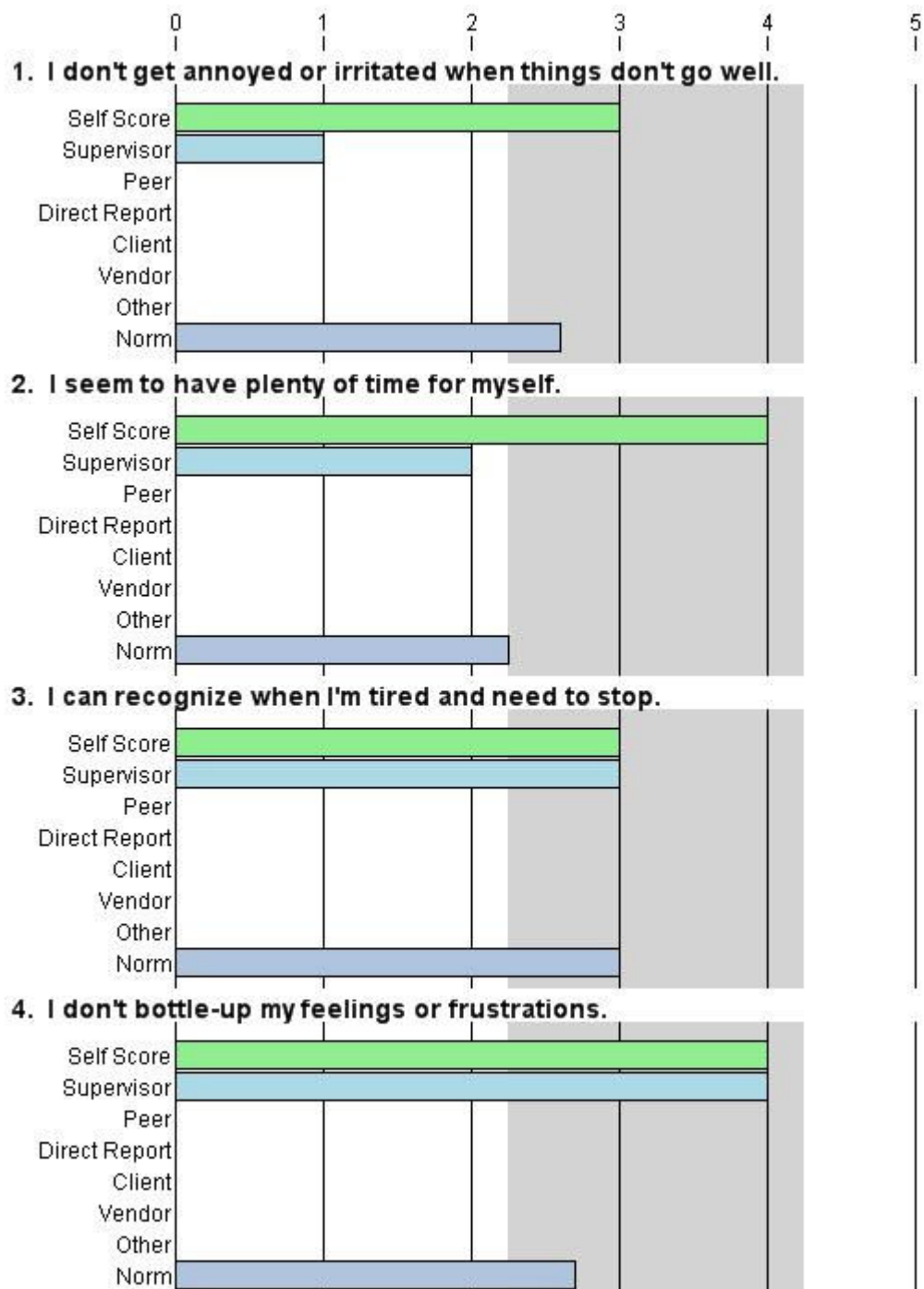
### Interpretation

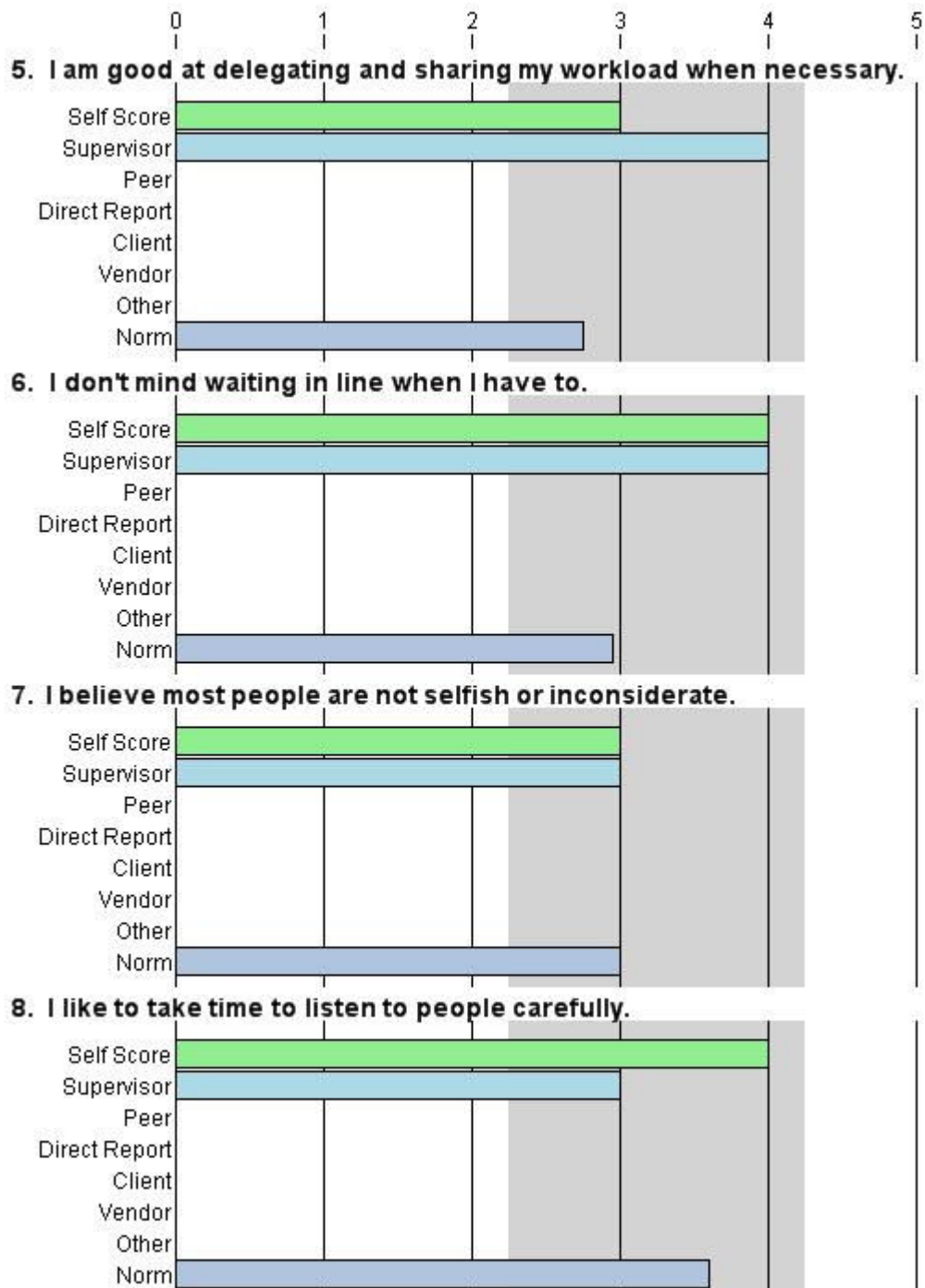
#### LOW (less than 2.75)

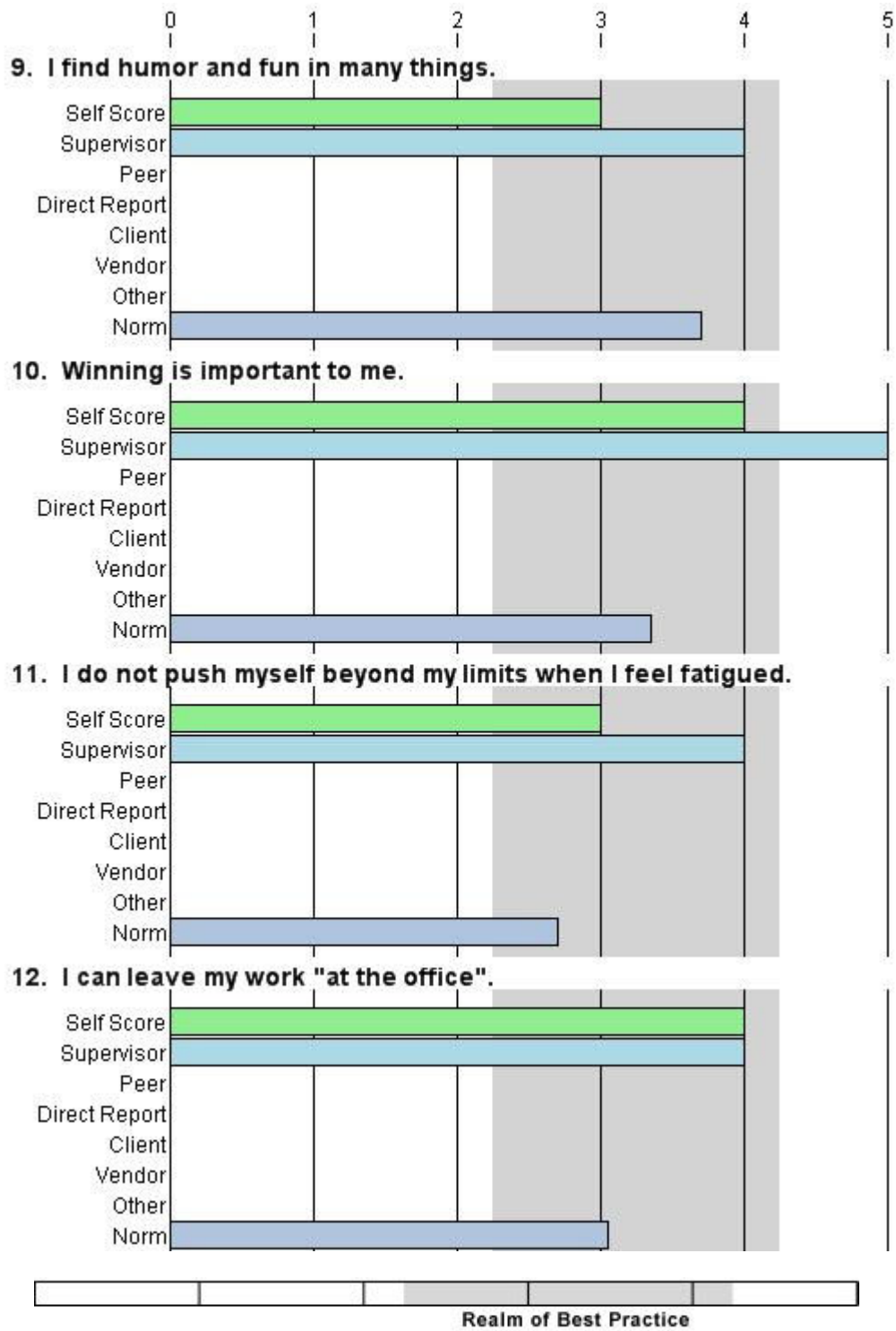
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest "Type A" behavior. This means that you are likely to see life in general as competitive, and feel constantly pressured by time. You tend to be tough on yourself and others. The Type "A" personality gets things done and is usually action-oriented. However, this behavior type takes a lot on, pushing themselves and others quite hard. Some Type A's will cram a lot into their day and thus impress those around them with their capacity to manage time with great pace and energy. However, the Type A often becomes overly obsessive about cramming in as much as possible, and sometimes fails to set aside enough time for contemplation or even time to relax or quietly reflect on where they are going.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest a so-called "Type B" behavior. This means that you are likely to be calm and relatively laid-back, and can relax, wind down, and easily avoid competitive pressures and unnecessary deadlines. The Type "B" tends to have fewer balls in the air. He or she works at a steadier pace than the Type A, and generally is quite good at controlling their pace and energy. A Type B is less likely to be a slave to the clock-sometimes even deliberately missing a deadline in order to maintain a healthy balance between work and a satisfying personal life (knowing others might think they are being less productive).







Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

**This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition and temperament and internal levels of "drive." It asks the question: "How much do you feel the pressure of time-how hard do you drive yourself?"**

### **Improvement actions**

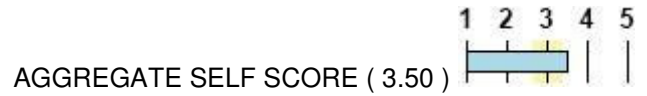
The Type "A" person can learn how to devote more time to their personal life and relationships. They should avoid setting so many deadlines and targets and begin focusing on improvements wherever there are "1" or "2" ratings. This approach of concentrating on low scores first should be used for every competency.

### **Predisposition/temperament**

- Design in more personal time to relax, reflect, think, and pursue gentle recreation, as often as you can.
- Stop working when you know that you are tired and clearly achieving less than your best.
- Try not to fill up your day with as much activity, targets, and priorities.
- Plan this different and slower approach into your day at first, until it becomes more natural for you.
- Clearly separate your work from your leisure time, and keep the two apart as much as possible.

## PREPARATION SKILLS

This section on Preparation Skills examines how well you prepare yourself for important tasks or personal priorities facing you on a daily or weekly basis. It asks the question: "To what extent is planning ahead an integral part of your time?"



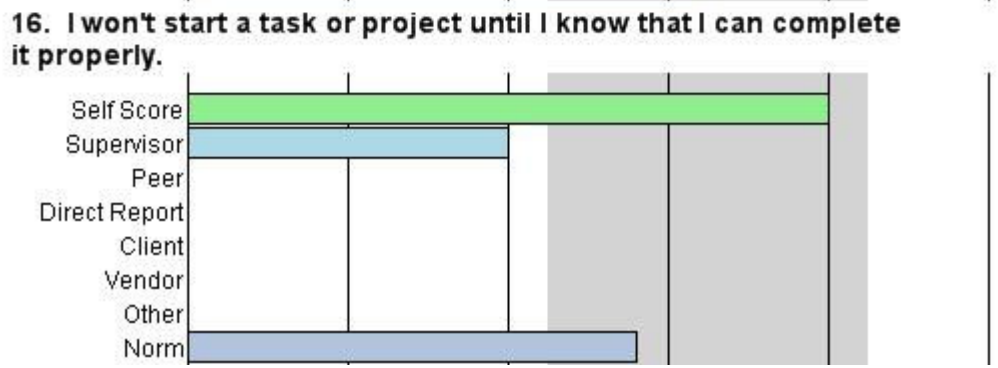
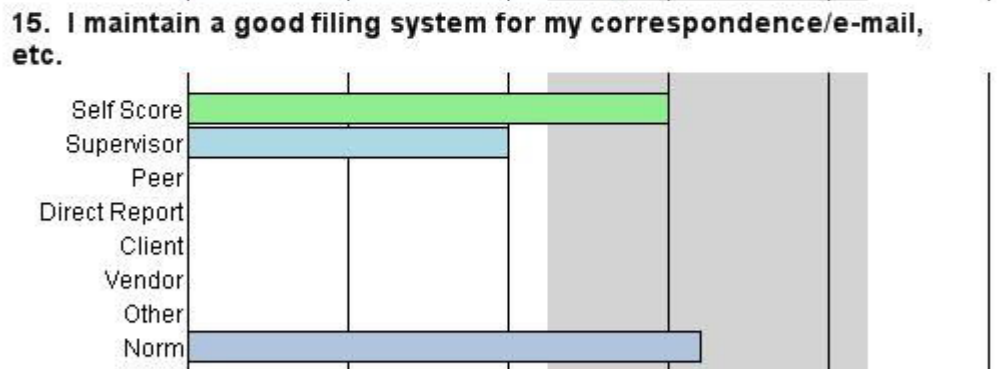
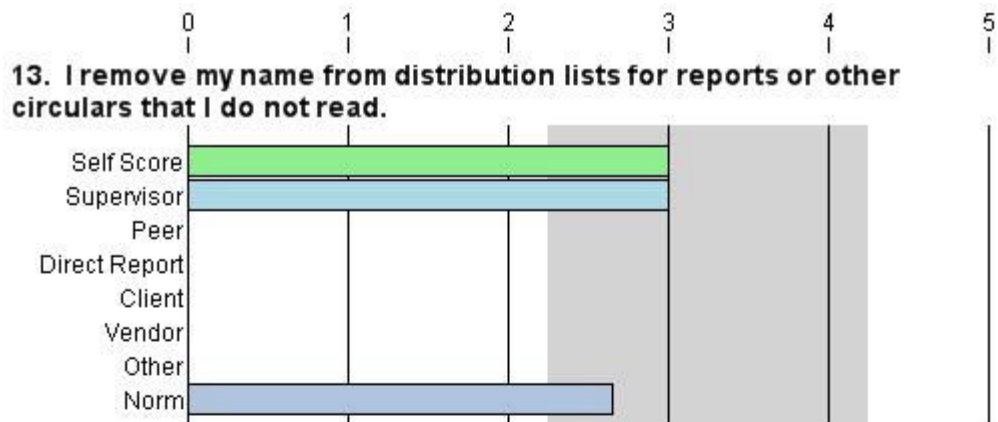
### Interpretation

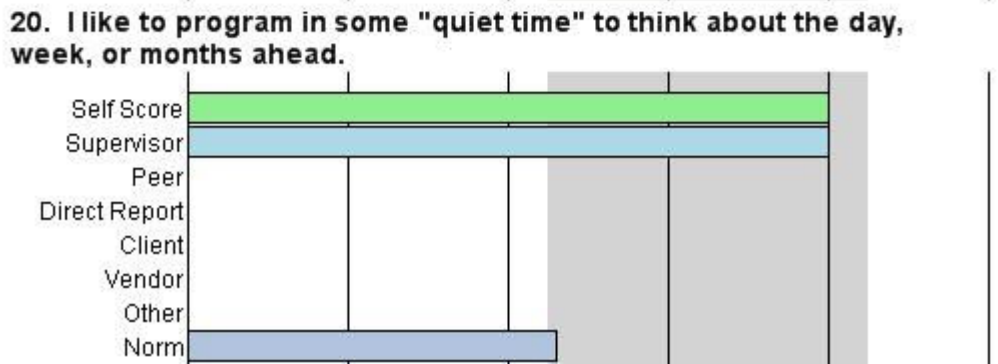
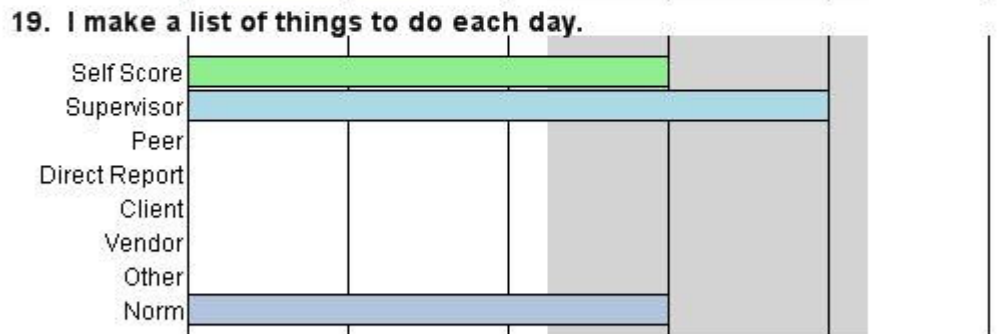
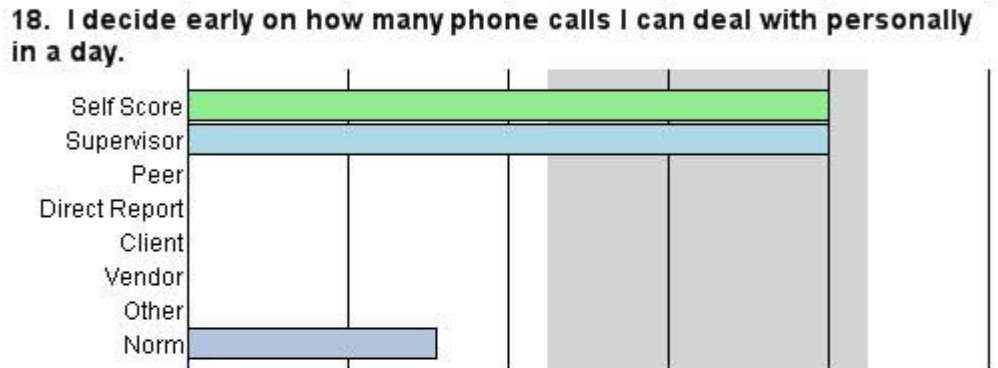
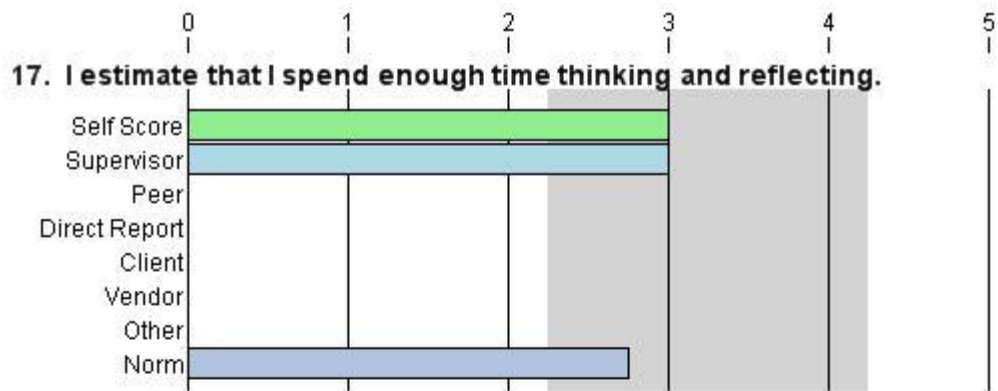
#### LOW (less than 2.75)

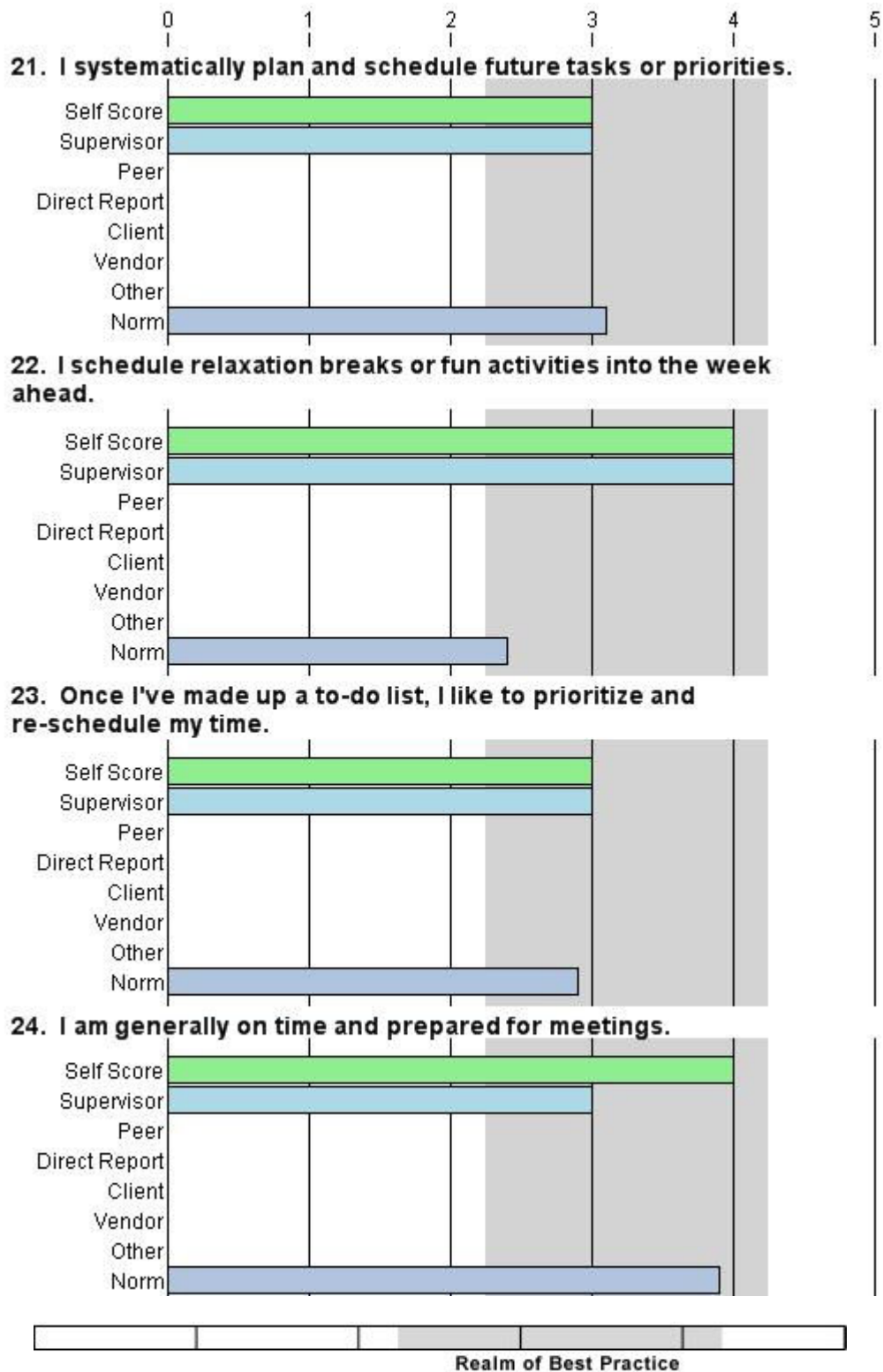
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you neglect planning or setting priorities and perhaps too often let events or interruptions dictate what your day will be like. The low scorer is likely to feel squeezed by time to the extent that they can do little or no planning ahead. This individual constantly feels that their time is not their own.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") are likely to mean that you are a well prepared individual or one who usually plans ahead to ensure that your known workload is tackled in a way that is sensible for you. An individual who scores high in this area finds time in every week to quietly plan or schedule ahead. This planning might be done over an extended period of time, just once or twice a week, or in short bursts, as needed.







Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

**This section on Preparation Skills examines how well you prepare yourself for important tasks or personal priorities facing you on a daily or weekly basis. It asks the question: "To what extent is planning ahead an integral part of your time?"**

## **Improvement actions**

The low scorer needs to actively set aside time to plan and prepare. This will not be easy at first, and might not come naturally or happen on a regular basis, despite good intentions. Planning or priority-setting should ideally be done at the beginning or end of each day, even if it is only for a few minutes. If this proves difficult, ask a friend or partner to remind you. If possible, use a planning system, a predesigned priority-setting list, or an organizer to give you some structure and keep you from losing scraps of paper or forgetting things.

## **Preparation skills**

- Force yourself to spend at least a few minutes each day with a pen and paper, and reflect upon what is important to achieve in the day or the week ahead.
- Make a list and prioritize it into MUST DO, SHOULD DO, and NICE TO DO IF THERE IS TIME categories.
- Stick to your daily plan as much as you can, once it has been thought through.
- Ensure that breaks, quiet time, and catch-up gaps are planned into each day.

## ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY

This section on Organizational Ability looks at how well you maintain a healthy equilibrium in your life. It asks the question: "How effectively do you control your time in order to achieve a good balance?"



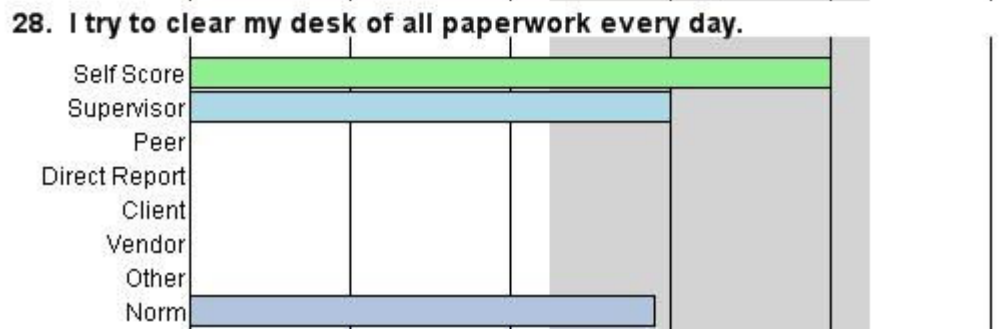
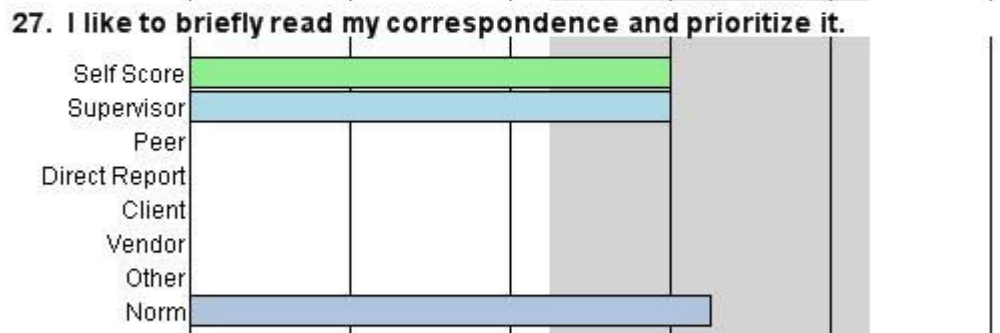
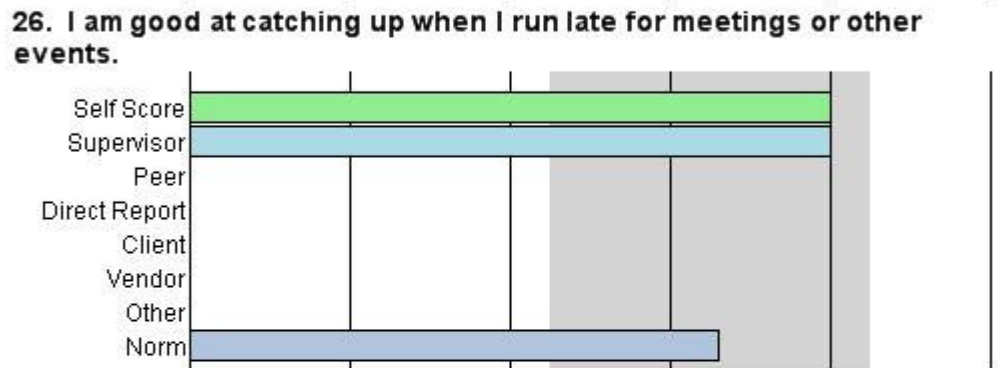
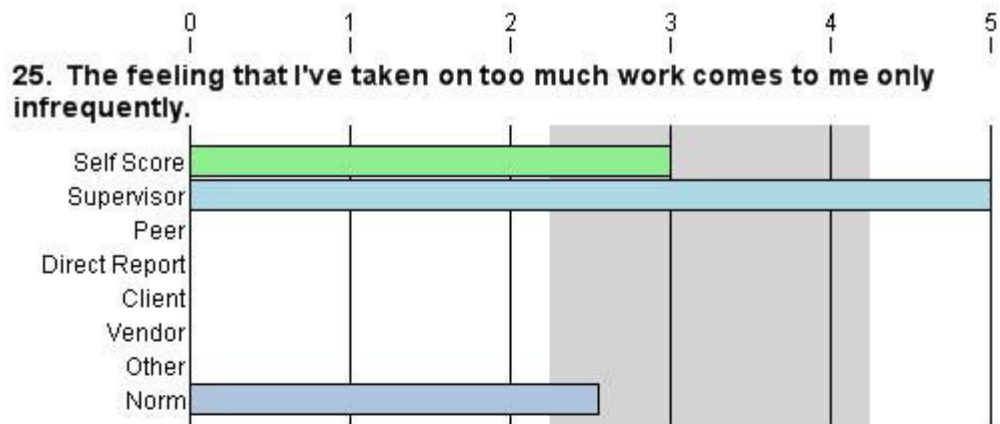
### Interpretation

#### LOW (less than 2.75)

Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you spend "little or no time" in systematically organizing your workload. You tend to tackle only the next tasks that face you, with limited forethought. A low score suggests that you believe there are more tasks than there is time in the day to do them. As a result, you usually take on whatever comes next or whatever seems to be most urgent, failing to organize yourself or others to be most effective and productive.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are able to organize yourself and others so that significant changes in your workload are quickly accommodated and re-prioritized. An individual whose scores are high believes that personal organization is a critical tool in their time-management tool bag. They understand the need to think about the ongoing fluctuations in workload and changes in deadlines, and will reorganize themselves and others in order to achieve the best result.

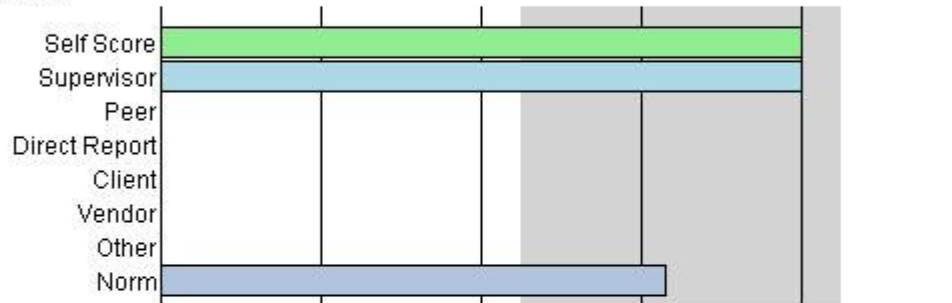


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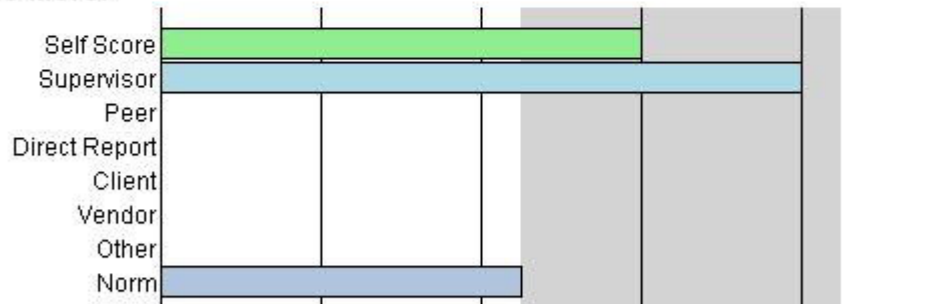
**29. I tend to start and finish my scheduled activities or events on time.**



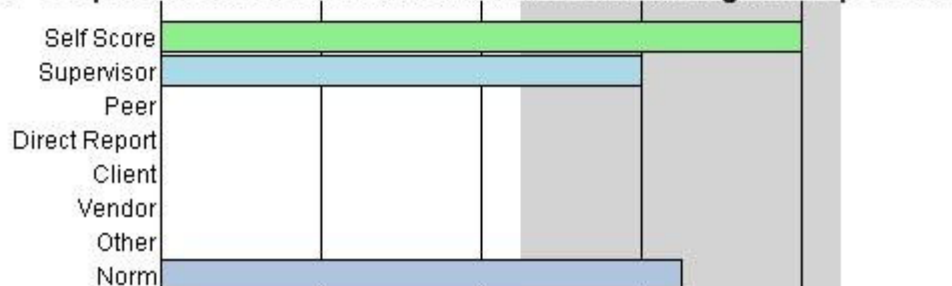
**30. I try to do something with every piece of paper that crosses my desk.**



**31. I limit my work time to a certain number of hours each day, and no more.**



**32. People who know me would describe me as an organized person.**





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**This section on Organizational Ability looks at how well you maintain a healthy equilibrium in your life. It asks the question: "How effectively do you control your time in order to achieve a good balance?"**

## **Improvement actions**

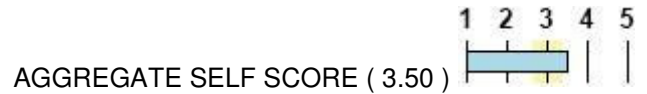
Low scorers need to recognize that people, resources, targets, deadlines, and available time will have to be organized in order to achieve the right results; you cannot float through each day like a piece of seaweed drifting on the sea of changing priorities. Low scorers must take charge of their personal priorities and learn that there is always an optimal sequence for tackling a series of future tasks or projects.

