QO$_2$

Moving Towards Goals

Multi-Pathways

Optimism

Time Focus

Fault-Finding

™

Opportunities-Obstacles Quotient Profile
WORKBOOK

Margerison~McCann

TEAM MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

®

Contents

This workbook is designed to introduce you to the concepts of the Opportunities-Obstacles Quotient (QO_2) Profile. It should be used in conjunction with your personal QO_2 Profile as part of a facilitated debrief session.

Activity: My Response to Change

A significant change I experienced:

Was it planned or unplanned?

What were my initial thoughts and emotional response?

How did this response visibly show up?

How did I approach the situation? What did I do first?

How did my thoughts and emotions change through the experience?

What caused this change of thoughts and emotions?

As I became accustomed to the change what else happened?

Looking back, how do I feel about it all now?

What have I learned about myself from this to take forward?

Activity: Risk-Orientation Scale

Obstacles	Opportunities

Regarding a significant change I experienced:

What were the obstacles I focused on?

What were the opportunities I focused on?

What does the common response to change mean for leaders?

Throughout our working life we encounter both opportunities and obstacles. They can arise in any project we undertake, no matter how much forward planning is involved. What determines peoples' approach towards risk is where their natural energy lies – either in seeing the opportunities or seeing the obstacles.

At one extreme, people can focus most of their energy on seeing opportunities. They are positive when new ideas are presented and will look optimistically at most situations. The challenge is the limited energy they may assign to seeing obstacles. This can lead them to overlook potential difficulties and misjudge situations.

At the other end of the scale, people may focus most of their energy on seeing obstacles. When working on a project, they are more likely to put a lot of effort into looking at all the things that might go wrong. When faced with potential opportunities they may well ignore them, presenting convincing arguments to support their view that the risks are too great.

Opportunities-Obstacles Quotient

The Opportunities-Obstacles Quotient (QO_2) is a psychometric measure designed to assess an individual's position on the Risk-Orientation scale. It is defined as the proportion of the energy allocated to seeing opportunities compared to the energy put into seeing obstacles.

In the work environment, a tenacity of purpose gives us the persistence to seize the opportunities which come our way. However, it is also important to possess a measure of intelligent doubt, which anchors us to reality and helps prevent mistakes.

The quotient is calculated by taking the ratio of the percentage score on the Opportunities scale to the percentage score on the Obstacles scale.

$$\frac{\textbf{Opportunities Score (\%)}}{\textbf{Obstacles Score (\%)}} = \textbf{QO}_2$$

The example below shows an 84.5% score on the Opportunities side of the scale and a 33.3% score on the Obstacles side. Dividing the Opportunities score by the Obstacles score indicates that this person would be 2.5 times more likely to see the Opportunities in a situation rather than the Obstacles.

$$\frac{\textbf{84.5 (\%)}}{\textbf{33.3 (\%)}} = \textbf{2.5}$$

**Risk-Orientation scale with a QO$_2$ of 2.5**
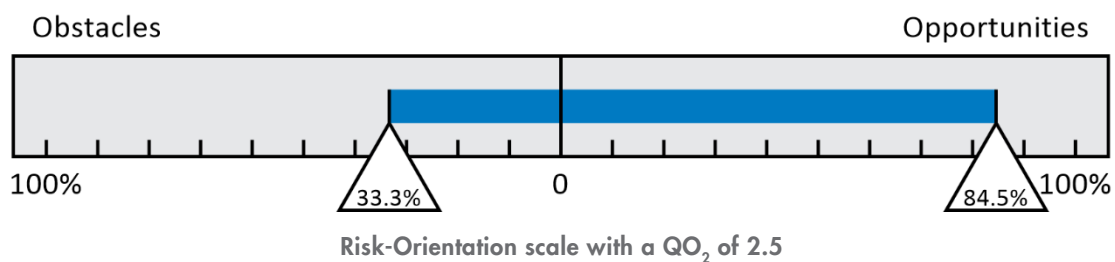
Distribution of the QO$_2$

The QO$_2$ has been developed and validated using a balanced representative sample population, ensuring its reliability and applicability across different job functions and work environments.

Based on the development sample data, the median value for QO$_2$ is 2.2. This indicates that, in the work environment, there is a tendency for people to put twice as much effort into seeing the opportunities as seeing the obstacles.

