

FACE: THE FACTS

an interview with the creator of FACE, Mike Francis

by Brett Maxwell of Max Business Services
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As part of the research in deciding to become a FACE Licensee, I chose to go straight to the source and interview the man who created FACE – Mike Francis.

B: Getting right down to it, what exactly is FACE?

M: In simple terms, FACE is a communication tool. It helps us to read and understand our own communication style, how to read and understand the communication styles of others, and then how to bridge the gaps. The name 'FACE' is an acronym for the four main communication styles – 'Friend', 'Analyst', 'Controller' and 'Entertainer'.

B: When did you first get the idea for FACE?

M: It's hard to know for sure when the seed was sown. I've always been intrigued by personality profiling tools and just about anything that gets me into studying people; in particular, our relationships and how we communicate with each other. Human interactions fascinate me. I can sit in a shopping mall and study people for hours. But I guess the concept for FACE became clearer in the late 1990s. In fact, I usually tell people that FACE was born out of frustration.

B: And how did frustration lead to FACE?

M: I was climbing the corporate ladder in the pharmaceutical industry. The companies I worked for were all multinationals and they spent a small fortune on training, especially for their sales forces; including training in things like DiSC and other similar profiling tools. As a manager, I always believed in spending time on the road with the sales representatives, no matter how high up the management tree I was. After a sales call, I would usually ask the rep, "So, what do you think that doctor's profile was?" and I lost count of the number of times I got an answer like "Oh, I don't know! We're supposed to sell drugs and the company wants us to waste time trying to work out their profiles instead. For something that's supposed to help, it just seems like it's more work!"

B: Not the response you expected, I guess?

M: Absolutely not! It was supposed to make them better at their jobs, not make them work harder. I couldn't understand it. I did the exact same training when I was a rep and I thought it was great stuff! I was a better salesperson because of it.

B: How then, could the same training get such vastly different results?

M: That's what I thought! And it was really from that thought that FACE had its genesis. I set my mind to creating a tool that would capture all that's good and useful about all these various tools and find a way to put it all into a user-friendly package that worked.

B: So how long after, did FACE come into being?

M: About 6 years later, after lots of research and development.

B: On the surface, the presentation of FACE looks very similar to most of the other mainstream personality profiling and behavioral tools like DiSC, Myers-Briggs or even something like True Colors. Haven't you just created more of the same?

M: Hey, good question, Brett! The answer is both "yes" and "no". Yes, FACE uses the same 4-quadrant matrix model as most of the other tools do. It's a proven model that works and there was no need to reinvent the wheel with FACE on that parameter.

FACE was created with 3 specific objectives in mind. FACE had to be simple to understand and easy to use. Secondly, it had to work. The 4-quadrant matrix model pretty much guarantees that FACE is effective and the feedback from our clients confirms that we got it right. And lastly, FACE had to be 'fun'.

B: 'Fun'... wouldn't that emphasis potentially distract people from taking FACE seriously?

M: Yeah, some people really do have a problem with that word; especially some of the 'old-school' people in business. We tell them to substitute 'fun' with 'positively engaging'. But take a look at kids – they learn best when they're playing, singing and having fun. The simple fact is, so do adults! We're just kids with more skin

and grey hair. We want to have fun too! And people like Richard Branson [founder of Virgin Group, Ltd] have proven, without a shadow of a doubt, that performance and profits can go hand-in-hand with a working environment that fosters a culture of fun.

Actually, there's an added bonus with FACE and that is that it's also highly 'visual'. The characters are expressive and they clearly illustrate the various communication styles.

Terry Hill, a Business Psychologist in the UK [also the Managing Director of The Selling Edge] said that FACE is the most refreshing new system he has seen in the market in the last 20 years.

B: Let's explore a little more of the history and the applications of FACE.

B: When and where did you first launch FACE?

M: August 2004 in Malaysia.

B: Why Malaysia?

M: Because that's where I was living at the time. It's my wife's home country.

B: Who were the first FACE guinea pigs?

M: Mostly corporate clients. Although, in those early days, I was running around and getting every 'Tom, Dick 'n' Harry' to do the 'What's Your FACE' questionnaire. Come to think of it, there were very few Toms, Dicks and Harrys in Malaysia. [chuckles]

Initially, FACE was just an added component to the different training programs we were running. Whether it was leadership, management, sales or customer service training, we did a segment on FACE and the interest just kept growing. We still do that today, but now we have a range of training courses that focus entirely on FACE, with the other topics wrapped around it.

B: So, if Malaysia was your starting market, then does that mean FACE is a tool that's suitable for countries and cultures other than the Western, English-speaking nations?

M: Absolutely!

FACE is a communication tool, not a personality or behavioral profiling tool.

B: Are you saying that FACE can work in any country or culture?

M: I believe so. Whilst we've only presented FACE in English so far; in the first couple of years, all of the audiences were a mix of participants who spoke Chinese, Indian, Malay, Indonesian and Thai as their primary language. I had to speak a little slower and sometimes repeat things a couple of times, but the content was always the same.

