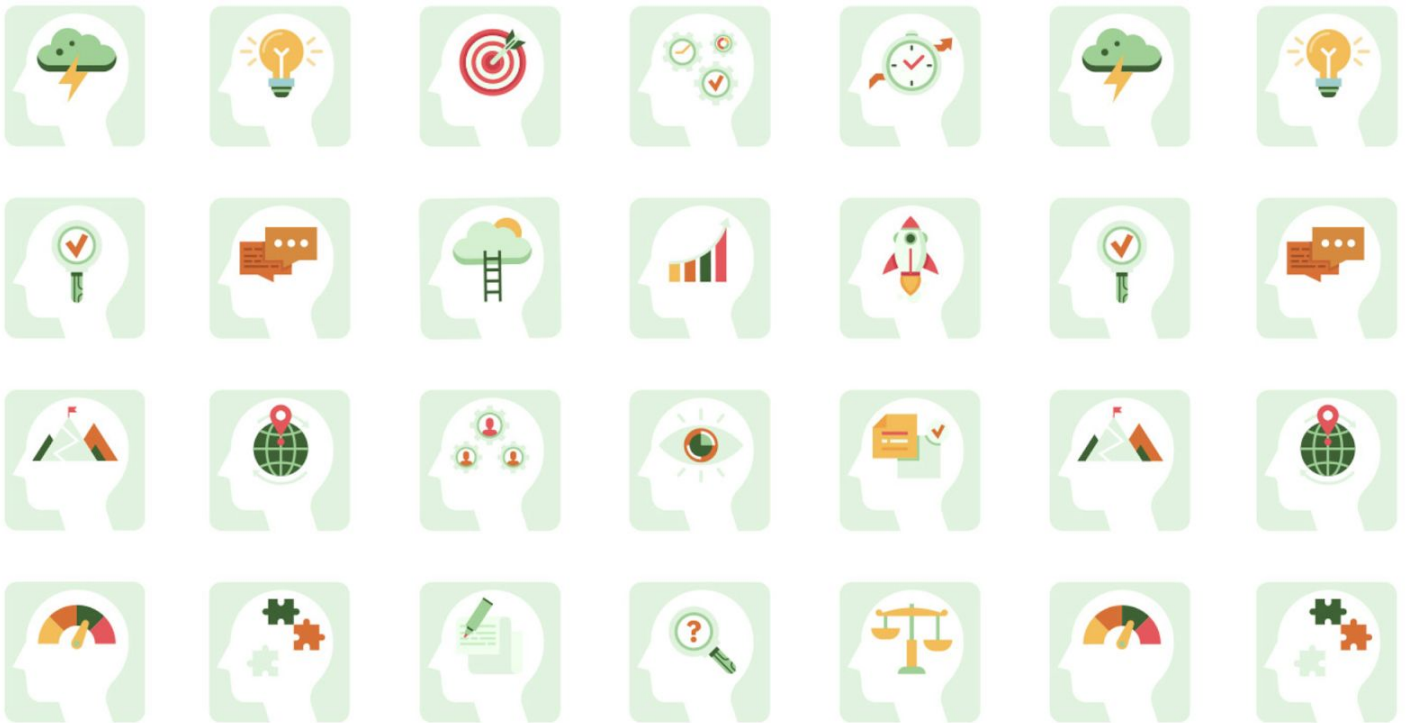


BEHAVIORAL & MANAGEMENT

What is WYSIATI in Our Profession? Some observations and a suggestion

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From *FFI Practitioner*

Thanks to Doug Gray for his article on VIA Classification assessment tools, which can help family enterprise practitioners think differently about their clients' family system. He provides background information, an overview of the assessment, and provides the reader with several additional resources.

The acronym WYSIATI, or “what you see is all there is” was famously explained by Daniel Kahneman (the only psychologist ever to win a Nobel Prize in economics!) in *Thinking Fast and Slow* (2019).

The impact of his work on *how* we categorize behaviors is significant and important for the profession of family enterprise advising. In this article, I briefly review some of the current models and suggest that my colleagues become familiar with the VIA Classification assessment tools, which offer an alternative vocabulary based on character strengths and new, globally validated research.¹

Some background

You may know that there are more than 15,000 validated personality assessments, plus countless intake forms or templates available in the marketplace.² Each assessment reflects whatever theoretical construct or model the user selects. Behaviorist, capitalist, feminist, conservative, radical, constructivist, nihilist—pick your model—the glasses you select will color your vision and reflect the model chosen to assess a family system. Various assessments provide vital data such as key values, behavior styles, emotional intelligence, or business metrics.

In the family enterprise field, practitioners often assess genealogical facts by creating a family tree to track marriages, birth, death, siblings, and divorces. Many practitioners also use genograms to assess the family's social history and dynamics. The descriptive value of genograms has been well researched by hundreds of clinicians, therapists, and physicians.

In 1998, the American Psychological Association (APA), led by Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology, shifted its empirical focus toward questions like, “How can we foster well-being?” and “How can people flourish?”³ The resulting sea change in psychology led many practitioners, including some family enterprise practitioners, to ask questions like, “What are the strengths of this family?” and “How can we leverage those strengths to perpetuate their legacy for future generations?”

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VIA Classification: Another approach

Following this change, in the past 20 years psychologists have identified and globally validated a classification system, creating a new common language to describe what is best in people, i.e., The VIA (Values in Action) Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues.⁴ This assessment tool defines six virtues and twenty-four character strengths.