One-quarter of people have a QO$_2$ score below 1.6, the lower quartile, indicating they are mainly focused on obstacles. Half of the population has a score between 1.6 and 3.0, suggesting they have a relatively balanced orientation towards opportunities and obstacles. Another one-quarter of people have a score above 3.0, the upper quartile, showing they are mainly focused on opportunities.
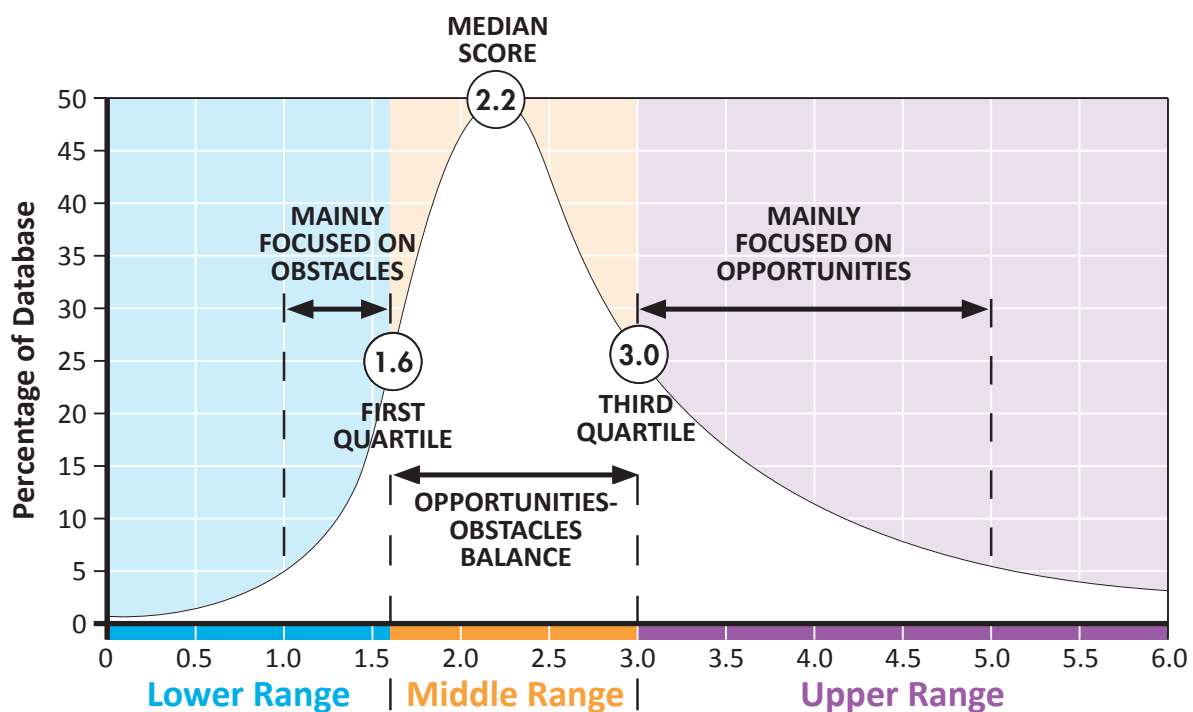
Distribution of QO$_2$ from Development Sample Norm Data (n=1000)

When interpreting a score, note that the percentage of database scores to the left of the median shows the percentage of the database with a lower score whereas scores to the right of the median show the percentage of the database with a higher score.

Five Subscales

The Opportunities-Obstacles Quotient (QO_2) is synthesised from five subscales: Optimism, Moving Towards Goals (MTG) Energy, Multi-Pathways, Fault-Finding, and Time Focus.

MTG Energy – the energy that gives us the determination, enthusiasm and resilience to formulate and achieve our goals.

Multi-Pathways – the ability to generate lots of possible pathways around obstacles.

Optimism – a psychological resource that gives people a generalised expectancy that they will succeed in their endeavours.

Fault-Finding – the effort put into looking for faults in both proposals and people.

Time Focus – a measure of whether people like to focus on the future, the present or the past.