B: But how did you take into consideration the differences in values, perceptions, religions, etc, that comes with people from predominantly non-English speaking cultures?

M: Good question. Firstly, they were all able to speak some degree of English. But, more importantly, and this is a good place to bring this up again... FACE is a communication tool, not a personality or behavioral profiling tool. The 2 axes of measurement we use with FACE are 'Pace' and 'Relationship'. So, no matter what the culture or ethnicity of the people who are using FACE, there will always be a mix of 'Drivers' and 'Observers' in Pace, and some who are 'Open' and others who are 'Closed' in Relationship.

especially our business clients; but we go beyond that. We make sure that our clients' get what they really want... change! And that involves a FACE project where we tailor a plan specific to the clients' needs. It involves training, consultancy, accountability and support.

B: Something I feel many people are both intrigued by and sceptical of is the 'What's Your FACE' questionnaire, in particular, that it is just 14 multiple-choice questions. How can you get a reliable assessment of a person's profile by such a small test?

M: I'll have to answer you with a question. You've done the questionnaire, right?

B: Yes I have.

M: And what was your communication style?

B: I came out as an Entertainer-Friend.

M: Okay, and you've gotten yourself a copy of 'FACE, The Global Language'; so what do you think of the description of Entertainer-Friends? Is it an accurate description of your communication style?

B: Yeah, it is.

M: There ya go. Mission accomplished. FACE is simple. But don't misread that simplicity as a weakness; it's a positive. Our clients routinely get their

FACE can be so effective and accurate at nailing a person's communication style. Actually, I really see it more as a compliment than a criticism. But here's the thing, and I make no apology for repeating myself on this – FACE is a communication tool *NOT* a personality profiling tool. If we wanted to psychoanalyze you, we'd have a thousand questions to answer and churn out wads of paper to provide you with a long-winded report that will spend more time gathering dust on a shelf than making any sort of difference in how you relate to people in a practical, day-to-day way.

B: How many people, to date, have done the 'What's Your FACE' questionnaire?

M: Since we launched the FACE website in April of this year, we've had almost 1,000 people do the questionnaire online. Previous to that we used both paper and computer-based methods, and we lost count after we passed the 3,000 mark! We still have hundreds of hard-copies in archives.

The key to successful relationships is effective communication.

B: Who would you say FACE is mainly for?

M: FACE is only for people who speak to other people. [cheeky grin]

B: So, FACE is for everyone.

M: Indeed. Well, any adults and most older teenagers at least.

B: Is it more suited for individuals, teams of people or entire organizations?

M: All of the above. The education and the understanding of FACE has to first occur at an *individual* level, but all teams and entire organizations are made up of multiples of individuals.

B: Is the delivery of FACE best done one-or-one or in groups?

M: Either, really. But, personally, I think that group training is more effective, because there is almost always a mix of FACE styles in the room and you can highlight the differences in communication styles there and then. I think it's a lot more fun too. And I should point out that there is more to what we offer with FACE than just training.

B: Can you explain?

M: Well, training is a very important part of what we do for our clients,

entire workforce to do the questionnaire online. Why? Because it's simple, it's quick, it's accurate, and it's fun.

B: What do you say to someone who doesn't agree with their FACE assessment?

M: Well, first of all, it's a very rare occurrence. Secondly, I don't believe that there is a personality profiling tool, or a behavioral assessment tool, or a communication style assessment tool, or a psychologist or a psychiatrist that gets it right 100% of the time. The fact that humans are emotional creatures prevents this level of accuracy. Having said that; if someone *does* disagree with their FACE result, after more discussion and some further probing, we can always help people understand why they got that particular result.

B: What's your greatest challenge with FACE?

M: The only challenge – and I see it more as an opportunity than a challenge – is the question that keeps popping up about the simplicity of FACE. Pretty much exactly what we were just talking about. Some people struggle with the idea that something as simple as





B: I know FACE has had good success in the corporate environment in Australia, but what about the USA – will FACE work the same here?

M: FACE was created for PEOPLE, not a certain nationality or specific culture. As we highlighted earlier, every society (regardless of language or culture) has the same mix of communication styles – some Observers, some Drivers, and some more Open and some more Closed – and FACE aims to cover them all. Incidentally, almost half of the people who've done the 'What's your FACE' questionnaire on our website are Americans, and judging by the feedback and comments we receive, and the Americans I've spoken with, it seems that most of them deeply relate to the FACE results they've received.

B: On the surface, FACE looks like its fun, but is it too 'light' for application in a business setting?

M: Fun? Woohoo! Mission accomplished, again! Take a look at a lot of the great, business success stories over the last one hundred or so years and you'll find a very sound principle: Success is often achieved by doing something simple over and over and over again. We help businesses to do exactly that with FACE. However, all of our accredited FACE Facilitators and any clients who have taken on FACE as their communication tool of choice have quickly come to understand the significant depth of FACE and its far-reaching applications. They will tell you that fun does not equal ineffective. In fact, fun facilitates change unlike any other approach!