Virtues are defined as characteristics valued throughout time. The six virtues named in the VIA Classification are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.⁵

Character strengths are defined as positive traits or capacities that are inherently good for us and for others.

Sidebar

“Succession Planning Using OKR Leadership: A case study”

FFI Practitioner

by Doug Gray

Thanks to this week’s contributor, Doug Gray, for providing this article, which includes background on OKR Leadership and how it can help with succession planning, as well as an illustrative case study.

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1. The Virtue of Wisdom includes the character strengths of Creativity, Curiosity, Judgment, Love of Learning, and Perspective
2. The Virtue of Courage includes the character strengths of Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty, and Zest.
3. The Virtue of Humanity includes the character strengths of Love, Kindness, and Social Intelligence.
4. The Virtue of Justice includes the character strengths of Teamwork, Fairness, and Leadership.
5. The Virtue of Temperance includes the character strengths of Forgiveness, Humility, Prudence, and Self-Regulation.
6. The Virtue of Transcendence includes the character strengths of Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humor, and Spirituality.

The twenty-four character strengths are listed below as Figure 1.






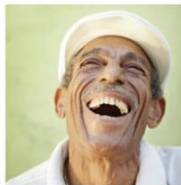
WISDOM	CREATIVITY	CURIOSITY	JUDGMENT	LOVE OF LEARNING	PERSPECTIVE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality • Adaptive • Ingenuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest • Novelty-Seeking • Exploration • Openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Thinking • Thinking Things Through • Open-mindedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastering New Skills & Topics • Systematically Adding to Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wisdom • Providing Wise Counsel • Taking the Big Picture View 	
	COURAGE	BRAVERY	PERSEVERANCE	HONESTY	ZEST	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valor • Not Shrinking from Fear • Speaking Up for What's Right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence • Industry • Finishing What One Starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity • Integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitality • Enthusiasm • Vigor • Energy • Feeling Alive 	
	HUMANITY	LOVE	KINDNESS			SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Loving and Being Loved • Valuing Close Relations with Others 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generosity • Nurturance • Care & Compassion • Altruism • "Niceness" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of the Motives/ Feelings of Self/Others • Knowing what Makes Other People Tick 			
JUSTICE	TEAMWORK			FAIRNESS	LEADERSHIP	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Social Responsibility • Loyalty 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just • Not Letting Feelings Bias Decisions About Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing Group Activities • Encouraging a Group to Get Things Done 	
TEMPERANCE		FORGIVENESS	HUMILITY	PRUDENCE	SELF-REGULATION	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy • Accepting Others' Shortcomings • Giving People a Second Chance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modesty • Letting One's Accomplishments Speak for Themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful • Cautious • Not Taking Undue Risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Control • Disciplined • Managing Impulses & Emotions 	
TRANSCENDENCE	APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE	GRATITUDE	HOPE	HUMOR	SPIRITUALITY	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awe • Wonder • Elevation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thankful for the Good • Expressing Thanks • Feeling Blessed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Future-Mindedness • Future Orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playfulness • Bringing Smiles to Others • Lighthearted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religiousness • Faith • Purpose • Meaning

Figure 1: The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

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I regard these six virtues and twenty-four character strengths as strengths-based glasses—WYSIASTI (what you see is all there is) for family practitioners.

Recommendations for Advisors and Summary

- I strongly encourage you and your clients use the free assessments provided by Neal Meyerson and his family at www.VIAcharacter.org. Compare your results to the 10 million other responses. You can also go to www.AuthenticHappiness.org for more content hosted by the University of Pennsylvania.
- Then I recommend that you include these new vocabulary words in your practice.

Like any complex system, families can be oversimplified as broken and bad or as unbroken and good. The fact is that WYSIASTI (what you see is all there is) defines *how* we see our client families. The evidence for identifying and leveraging strengths is compelling.

Recommended Books

McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R. & Petry, S. (2008). *Genograms; Assessments and Intervention*, 3rd Ed. Norton; New York.

Niemiec, R.M. (2017). *Character Strengths Interventions; A Field Guide for Practitioners*. Hogrefe; Boston, MA.

Niemiec, R.M. & McGrath, R.E. (2019). *The Power of Character Strengths; Appreciate and Ignite Your Positive Personality*. VIA Institute; Cincinnati, OH.

Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). *Flourish; A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. Simon & Schuster; New York

References

¹ <https://www.viacharacter.org>

² <https://www.siop.org/Business-Resources/Employment-Testing/Test-Types>

³ Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). *Flourish; A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. Simon & Schuster; New York

⁴ <https://www.viacharacter.org>

⁵ <https://positivepsychology.com/classification-character-strengths-virtues/>



About the Contributor

Doug Gray, PhD, PCC has always focused on outcome-based leader development. He has worked with over 10,000 leaders in multiple business sectors, schools and colleges, families and non-profits. Doug is a consultant with the Family Business Consulting Group, and a member of FFI. Doug is the author of "Objectives + Key Results (OKR) Leadership: How to Apply Silicon Valley's Secret Sauce to Your Career, Team or Organization." He can be reached at doug@action-learning.com.

FFI on Monday – webinars continue on June 8 with John W. Ambrecht and Michael D. Whitty

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If you enjoyed today's article, check out this related article that features another tool that can be used with your family enterprise clients:



"Tools for Exploring the Family Business System: Some Examples and Some Thoughts" by Luke Simmering

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