People who map strongly towards the opportunities side of the scale are more likely to have a higher MTG Energy; that is, they set challenging goals and regularly achieve them. When difficulties occur or blockages to their goals arise, they are quick to generate alternative pathways and move around the blockage, still focusing on the goal. As well, they are generally optimistic and full of hope that everything will turn out for the best. They are inclined to put less energy into finding faults with proposals, projects and people, and usually have a positive attitude and can enthuse those around them. For them, the future is a rosy place and one they want to be part of, as it is likely to be better than where they are now.

Those who are strong at seeing the obstacles end of the scale tend to have a lower MTG Energy and may be less able to generate pathways around obstacles. When blockages occur, they are more likely to keep pressing forward down the same pathway and will often stop when their energy is expended. Additionally, they tend to be less optimistic and anticipate the worst scenario when problems arise. They will usually put more effort into Fault-Finding, and this can be both a strength and a weakness. When faced with a new idea they are more likely to identify all the difficulties that might prevent the idea from becoming a reality. Seeing-Obstacles people are also more comfortable with the present and past because, to them, the future is not a rosy place but one that could be fraught with difficulties.

The subscales of the QO_2 provide a clear lens through which people can understand the key factors defining their approach to opportunities and obstacles. Importantly, no score is inherently better or worse; its significance is determined by one's level of self-awareness, the specific demands of their job and the broader dynamics of their work environment. This understanding enables people to make strategic decisions regarding their scores. One individual might choose to leverage their strengths to address potential challenges indicated by their current score within a subscale. Another may prioritise a particular subscale for development, aiming to shift their score to better align with their professional objectives and the dynamics of their workplace.

Moving Towards Goals (MTG) Energy

*The energy that gives us the
determination, enthusiasm and resilience
to formulate and achieve our goals.*

This energy often springs from our life experiences, shaped by our personal ambitions (intrinsic goals) and the expectations others set for us (extrinsic goals). Achieving our goals brings rewards, ranging from recognition to the satisfaction of a job well done, which reinforces our belief in our ability to succeed. Early experiences highlight the value of setting goals that stretch our abilities while remaining achievable, fostering the well-rounded development of our MTG Energy. Whether these goals are self-imposed or influenced by others, they play a crucial role in nurturing our capacity to aspire and achieve. It is through this lens of developmental growth that we come to understand MTG Energy as a dynamic attribute, evolving with our experiences and aspirations.

Higher MTG Energy

People with higher MTG Energy are characterised by their clear goal setting, an unwavering drive to achieve and the momentum that fuels their progress. They are adept at mobilising resources and energy to meet their objectives, maintaining focus and direction. However, this focus on goal attainment may lead to neglecting their own or others' wellbeing, pursuing goals at significant personal or professional costs, and overlooking the importance of re-evaluating goals or fostering teamwork. Incorporating strategies to enhance wellbeing, ensure inclusivity and collaboration, and periodically reassess goals can mitigate the potential downsides.

Lower MTG Energy

In contrast, people with lower MTG Energy have the advantage of recognising early when efforts may need a change in direction, avoiding less critical tasks and maintaining a sustainable work-life balance that prevents burnout. Their approach allows for a steadier progress towards objectives. However, they might encounter challenges such as feeling overwhelmed, difficulty in matching the pace of colleagues, or not displaying enough drive to surmount substantial hurdles. Additionally, there might be a lack of clear milestones which can slow progress towards long-term goals. Individuals with lower MTG Energy can benefit from engaging in goal-setting exercises that establish achievable, incremental targets, cultivating a personal connection to their goals and employing self-care strategies to bolster their drive and focus.

Notes and Reflections:

Multi-Pathways

*The tendency to generate lots of
possible pathways around obstacles.*

Multi-Pathways refers to the ability to envision and navigate multiple routes toward a goal, particularly when faced with obstacles. This skill is invaluable in dynamic and unpredictable environments, allowing individuals to pivot and adapt by generating various potential solutions. Those proficient in Multi-Pathways thinking see multiple routes to success and are open to exploring various strategies to overcome challenges, enhancing their adaptability and problem-solving capabilities.

Higher Multi-Pathways

People with higher Multi-Pathways scores are typically adaptable and creative in their problem-solving approach. They thrive in brainstorming sessions, often presenting innovative solutions and are adept at navigating through setbacks with flexibility. However, an abundance of options can lead to decision fatigue for them and others, a tendency to deviate from initial goals in pursuit of new ideas, and a risk of delayed action due to excessive contingency planning. Individuals with higher scores should consider prioritising ideas, adopting action-focused strategies and establishing clear decision-making guidelines.