The key to successful relationships is EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION; and the key to effective communication is UNDERSTANDING.

B: FACE obviously costs money to implement. Why would any organization want to invest in a training program like FACE?

M: Okay, if there's one question that needs a longer answer than the rest, it's this one. Here goes...

Every business is built on 3 pillars: products, processes and people. Products and processes are non-emotional and easily copied by competitors. Every organization invests time and money to develop and train in both of those areas. The people, on the other hand, are the emotional pillar of the business and not so easily copied. Indeed, it's the people who make or break organizations. Interestingly, the majority of businesses invest much more heavily in training and development focused on products and processes, than they do on people. When you dig deeper into FACE, you find that it is primarily a tool that develops relationships, whether they be business or personal. And here's the real formula for the value of FACE – the key to successful relationships is effective communication; and the key to effective communication is understanding. FACE provides a framework of understanding that helps us to communicate more effectively with our customers (internal and external), thus building successful relationships. Happy employees equal happy customers, and happy customers equal k'ching, k'ching!

B: Is there any quantitative data on the success of FACE?

M: Lots of it! But, none more so than our list of satisfied clients. The best piece of quantitative data is the absence of even one single client who says that FACE doesn't work.

B: What companies have successfully used FACE?

M: One of our larger clients in Australia, O Group Incorporated, is a group of companies that operate in the employment services industry. They employ over 400 people and also manage a volunteer force of another 350 people. We first introduced FACE to their managers in December 2006 during a team-building day we ran for them. Over the course of the next 3 years, we rolled out FACE to their entire organization and in 2009 they won the Employer of Choice Award – the first not-for-profit organization to ever do so.

B: All because of FACE?

M: Of course not! FACE was a part of a much larger project for developing their corporate culture. However, the CEO, Andrew Billing has gone on record to say that FACE was an integral part of the reason for them winning the award. Actually, I'll be interviewing Andrew this week and the

audio of that [interview] will be available on our website.

www.facematrix.com.au

B: In what parts of the world is FACE already operating?

M: Up until the end of last year, anything and everything to do with FACE training or consultancy was delivered by FACE Central [us]. We were extremely busy and our calendar was just nuts! So at the beginning of 2010, we put together a licensing program and as of July, we are open in 3 regional licence areas: Australia-Pacific, North America and UK-Euro West.

B: Do you see FACE going into the Asian market?

M: Yes indeed, and we've already had some very healthy enquiries from there. We plan to open the Southeast Asia and India regions in mid 2011, and then China will open in mid 2012.

I won't stop until FACE is a worldwide communication phenomenon – a household brand name in business and in life.

B: What exactly does it mean to be a FACE Licensee?

M: A FACE Licensee is a person or an entity that is licensed to market and sell our products and services. All FACE Licensees are also accredited FACE Facilitators, so they can deliver FACE training and consultancy as well. For example, our Regional FACE Licensee in the UK/Euro-West can (and does) deliver FACE training and consultancy, but his passion is sales and business development, and he has now got a team of FACE Facilitators with him.

B: What's the draw of becoming a FACE Licensee?

M: Wow, where do I start! Apart from the fact that you'll be a part of a very exciting global organization that's introducing the world to a proven, exciting and fun new communication tool, you'll also be building a successful and profitable business. And you get to do all that by helping people and organizations to build successful personal and business relationships. Of course, you also get loads of support from us at FACE Central.

B: Aside from working with organizations, are there any other

groups FACE is offered to?

M: Yes. In fact, we just recently launched a module called 'FACE for Couples'. In the future, we plan to develop FACE for Teens, FACE for Children; the possibilities are endless.

B: My wife and I are newlyweds; so how can FACE help us?

M: In 3 ways:

- 1) communication;
- 2) communication; and
- 3) communication!

Need I say more?

B: Do you see yourself as the next Dr John Gray?

M: Well, that would be a privilege worth pursuing. He has helped many, many people to build happier relationships and I think FACE can certainly do the same.

B: What's your broad vision for FACE?

M: We won't stop until FACE is a worldwide communication

phenomenon – a household brand name in business and in life; something that everyone knows about. When people think about how to make relationships successful, their first thought will be 'FACE'.

B: WOW! Now, there's a vision that's certainly worth being a part of.

M: Sure is! It's a brilliant opportunity for the right people and you certainly don't want to miss out.

B: Thank you very much, Mike, for giving me such a good insight into the World of FACE.

M: My pleasure.

Apart from my time with Mike, I also got to speak with other FACE Facilitators and FACE Licensees around the world.

All of them willingly sing the praises of FACE. Mike and the FACE Central team are truly dedicated to what they believe in; so my decision is easy... I'm in!

For more information on FACE,
please go to
www.facematrix.com.au