## **Organizational ability**

- Make sure that all your planned and unplanned activities of the day and week are always scheduled and re-scheduled as necessary.
- Set up a system to make sure that you can find things you need regularly, and think carefully about targets and deadlines for tasks or projects.
- Try not to make commitments until you have looked at your overall workload and worked out what is possible and how much re-organization will be necessary.
- Realistically recognize your own limitations, and those of others around you upon whom you may depend to meet your targets and deadlines.

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

This section on Stress Management looks at your ability to keep calm and stay focused when the pressure is on or a crisis occurs. It asks the question: "When the people around you are all losing their heads, can you keep yours?"



### Interpretation

#### LOW (less than 2.75)

Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that pressure distracts you and tends to throw you entirely off-course, causing potential strain and worry. A low scorer in this section is likely to become flustered, disorganized, or destabilized by high levels of stress during workload crises. This can lead to cutting corners, dropping priority tasks, working at home or late at night, or even causing unnecessary stress to others.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you manage pressure in a relatively relaxed and flexible way and generally do not see it as a threat to your key priorities. A high scorer in this section is likely to understand that pressure and stress are an inevitable part of day-to-day life, and accommodate it the best way they can. However, they tend to find creative ways to make extra time available and do not let the pressure get the best of them or encroach on personal or reflective time.

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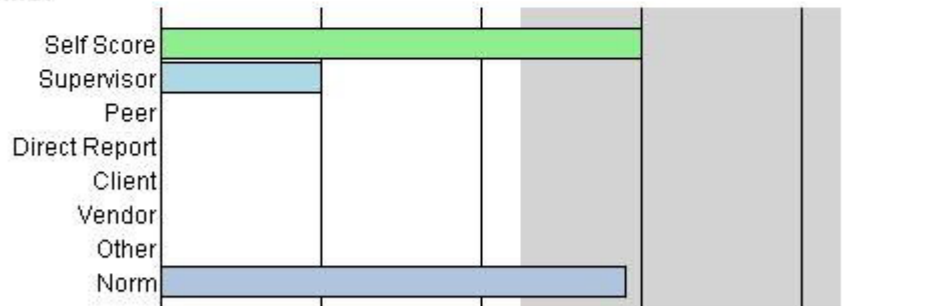
**37. I don't get flustered or annoyed when people arrive late for meetings.**



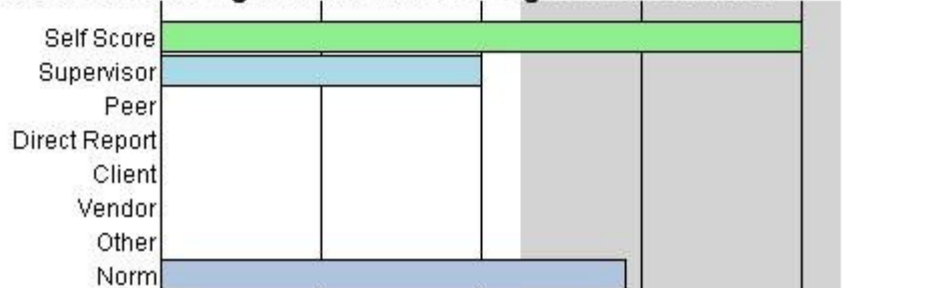
**38. Good time management means working more effectively--not "gettin everything done".**

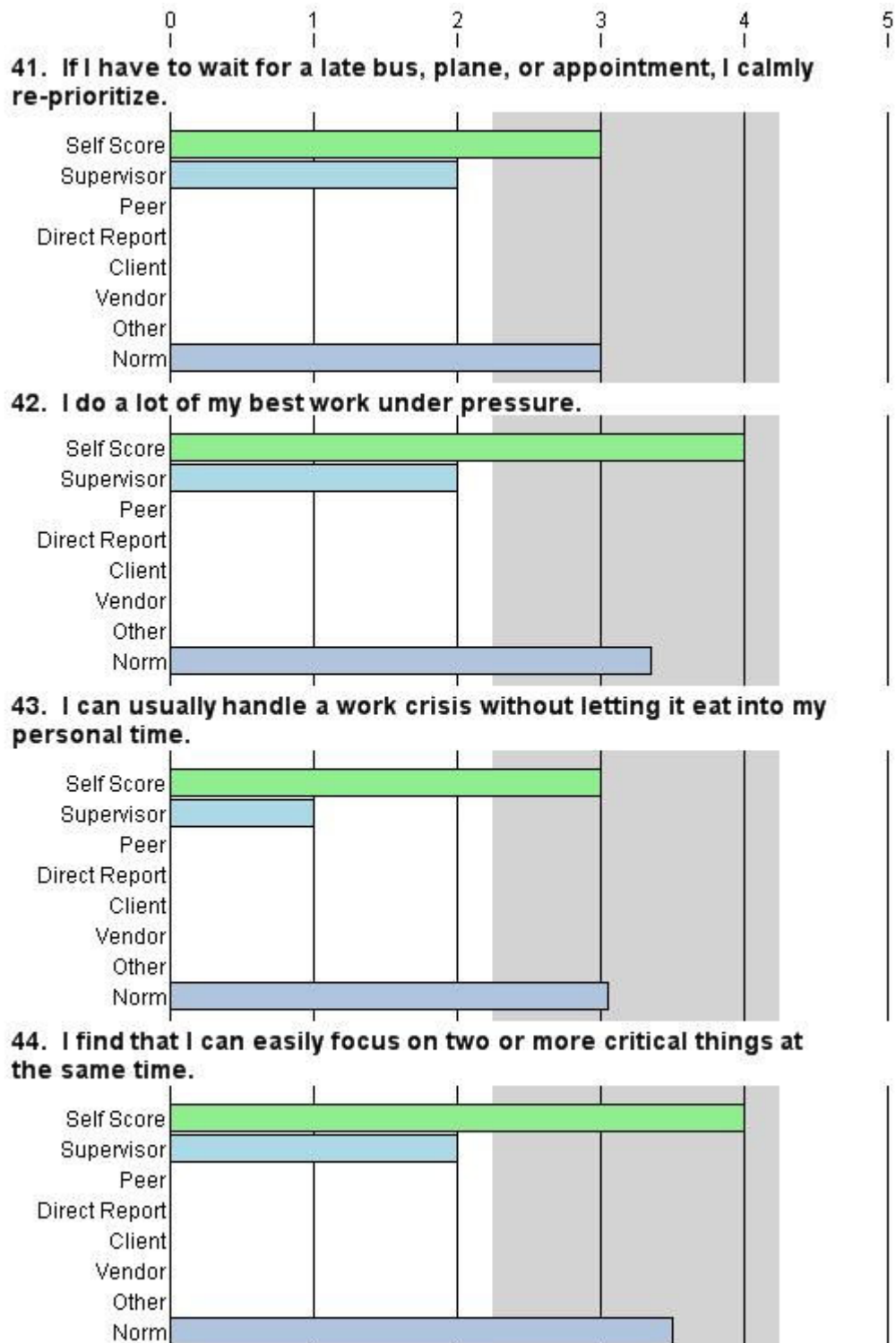


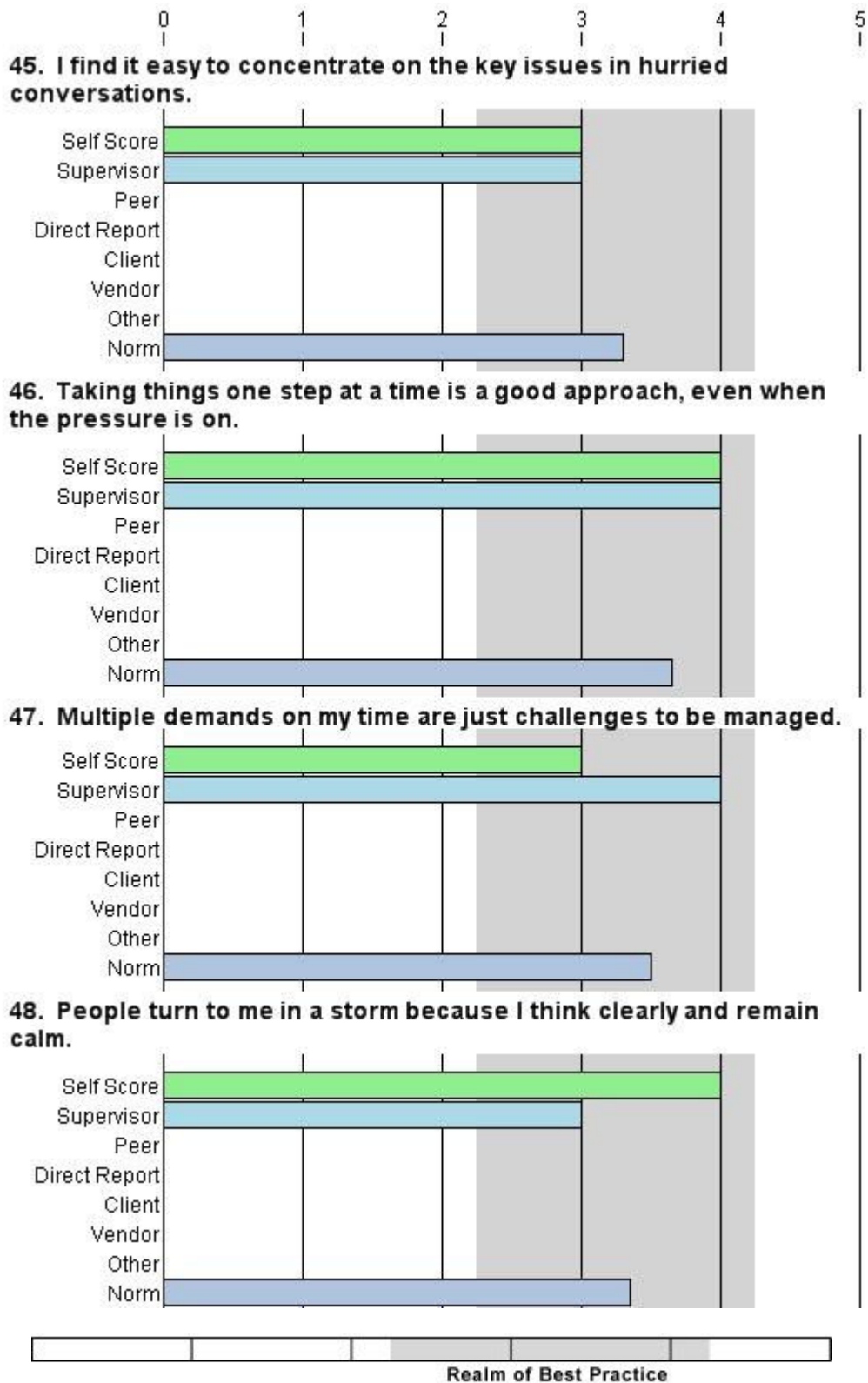
**39. If I am given a tough task, I tend to work on it a little at a time.**



**40. I avoid working late into the evening or on weekends.**







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**This section on Stress Management looks at your ability to keep calm and stay focused when the pressure is on or a crisis occurs. It asks the question: "When the people around you are all losing their heads, can you keep yours?"**

## **Improvement actions**

Low scorers need to accept pressure as something to be managed as flexibly as possible. Strong efforts need to be made to protect planning time, thinking time, breaktime, and relaxation time when pressure is at its greatest. Ultimately, pressure should be viewed as something to be creatively managed and reduced-not endured as a long-term "norm."

## **Stress management**

- Do some quiet reflective thinking or contemplation on the sort of pressure or crises that arise on a regular basis (or of a similar type when it occurs).
- Develop a range of flexible coping strategies that can be deployed when this occurs.
- Include more planning, stronger prioritization, delegation, more short breaks, or a number of other coping tactics into your schedule.
- Take your time and calmly rethink your most important priorities when the pressure is on or crises occur.

## DELEGATION SKILLS

This section on Delegation looks at how well you assess what you are capable of achieving and then seek ways to obtain assistance from others when necessary. It asks the question: "How effectively do you spread out your tasks or workload in order to stay personally in control or on top of things?"