Lower Multi-Pathways

People with lower Multi-Pathways scores tend to have a focused and consistent approach, prioritising proven methods. This strong focus on primary goals ensures solid dedication to the chosen path but it can limit adaptability and stifle innovation, potentially leading to inefficiencies in rapidly changing scenarios. Individuals with a lower score can benefit from creative thinking exercises, collaborating with diverse teams for broader perspectives, and participating in brainstorming sessions to promote innovation.

Notes and Reflections:

Optimism

*A psychological resource that gives
people a generalised expectancy that they
will succeed in their endeavours.*

Optimism is a characteristic that is the basis of positive thinking. Expected success, in turn, gives people the will to expend effort to realise their goals. If they expect failure, then they may put less effort into a task and are more likely to stop when an obstacle appears.

Higher Optimism

Individuals with higher levels of Optimism often act as a beacon of positivity, characterised by their resilience and a buoyant spirit that setbacks cannot easily dampen. Their optimistic outlook can uplift the work environment, instilling a collective can-do attitude and framing challenges as opportunities for growth. However, this unwavering positivity may sometimes lead to overlooking learning opportunities, downplaying the importance of responsibility during setbacks, and setting unrealistic expectations that can skew planning and outcomes. Balancing this with realistic assessments of situations, fostering open dialogues about mistakes and embracing constructive feedback is essential to remain both grounded and effective.

Lower Optimism

Individuals with lower Optimism scores exhibit a heightened awareness of potential pitfalls, which aids in early detection and thorough contingency planning. This cautious approach to risk, combined with a strong sense of personal accountability, can ensure meticulous planning and execution. However, this perspective might cause people to overlook the positive aspects of change, internalise failures, and adopt a self-defeating outlook when faced with persistent challenges. To counter these tendencies, it is beneficial to adopt a mindset that acknowledges both risks and benefits, engage in resilience-enhancing activities, and cultivate a supportive network for problem-solving and encouragement.

Martin Seligman's work, particularly on the three Ps (Personal, Permanent and Pervasive), offers a valuable lens through which to understand our explanatory style when there are setbacks:

- Personalisation refers to whether individuals attribute events to internal or external causes. Those with higher Optimism tend to externalise the causes, while those with lower Optimism are more likely to feel personally responsible for negative outcomes.

- Permanence relates to how long one expects an event's effects to last; do we see it is as a temporary setback, or do we see it lasting indefinitely?

- Pervasiveness is the extent to which one believes an event will affect other areas of their life; do we view them as isolated events, or do we expect negative events to affect all areas?

Notes and Reflections:

Seligman, M. E. P. (1990). Learned optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life. New York: Pocket Books.

Fault-Finding

*The effort put into looking for faults
in both proposals and people.*

Some people will devote considerable effort to identifying faults in any ideas or projects presented to them, while others solely look for the opportunities, assuming that everything will turn out for the best. Those with higher QO_2 scores often score lower on Fault-Finding, tending to see the glass as half-full, they may not realise it could soon be empty! Obstacle-oriented people often adopt a mindset which leads them to plan for the worst. When faced with an opportunity, their initial reaction is to look for the potential faults by taking on the role of devil's advocate.

Higher Fault-Finding

Individuals with higher Fault-Finding scores typically excel in strategic planning and risk mitigation, proactively identifying potential pitfalls. This diligence contributes significantly to thorough governance and offers valuable insights during post-implementation reviews. However, being perceived as overly critical can dampen team morale or lead to analysis paralysis due to excessive scrutiny. Mitigating these effects requires the appropriate timing of feedback, highlighting positive aspects alongside concerns, promoting a culture where setbacks are seen as learning opportunities, and balancing meticulous governance with empowering team autonomy and trust.

Lower Fault-Finding

Individuals scoring lower on the Fault-Finding subscale tend towards action without excessive analysis, which can foster an environment of trust, autonomy and innovation within teams. This approach, however, risks overlooking crucial early warnings and planning inadequacies. Therefore, it may be worthwhile learning how to direct more energy towards identifying potential obstacles. To counterbalance these challenges, strategies include allocating specific times for risk assessment, fostering a culture that values constructive criticism, and establishing regular review mechanisms for ongoing projects.

Notes and Reflections:

Time Focus

*A measure of whether people like to focus
on the future, the present or the past.*

The Time Focus subscale explores how individuals perceive and prioritise time. This measure explores psychological time, identifying differences in the pace at which time seems to pass and determining whether individuals are oriented towards future aspirations or reflecting on past experiences. Some people can span the entire timeline, giving equal weight to past, present and future, while others may prefer to focus on one specific time frame.

Future Focus

Individuals with a higher Time Focus score are oriented towards future timelines (F-time). They display a forward-thinking mindset, often characterised by visionary thinking that drives innovation and change. Their psychological time moves swiftly, filled with aspirations and plans for what lies ahead, which can bring a dynamic energy to teams and projects. However, this future orientation may lead them to overlook immediate needs or undervalue established practices, potentially advocating for changes without a solid rationale. Those with a higher Time Focus may benefit from practicing mindfulness to anchor themselves in the present moment, engaging with the historical context to appreciate established practices, and balancing their visionary ambitions with practical, actionable steps.

Past Focus

Individuals with a lower Time Focus score are oriented towards past timelines (P-time) and derive their perspectives from historical insights, valuing reliability and consistency. They tend to experience a slower psychological time, approach progress cautiously and rely heavily on proven methods, which helps to maintain the status quo. However, P-time individuals might resist new ideas and risk being seen as out of touch with current needs, potentially hindering innovation. To address these challenges, they can benefit from keeping up to date with current trends, engaging in dialogue with future-focused colleagues, and establishing clear links between past successes and future opportunities.

Notes and Reflections:

Resilience Index

The ability to withstand, recover from and adapt to adversity or stress.
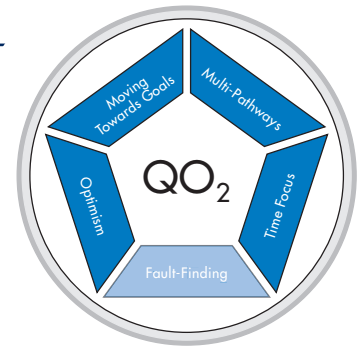
The Resilience Index measures an individual's ability to navigate through and recover from significant challenges. It has been created from a weighted selection of items from the subscales: MTG Energy, Multi-Pathways, Optimism and Time Focus. By combining these items, the index provides a picture of how one might endure stress, recover from setbacks, and positively adapt to new circumstances. Of note, the Resilient Index is strongly correlated with persistence and the ability to look for ways around any obstacles that may arise.

Aiming for future goals and believing in their achievement are key components of resilience. This includes evaluating the likelihood of events occurring and feeling positive about the benefits and rewards they will bring. At the core of resilience is the determination and energy to pursue these goals. This idea can be summed up by the phrase, 'Where there's a will, there's a way.' Optimism also plays a crucial role in resilience, where there is an expectation that the best outcome will prevail even when setbacks are encountered. Resilience includes the ability to put the past behind us and rebound easily from adversity. This focus on the future rather than the past is an important attribute, propelling individuals towards a brighter future.

Higher Resilience

Individuals with a higher Resilience Index score are typically marked by their tenacity and ability to thrive despite stress or unexpected events. They tend to set ambitious goals and are adept at finding alternative ways to overcome obstacles. Their positive outlook leads them to view setbacks as temporary and surmountable. However, the very qualities that contribute to higher resilience can also lead to unintended consequences. Relentless drive and perseverance may inadvertently cause individuals to overlook the negative impact of sustained stress to both themselves and others around them. To balance this, higher resilience individuals can lead by example with self-care, monitor signs of burnout in themselves and other colleagues, and encourage team members to express their concerns.

Lower Resilience

People with lower scores on the Resilience Index tend to be realistic and cautious, often identifying potential challenges at an early stage in the workplace. They can serve as warning indicators, alerting to issues before they fully emerge. There will be a preference towards nurturing environments where support and wellbeing are prioritised. However, a lower Resilience score may indicate a tendency to become easily overwhelmed by adversity, leading to disengagement or a reluctance to tackle challenging situations. Beneficial strategies for these individuals include cultivating robust support networks, implementing effective coping strategies, and consistently celebrating small victories. These steps not only build confidence but also establish a strong sense of accomplishment.