### Interpretation

#### LOW (less than 2.75)

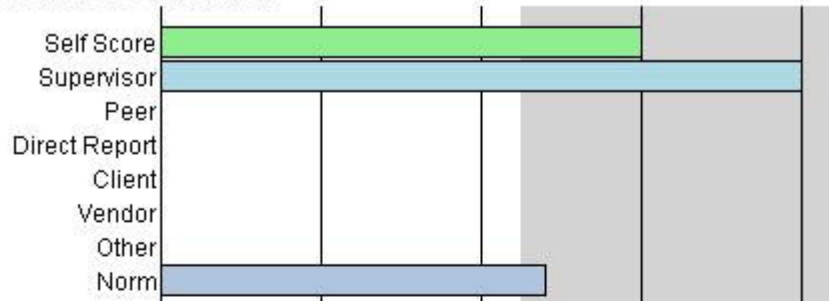
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you probably take on too much work, and think that asking others for help is a sign of weakness or failure (or that people around you are less capable or less skilled than you are). An individual who scores low in this area tends to take on most tasks themselves and has an "If a job is worth doing well, it's better to do it yourself" attitude most of the time. You might have to work harder to catch up or work longer hours than necessary because you don't spread your workload out more creatively.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

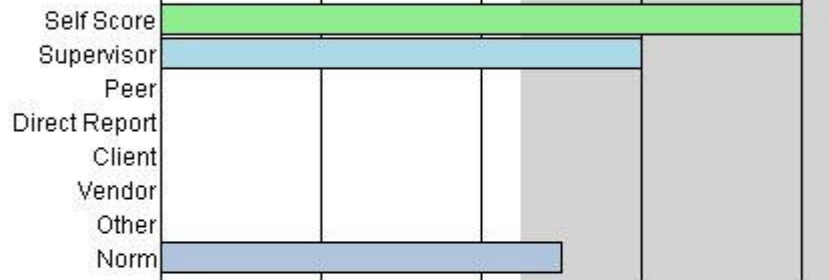
Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you recognize your own skill limitations and time constraints and look to find ways to get others to help you as much as possible. A high scorer in this area carefully evaluates their own limitations against their workload and looks for ways to match people, resources, and tasks (even when they do not have people working for them directly).

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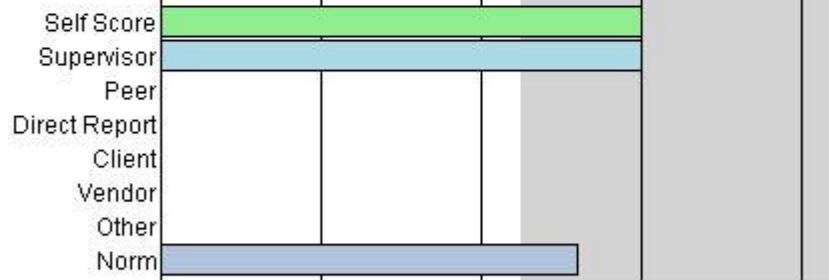
**49. I find that the only way to get everything done is to delegate as much as is sensible.**



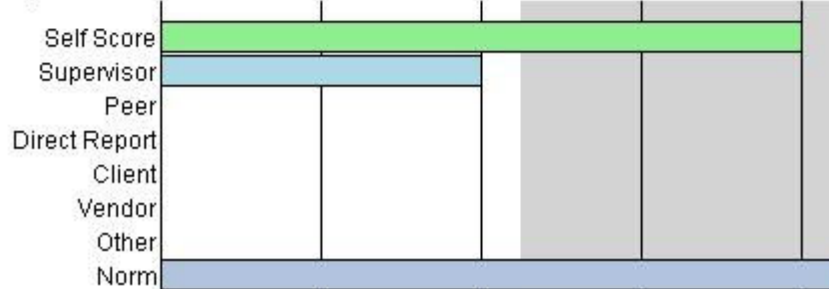
**50. I try to delegate tasks that I know I will be slow getting to.**



**51. I don't have to do all the to-do items on my list myself.**

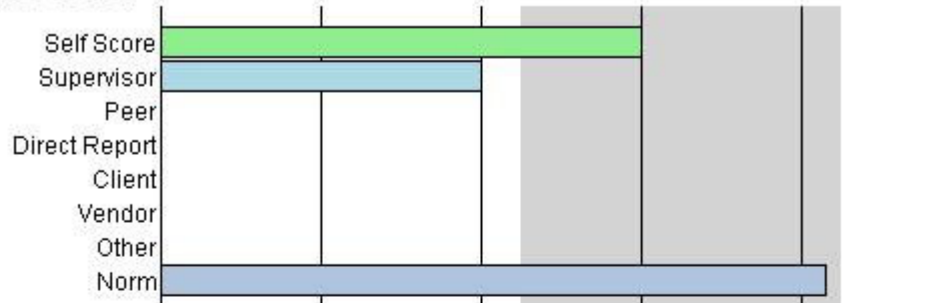


**52. When I'm asked to assist someone on a project, I usually try to help them.**

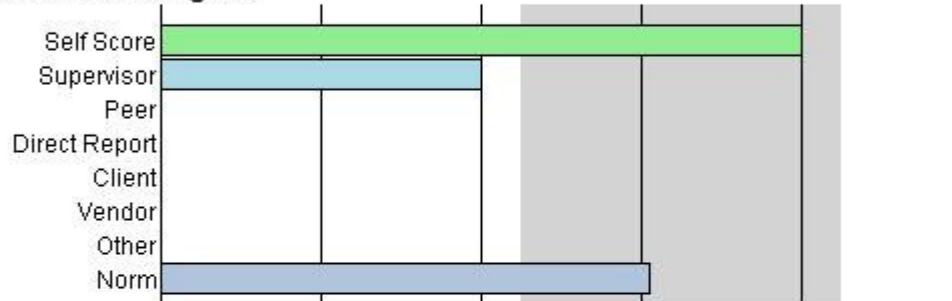


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**53. I am happy to take on delegated tasks that I have the skills and time to do.**



**54. I believe that you don't need people to work for you directly to be able to delegate.**

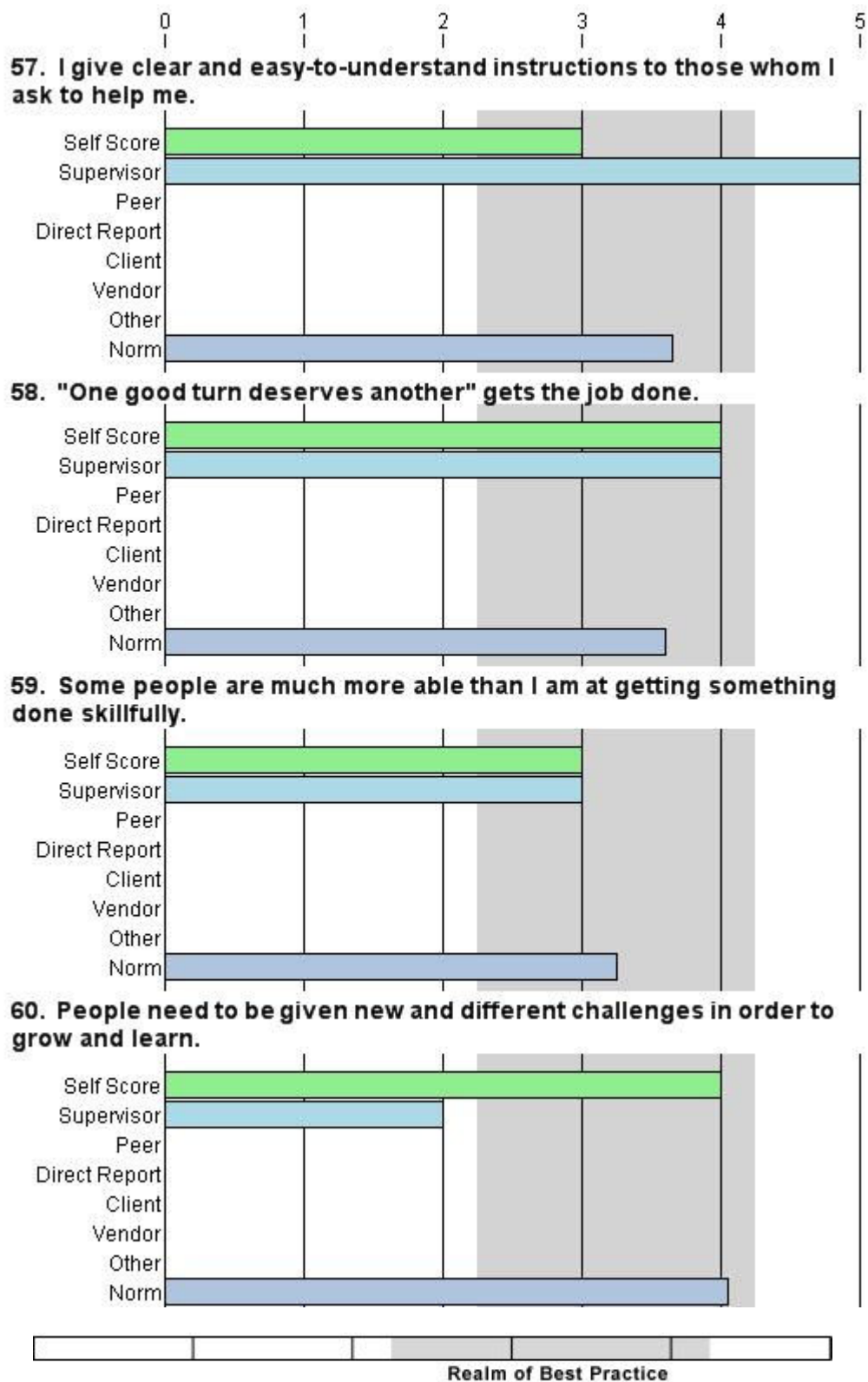


**55. I quickly assess when a target or deadline will be missed.**



**56. I enjoy coaching other people when the opportunity arises.**





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## **Improvement actions**

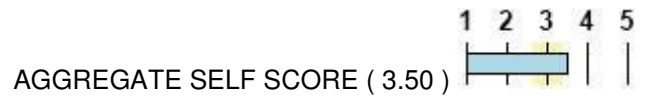
Low scorers in this area need to invest more time and energy in sharing their skills with others and in accepting the fact that some people can tackle a number of tasks as well, if not better, than they can. Start with delegating only small tasks or trading work you enjoy (or are good at) with work that colleagues might do better. The more you use this cooperative approach, the more natural delegation will be.

## **Delegation skills**

- Think about your colleagues around you and their skills and abilities relative to your own.
- Reflect upon the balance of workload that prevails in a given day or week (including the peaks and troughs).
- Look at your own skills and abilities and develop a list of tasks and activities that could become the basis of discussion for delegating to others, and for you to potentially take on some of their tasks.
- Consider what tasks or projects could help individuals to grow or learn new skills.

## MANAGING INTERRUPTIONS

This section on Managing Interruptions looks at how well you stay on track when unexpected events or people interfere with your plans. It asks the question: "How flexible are you in your work, should unexpected events or interruptions occur?"