Notes and Reflections:

Handling Change Index

*The capability to initiate
and adjust to change.*
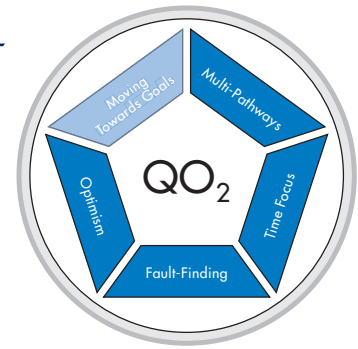
The Handling Change Index assesses an individual's capacity to embrace and adapt to change in their work environment. This index is calculated by averaging the scores from the items in the Multi-Pathways, Optimism, Time Focus subscales, along with the inverse score of the Fault-Finding subscale. It offers insights into how individuals perceive and navigate new situations by evaluating their level of Optimism, their ability to envisage multiple solutions, their critical assessment of potential pitfalls, and their consideration of time in relation to change.

Higher Handling Change

Embracing new ideas with enthusiasm, those scoring higher in Handling Change can excel at leading transformation initiatives and injecting a forward-thinking energy into their teams. Their optimism fuels a belief in positive outcomes, driving them to advocate for and implement change. However, this inclination towards change might at times neglect pressing concerns or well-established practices, potentially leading to the launch of new initiatives without a solid foundation or clearly defined purpose. To counterbalance these tendencies, it's beneficial to ensure a grounded approach to change that remains sensitive to the present moment's realities. This involves staying attuned to current needs and respecting the lessons from past experiences, thereby ensuring that ambitious goals are pursued with thoughtful planning and a readiness to address challenges. Fostering open dialogues with all team members can enrich the change process with diverse insights, paving the way for more inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

Lower Handling Change

Individuals with lower scores on the Handling Change Index may exhibit a cautious approach to change, relying on past experiences and established methods to inform their decisions. This caution can foster a stable environment and ensure thorough preparation and due diligence before new initiatives are pursued. However, an overly conservative stance might hinder agility and innovation, potentially causing resistance to beneficial changes. To navigate this challenge, it is valuable to foster an openness to new ideas, gradually integrate change through incremental steps, and develop a clear understanding of the rationale and benefits of change. Encouraging dialogue with more change-oriented colleagues can also broaden perspectives and ease the transition towards more adaptive approaches.

Notes and Reflections:

Pacing with QO$_2$

Effective communication requires understanding the other person's perspective. By speaking in a way that aligns with their worldview, you increase the likelihood of gaining their approval and achieving your goals. This technique is known as the skill 'Pacing'.

If you stay in your model of the world and don't make allowances for other people, your interactions are likely to be ineffective. Pacing is the key to influencing others and helping them to see the world from your point of view.

When pacing with higher QO$_2$ individuals:

DO	DON'T
• Be initially supportive and listen.	• Tell them why their ideas won't work; help them to see this themselves.
• Try to sound positive about their ideas even if you disagree.	• Dwell on the past.
• Focus on the good part of their proposal before you explain what the difficulties are.	• Criticise them personally.
• Encourage them to describe the changes that might need to be made to implement their ideas, then point out any obstacles that might arise.	• Appear negative or lacking in enthusiasm.
• Be prepared for their ideas to be unrealistic but look for the kernel of a good idea.	

When pacing with lower QO$_2$ individuals:

DO	DON'T
• Expect them to be initially negative, so be prepared to explain why your ideas will work.	• Focus excessively on the future; show them how your proposals link to the present and the past.
• Be prepared for them to be resistant to change.	• Be over-excited until you are sure they can see the opportunities as you do.
• Ask them to help you examine all the things that could go wrong.	• React negatively when they tell you what the pitfalls are.
• Accept that their 'devil's advocate' position might be of value to you.	• Appear over-optimistic.
• Understand that you may need to work hard to change their mind.	

The diagram shows a central circle labeled QO_2 surrounded by five segments: Moving Towards Goals, Multi-Pathways, Time Focus, Fault-Finding, and Optimism.

QO$_2$

Moving Towards Goals

Multi-Pathways

Optimism

Time Focus

Fault-Finding

Notes and Reflections

Notes and Reflections