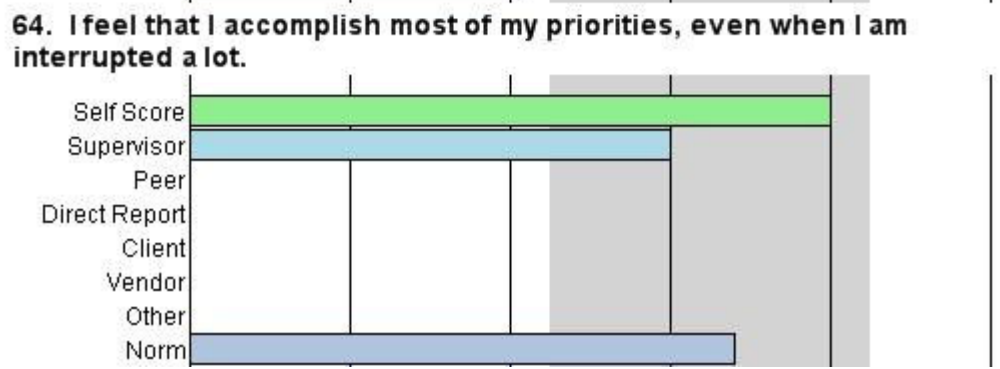
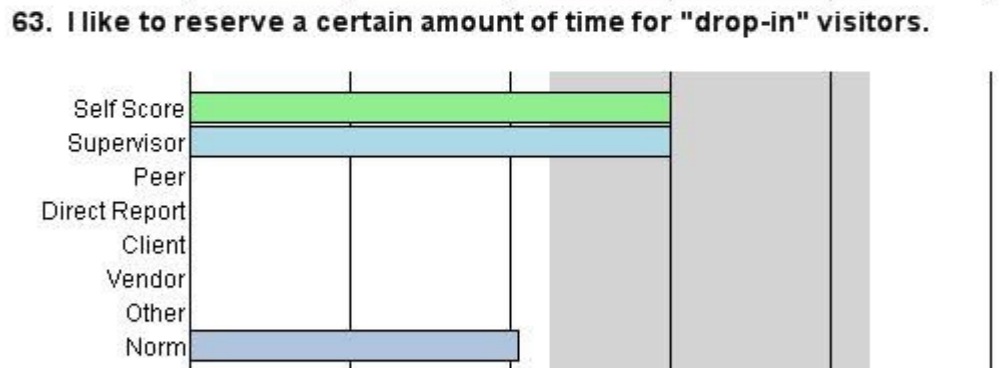
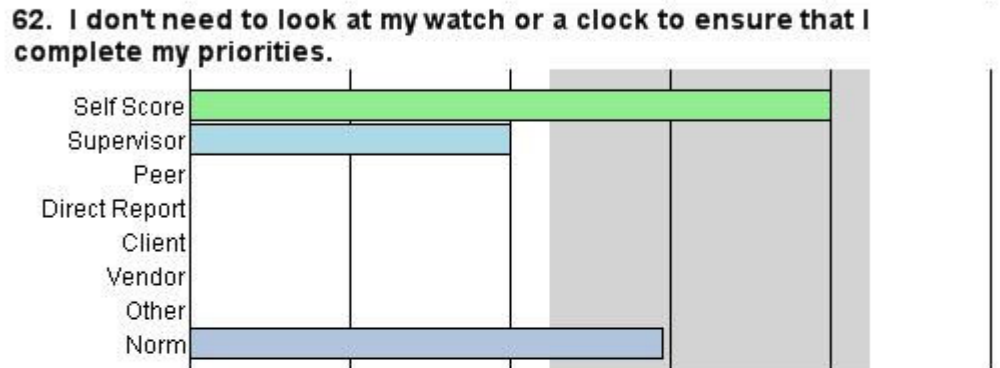
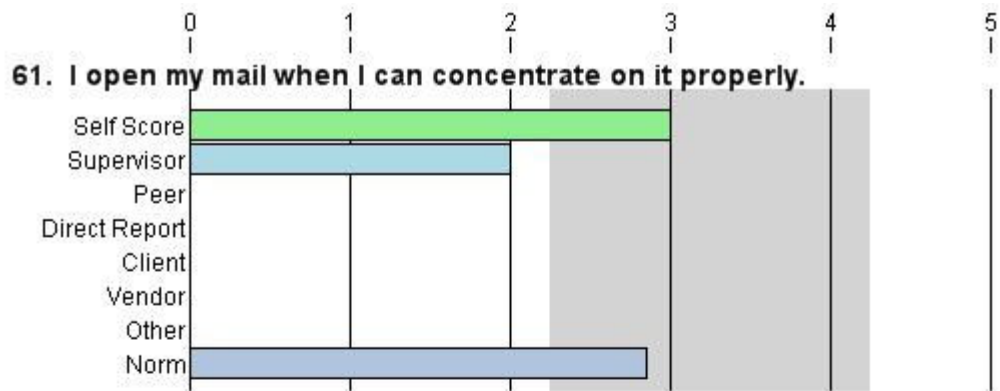
### Interpretation

#### LOW (less than 2.75)

Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you probably let interruptions steer you off-course and get in the way of greater priorities. Those whose scores are high in this area unwittingly give indications that it is okay for others to interrupt them when they like. A low scorer here generally dislikes interruptions and worries about when they will come (yet again!), but also tends to invite them by allowing current interruptions to take control. Other work (and some of it much more important) gets postponed or dropped altogether.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you take interruptions in stride, but also plan your day to accept a certain amount of unexpected variation. An individual who scores high here sends out signals that he or she should only be interrupted for important things, but also keeps these interruptions quite brief, quickly evaluating them for their importance in the broader picture.

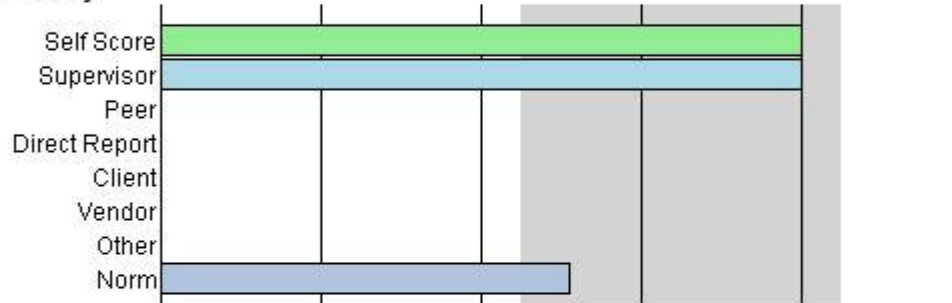


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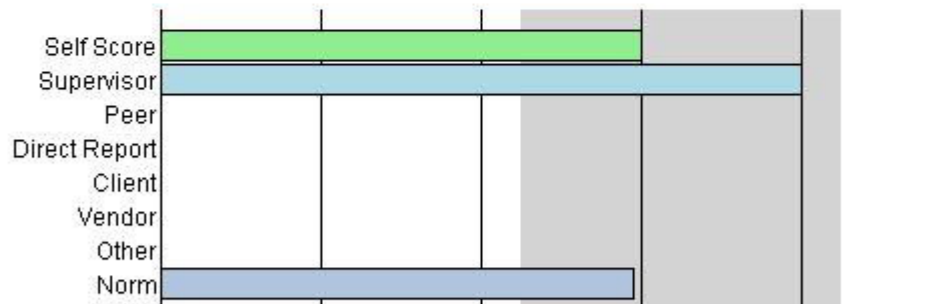
**65. I switch my calls to voice mail or turn off my cell phone when I don't want to be interrupted.**



**66. I am comfortable asking informal visitors to come back later if I'm busy.**



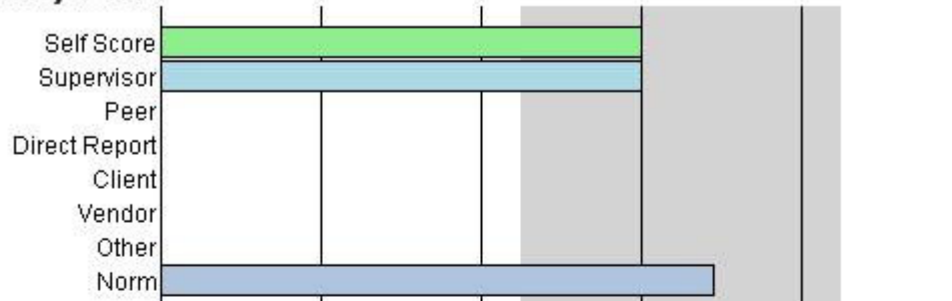
**67. I am not easily distracted by lots of activity or noise around me.**



**68. You should always expect the unexpected and not be phased by it.**



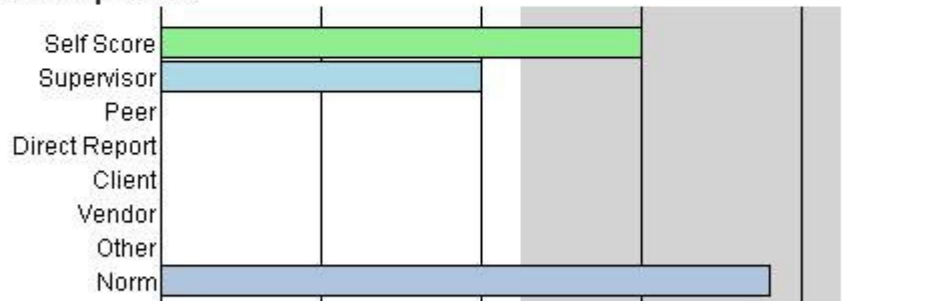
0 1 2 3 4 5  
**69. I maintain good humor when there are a lot of unexpected demands on my time.**



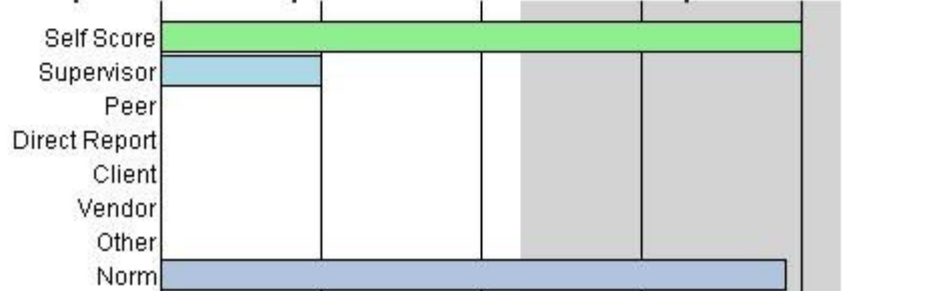
**70. Interruptions are often a welcome break from over-concentration.**



**71. People who know me would generally describe me as a pretty flexible person.**



**72. I operate on an "open door" basis as much as possible.**



Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

**This section on Managing Interruptions looks at how well you stay on track when unexpected events or people interfere with your plans. It asks the question: "How flexible are you in your work, should unexpected events or interruptions occur?"**

## **Improvement actions**

Low scorers in this area need to spell out just when interruptions are generally not acceptable (close the door of a room, transfer calls to voice mail, etc.). In addition, low scorers need to recognize that not every interruption requires their full attention and immediate action. Instead, such interruptions should be speedily assessed and allocated appropriate time on the prioritized to-do list.

## **Managing interruptions**

- List the main interruptions that you are likely to encounter (phone calls, mail, drop-in visitors, etc.).
- Design some time into your day or your week to allow for some interruptions (but be clear about how you will manage them when they occur).
- Assess how much time you will allow before you need to prioritize your workload and get back on track, when interruptions occur.
- Be firm in managing casual interruptions from people by clearly telling them that you have important priorities that you must do first.

## RESULTS ORIENTATION

This section on Results-Orientation looks at how well you maintain your focus on the results or goals that are most important. It asks the question: "How well do you distinguish between what is important and what is merely urgent?"



### Interpretation

#### LOW (less than 2.75)

Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you do not spend enough time thinking about which tasks or activities can move you closer to your goals. Low results-orientation can also mean incorrectly seeing all activity as being synonymous with productive work or output.

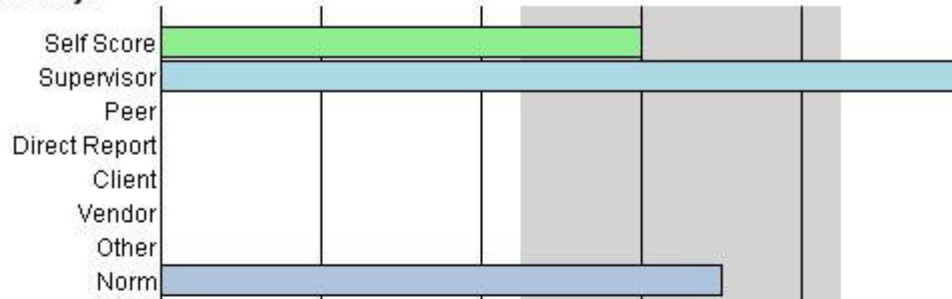
An individual who scores low in this area often thinks they are juggling a lot of balls in the air, but in reality might not be accomplishing as much as they think. Completing tasks or expending effort without direction ultimately means that important tasks or personal goals are not completed quickly enough.

#### HIGH (greater than 3.5)

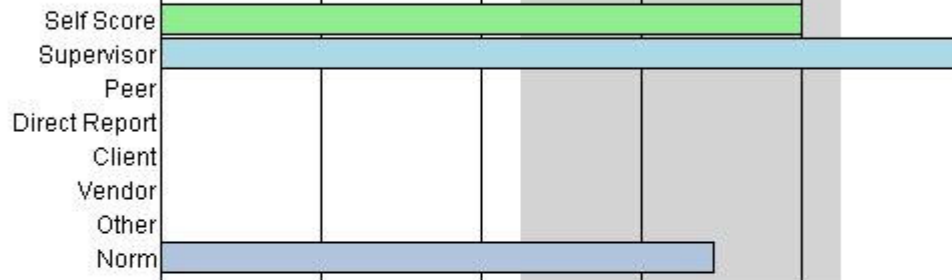
Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you usually retain a strong awareness of what is important and of a high priority. You ask others to be very clear about what they want to achieve and value most, and decide if these needs should take precedence over your own goals. A high scorer will usually understand that the tasks or projects that they spend the majority of their time doing should be tied to results that are important to themselves personally or to their organization.

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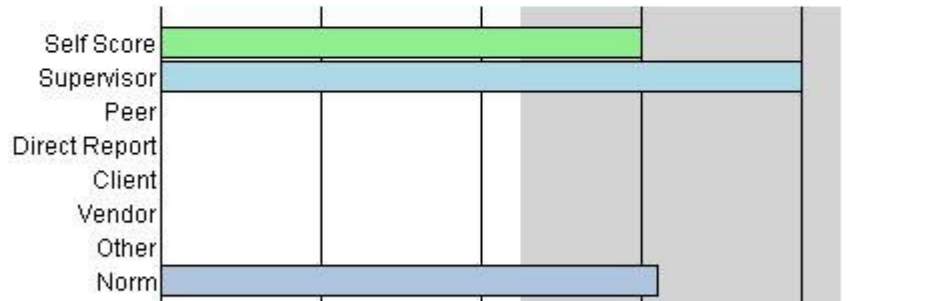
**73. I can typically get things done or achieve results at any time of the day.**



**74. The meetings I arrange generally achieve their purpose.**

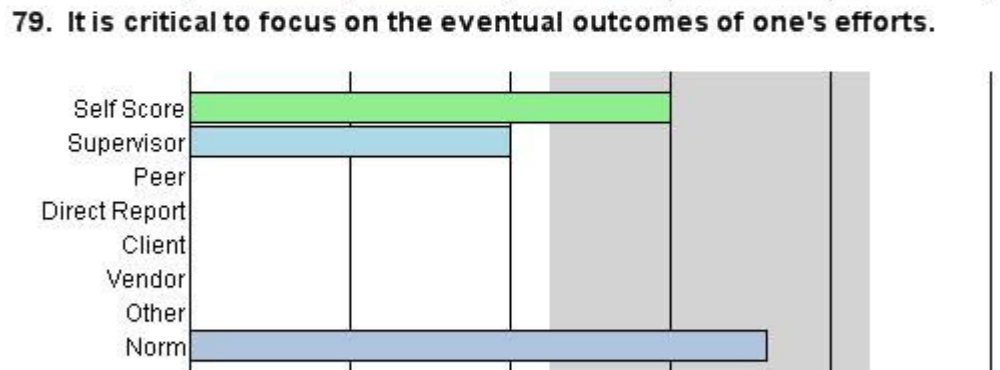
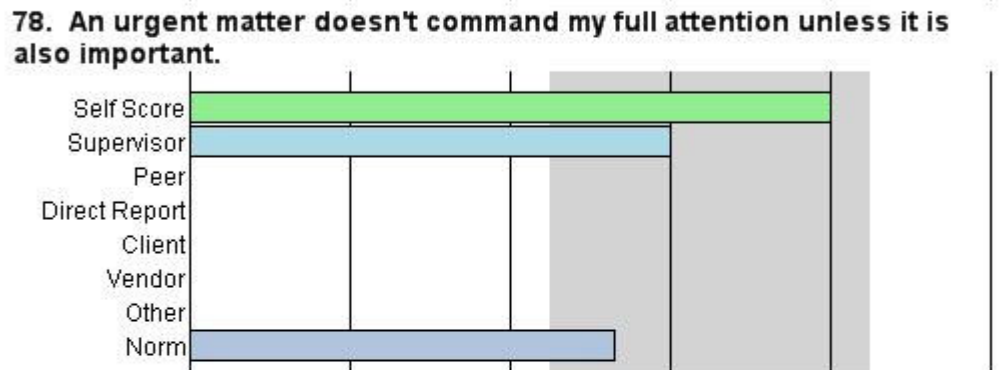
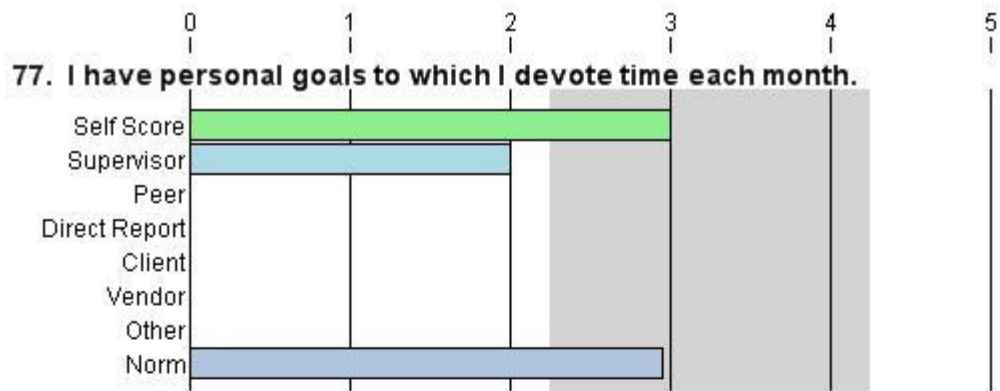


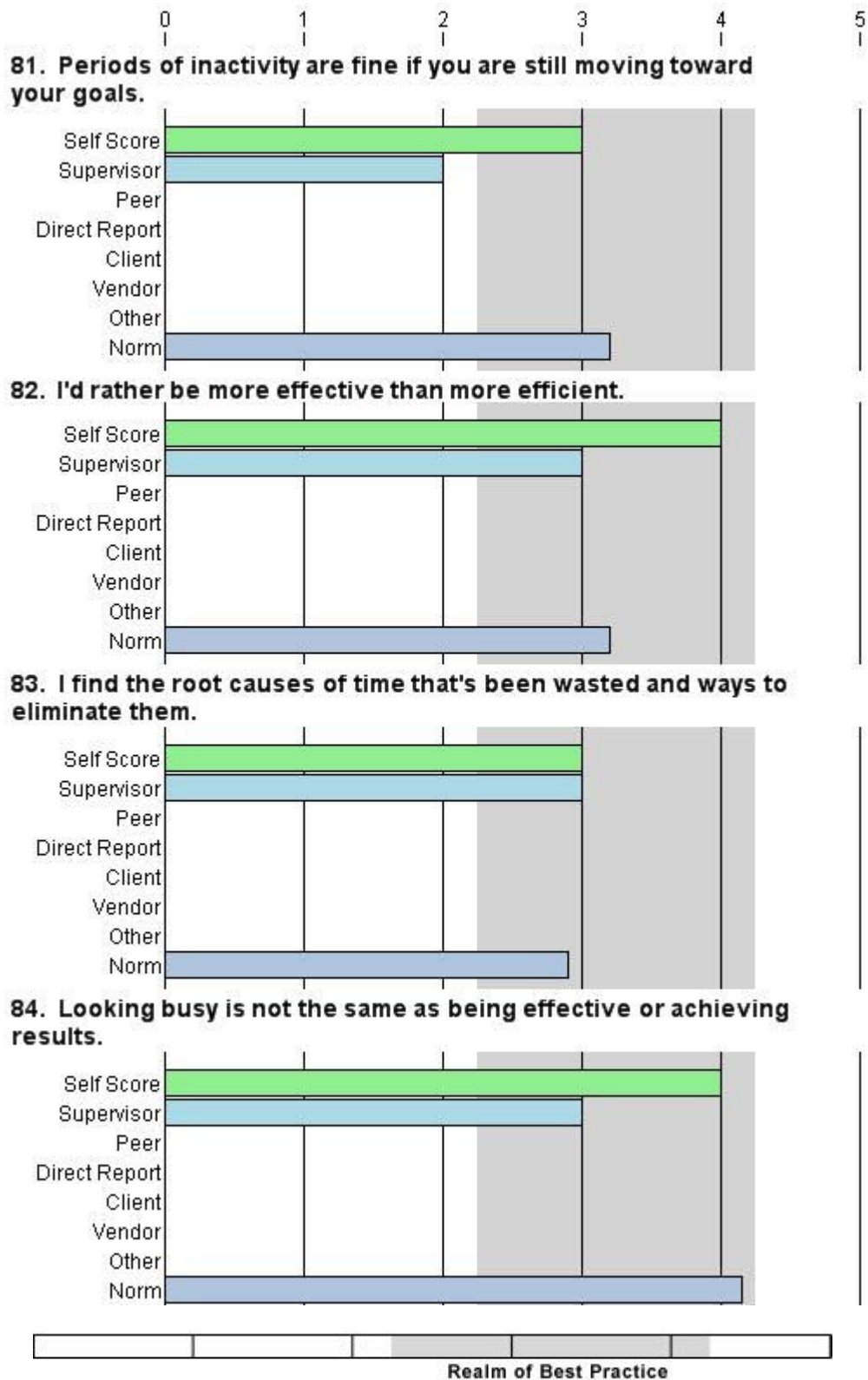
**75. I am good at skimming any newspaper or magazine article for ideas.**



**76. I easily recognize the priority of important tasks, even when they are not urgent.**







Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

**This section on Results-Orientation looks at how well you maintain your focus on the results or goals that are most important. It asks the question: "How well do you distinguish between what is important and what is merely urgent?"**

## **Improvement actions**

Low scorers need to keep an up-to-date list of what is important or what results they would like to achieve, and by when. Having done this, they should plan their work and organize their time so that anything that is trivial or of low value is dispatched quickly. A major part of the day should be devoted to moving closer to their goals.

## **Results orientation**

- Write down your major work related goals and your personal goals for the week or month ahead, and how much time appears to be needed to work on each.
- Write down the steps and tasks that will help you to move toward these goals or targets.
- Make sure that your expected results are built into your planning, scheduling, and organizational process.
- Seek out all the regular wasted time and effort in your weekly schedule and develop a comprehensive plan to eliminate it.

## THE 10/10 REPORT

### Top 10 Strengths

#### Predisposition/Temperament

10. Winning is important to me. 4.50

#### Results-Orientation

74. The meetings I arrange generally achieve their purpose. 4.50

#### Predisposition/Temperament

4. I don't bottle-up my feelings or frustrations. 4.00

6. I don't mind waiting in line when I have to. 4.00

12. I can leave my work "at the office". 4.00

#### Preparation

18. I decide early on how many phone calls I can deal with personally in a day. 4.00

20. I like to program in some "quiet time" to think about the day, week, or months ahead. 4.00

22. I schedule relaxation breaks or fun activities into the week ahead. 4.00

#### Organizational Ability

25. The feeling that I've taken on too much work comes to me only infrequently. 4.00

26. I am good at catching up when I run late for meetings or other events. 4.00

### Top 10 Development Needs

#### Predisposition/Temperament

1. I don't get annoyed or irritated when things don't go well. 2.00

#### Stress Management

39. If I am given a tough task, I tend to work on it a little at a time. 2.00

43. I can usually handle a work crisis without letting it eat into my personal time. 2.00

#### Preparation

15. I maintain a good filing system for my correspondence/e-mail, etc. 2.50

#### Organizational Ability

33. I can generally find all the things that I am looking for. 2.50

#### Stress Management

41. If I have to wait for a late bus, plane, or appointment, I calmly re-prioritize. 2.50

#### Delegation

53. I am happy to take on delegated tasks that I have the skills and time to do. 2.50

#### Managing Interruptions

61. I open my mail when I can concentrate on it properly. 2.50

71. People who know me would generally describe me as a pretty flexible person. 2.50

72. I operate on an "open door" basis as much as possible. 2.50

## COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

The following are general reading and course suggestions that may help you to better understand the two categories in which your scores were the lowest and to assist you in writing your development plan.

### Stress Management

Stress Management looks at your ability to keep calm and stay focused when the pressure is on or a crisis occurs. It asks the question: "When the people around you are all losing their heads, can you keep yours?"

#### Course Suggestion

- Managing Pressure
- Stress Awareness
- Dealing With Low and High Levels of Stress
- Relaxation Techniques and Methods
- Time Management Skills

#### Other Suggestion

- Complete the "Stress and Well-Being Profile". HRD Press: 1999.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects, and other possible support they may be able to offer to improve your skills.

#### Reading Suggestion

- Ten Skills for Working With Stress. Robert Burns: 1992.
- A Passion for Living. John Tickell: 1992.
- Stress Without Distress. Hans Selye: Corgi, 1997.
- The 14 Day Stress Cure - A New Approach for Dealing With Stress. Mort Orman and Frank Reuter: 1991.
- 60 Second Stress Management. Andrew Golizek: 1993.

### Managing Interruptions

Managing Interruptions looks at how well you stay on track when unexpected events or people interfere with your plans. It asks the question: "How flexible are you in your work, should unexpected events or interruptions occur?"

#### Course Suggestion

- Assertiveness Skills
- Strategic/Tactical Planning
- Workload Prioritization
- Negotiating Skills

#### Other Suggestion

- Analyze all of your interruptions in a given day or week and plot them on a graph or a pie chart so you can see which are the most significant that need a new handling approach.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects, and other possible support they may be able to offer to improve your skills.

#### Reading Suggestion

- The 80/20 Principle. Richard Koch: Nicholas Brearley Publications, 1998.
- 100 Quick Tips for Time Management. Doug McFarlane and Nicki Harding: The Short Attention Span Library, 1997.
- 101 Ways to Make Every Second Count. Robert Bly: Career Press, 1999.
- Managing Your Priorities From Start to Success. William Bond: Irwin, 1996.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the space below to write out your personal development plan for the next 12 months based on your results. Draw upon the general improvement actions in relevant areas of the report, and ideas that are suggested in the attached coaching tips.

1. I don't get annoyed or irritated when things don't go well. Score: 2.00

**Action to Take:**

39. If I am given a tough task, I tend to work on it a little at a time. Score: 2.00

**Action to Take:**

43. I can usually handle a work crisis without letting it eat into my personal time. Score: 2.00

**Action to Take:**

15. I maintain a good filing system for my correspondence/e-mail, etc. Score: 2.50

**Action to Take:**

33. I can generally find all the things that I am looking for. Score: 2.50

**Action to Take:**

## Predisposition/Temperament

**Don't let yourself get annoyed or irritated when things don't go well.**

Float, don't freak out when things go wrong. After all, some things are inevitable. People make mistakes and sometimes even rise to the level of their incompetence. Raise your threshold of tolerance for ambiguity and chaos, and learn how to control the controllable and live with the uncontrollable. For the sake of your sanity, if nothing else!

You might not like the sound of this approach, so consider this common-sense advice:

1. You can't always get what you want. This is a hard truth to accept in the best of times; if you punish yourself with absurdly high standards of perfection, however, you will fail on at least a few occasions. High standards are important for quality control and motivation, but if your expectations for yourself and others are too high, you set yourself up for failure. Avoid setting all-or-nothing standards and explore alternative, more-flexible strategies.
2. Be philosophic about not getting everything that you want. Perhaps it was meant to be! Look at these disappointments as second chances to refine and regroup, and try to isolate the factors that turned out to be the weakest link. Sometimes an early problem is a blessing, saving you from making far-more-dangerous mistakes later on.
3. Failure can be very instructive. Anything less than perfection is a learning opportunity. Think of alternatives, and wait for circumstances to change. They will, sooner or later.
4. Nobody likes a poor loser, but *everyone* likes a gracious loser who can admit that they were wrong. Accept defeat gracefully and you will be in a better position to win the next one. You might also find that others will feel a little obligated to you because you were gracious. You will be able to cash in on that obligation on the next go-round.
5. Don't get mad, get smart. Allowing yourself to be emotionally wrecked can do your health a lot of damage. Impatient people often end up being patients! Learn the strategy of patience: don't trip over your short concentration span, and don't get carried away by the heat of the moment. Most people won't remember the cause or even the details of the argument several days, weeks, or months afterward. If a proposal or request was turned down, put it aside for the time being, or continue to quietly work on it. Brutally re-evaluate to see if anything will stand up sometime later on. If so, quietly re-introduce your idea at a later stage in a modified form so that it looks like a new idea—not something that already looks shot full of holes. See if you can get authorization to do it on a trial basis.

## Stress Management

### Break a tough task down into smaller chunks.

As the Chinese proverb has it, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. One extremely useful time-management skill is to break large or tough tasks down into component parts. If we don't learn this skill, we either do the task badly or become so discouraged by the immensity of it that we put it off. Here are some ways to get started:

1. Try not to be overwhelmed by the sheer size of a task. Look at it with new eyes, and try to break it into digestible chunks. Look for patterns and inter-connections—the “skeleton” beneath the skin.
2. Get others to look at the task, as well. Other people are invaluable resources: They can see things from a different perspective, partly because they have different skills and partly because they have different values and cognitive styles. Maybe they can see different ways in which the task can be broken up.
3. Once you have broken a task up into component parts, can you work out the best sequence in which to tackle the sub-tasks? What is connected to what? What comes logically before what? What cannot be done without something that precedes it being done first?
4. Be careful about the way you choose to do the sub-tasks. Sometimes it makes sense to pick the easiest ones first, and then gradually ease into the total task. This is a way of procrastinating from doing the really hard stuff, however, so be careful here, too. Such procrastination can really blow the project out of the water. Pick the worst, most objectionable, most demotivating thing to do first, and once that is out of the way, everything else is a breeze!
5. Be mentally disciplined enough to multi-task: develop the ability to switch back and forth between tasks, without losing concentration. Think of several projects or files as being “live” at the same time. Keep more than one set of files open on your desk or your computer. Alternately, develop the skill of being able to temporarily close a file. We don't keep all our crockery, cutlery, and pots and pans out on the kitchen counter just in case we need them, because there would be no place to prepare the food. File and remember, don't file and forget.
6. Track and record the different parts of the task. Put up a progress chart that shows milestones, dates, and other critical data (for example: 10 percent done; 25 percent done; 50 percent or one-half done). Each time you complete a subtask, draw a bold line through it on a list; this will be very satisfying and very motivating! Celebrate milestones, particularly if others are involved: Give words of praise and applause at a meeting; take people to lunch; post a memo on a bulletin board or on the computer network. Praise the parts, and the whole will arrive so much quicker.

## Stress Management

**Try to handle a crisis without letting it eat into your personal life.**

The simplest way to handle an out-of-the-ordinary situation is to take all the time you need in order to deal with it, including your personal time, if necessary. But the simplest way is not always the best way. Don't fix one crisis by creating another crisis elsewhere. Personal responsibilities are just as real. Perhaps some of these tips will work for you.

1. The easiest way to handle crises is not to have any! When you step in the middle of one, make a mental note to do a post-mortem. Why did the crisis occur? Was it a one-time-only event, or is it part of an ongoing pattern? If it is part of an ongoing pattern, then this is, in a strange way, a good thing: Any pattern that can be detected can be worked on to eliminate the root cause.
2. When a crisis occurs, don't assume that the only part of the day with any flexibility in it is your personal time. Look at your schedule. What can be shifted or deferred? Always try to build flexibility into your schedule so that you have freedom to move when the call to battle stations is sounded.
3. Can anyone else help you? A good way to solve a crisis is to get help, and a good way to get help is to have in place a culture of cooperation and sharing. If someone helps you this time, you can help them the next time. If you have a good track record here—if you really mean what you say and are completely reliable—then you should have no trouble getting help. If you've been less than helpful in the past or are all talk and no action, you will find few allies, and it will be nobody's fault but yours. Cooperation and helping are more than feel-good ideals; they are practical realities. If a culture of cooperation and sharing does not yet exist, start working on creating one now.
4. If you can't avoid giving up your personal time for one particular crisis, is it possible to trade off or negotiate some comp time? For example, if I work two nights in a row on this particular nightmare, can I take a day off next week?
5. When a crisis comes, don't panic. When we panic, we do things badly, and things done badly usually have to be done again and again. In other words, panic is literally a waste of time. Stay cool, and do it right the first time.

## Preparation

### **Maintain an effective filing system for correspondence, e-mail, and so on.**

We are all fighting an information war, but only some of us are winning it. If we do not devise ways to tame the torrent of paper and pixels that are aimed at us, we will go under (if not today, then tomorrow; if not tomorrow, then some unnamed day of doom). Better to try and get it under control.

The first step is to set new priorities. Most of us think that organizing files is a trivial activity hardly worth bothering with, or something that will solve itself. But don't fool yourself—filing is a major problem. Here are some solutions:

1. Consider setting aside a large chunk of time to simply purge your filing system. That “chunk,” however, might well be a day or more, and you might have to involve other people. A British department store has a “tear up and throw away” day where a large proportion of the office staff comes in wearing old clothes and thinking cruel thoughts. They then proceed to tear up and throw away what is not needed. A whole day? Well, why not? If a whole day is less than half a percent of the working year, that might save you at least half a percent of your work day: about two minutes. If you think a filing system that actually works can save you more than two minutes a day, it's not such a ridiculous idea after all!
2. Filing cabinets have been described as “vertical tombs.” Someone once figured out that about 90 percent of material put in filing cabinets is never looked at again. If you don't want to spend an entire day or more on doing a purge of the system, work on it salami-style—one chunk at a time (one drawer of your filing cabinet a week, for example).
3. Keep it? Or chuck it out? Again, here's the rule: If you don't keep it, can you get it elsewhere? If you can't get it elsewhere, then it's probably best to keep it.
4. Don't let your filing system operate in a vacuum: Put it in your planner so that you know when to take action on various documents or accounts. If your filing cabinet is the “space” dimension, then your schedule or planner is the “time” dimension: Make sure that they intersect.
5. Take time to check out the capabilities of the computer software you are working with. Can it track correspondence, alert you to upcoming deadlines, organize correspondence into grouped files, track cross-references to other files, or coordinate your work with that of your colleagues? Most people only use a small percentage of what their software packages are capable of: try to get adequate training on yours. There's nothing worse than finding out two years from now that there was actually no need for you to be as frantically busy as a one-armed paperhanger.

## Organizational Ability

**Be sure you can easily find all the things you are looking for.**

Are you master of all you survey at work? Or do you sometimes feel like an ant staggering through a pile of rubbish? Here are some good suggestions:

1. Know the history. What's the rationale of why everything is where it is? Who is the keeper of the corporate memory around here? Spend some time with this person to learn what is where and why. This, of course, should be part of any formal induction and information program, but it sadly isn't.
2. Get serious about stationery and office equipment, and systems. The only thing more expensive than having stationery, equipment, and systems that work is not having stationery, equipment, and systems that work! You will have to fight to fund these things, but they are tools and should be budgeted for on that basis. Many ingenious people have worked long and hard to invent gizmos that make work a lot easier, so why not benefit from their labors? An hour or two spent perusing an office supplies catalogue or even visiting a store might save many hundreds of hours if these tools can be put into place. Filing cabinets (of various shapes and sizes), shelves, cupboards, drawer organizers, archival boxes, files, racks, trays ... everything in its place, and a place for everything.
3. "They are tools, not toys ..." Well ....yes, and no. Don't tell the bean counters, but new stationery, equipment, and computer systems can be fun. People really do like working with new things that work well; why do you think so much of it gets stolen? Why do you think people who really don't have much need for this type of stuff buy so much of it? Shake off the guilt and give yourself permission to enjoy the sight, touch, and smell of the new office toys. You might find that you work better and, for the first time in a long while, you might actually know where things are.
4. Develop a system for putting things away, temporarily or permanently. Make it personal, but don't make it so idiosyncratic that others won't be able to crack the code if you are away. Speaking of others, if you need to share resources such as files or equipment, do develop understandings, rituals, and rules about where things are and how such things can be shared with maximum efficiency, good will, and synergy (and minimum hysteria, drama, and misunderstanding).
5. Factor in some time to cope with the absurd. Sometimes things just go missing, despite the best of intentions. Why? Is it gremlins? Did a black hole open up on your desk? Sometimes you have to be relaxed enough to skip that task, and trust that whatever you are after will turn up (it fell off the desk, got lost in the file cabinet, etc.). And it usually does turn up, surprisingly enough. The only way you can be relaxed enough to afford to do this, however, is to be organized in every other area and be able to switch between tasks and priorities without freaking out. The more organized you are, the better you will cope with some chaos. The less organized you are, the more likely it is that even a small amount of random chaos will overwhelm you.