

Faking and Wave - Six Considerations

In the main, individuals complete the Wave questionnaire honestly and straightforwardly. However, if someone does fake a questionnaire, how easy is this to spot? The power of the Wave technology and scoring gives key advantages in helping to prevent and control distortion.

Quick Start Guide

Prevention - Inform candidates of the steps you are taking to ensure results are accurate

Detection - Consider the following six areas:

1. **Context:** How high stakes is the assessment?
2. **Response Styles:** What does response acquiescence indicate about how positive a candidate has been? How does acquiescence compare with consistency?
3. **Normative- Ipsative (N-I) Splits:** How many and how big are the splits on the profile?
4. **Motive-Talent (M-T) Splits:** How many splits are there and what do they add to the pattern of the profile?
5. **Overall Profile:** What is the overall pattern? Does the profile tend to lack specific areas of self-criticism, in addition to several N higher than I splits?
6. **Cross-Referencing:** What evidence from interviews, track record and other sources is there to support the profile data?

Prevention

Candidates are more likely to fake or over exaggerate in recruitment settings rather than personal development. In competitive recruitment campaigns there is more pressure on candidates. There are, however, things recruiters and assessment practitioners can do to minimise the chance of getting faked responses to a questionnaire:

- Inform candidates prior to completion that you will cross-reference the questionnaire data with biographical data and data from other assessment methods
- Make clear to the candidate that whether they are successful or not you will offer feedback and jointly explore the data
- Inform candidates that you will follow up online unsupervised assessment with targeted and focussed interviews that will seek behavioural examples to support the profile
- Encourage candidates in all briefings and instructions to answer honestly and straightforwardly
- Advise candidates that there are mechanisms within the questionnaire which are designed to look at how they respond
- Utilise the combined and dynamic rate-rank online response format in Wave Styles or Strengths

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Detection

1. Context – Why has someone been asked to complete Wave?

Competitive selection environments are more likely to be associated with faking than personal development, talent development or coaching applications. Recruitment is likely to be the highest risk application for faking. To mitigate this, recruiters need to use valid assessments and invest time in thorough briefings of candidates. Where the rewards of success are higher, some candidates may consider the risks of faking are worth taking.

People asked to **trial a questionnaire** on behalf of their organisation do sometimes look to test the limits of the scoring system. We have seen a couple of high profile examples of this recently with journalists. In each case, the data in the Wave report from response styles splits and the overall profile pattern flagged unusual responses. We were able to present these to the individuals who quickly confirmed that they had not responded seriously to the questions asked.

In a **training environment** there can be instances where people race through completion, more to see how it works and what it is like to complete than to truly describe themselves and their behaviour.

2. Response Summary

The Response Summary page in the Wave Expert Report is the first place to look for insights into how an individual has responded to the Wave questionnaire.

Response Summary										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ratings Acquiescence Overall, more positive in self-ratings than most people										
Consistency of Rankings Consistent in rank ordering of characteristics										
Normative-Ipsative Agreement Overall, the degree of alignment between normative and ipsative scores is less than for most people										
Motive-Talent Agreement Overall, there is a high degree of alignment between Motive and Talent scores										

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On the Response Summary, very high scores on acquiescence can be accompanied by good or reasonable consistency, as above. Although high acquiescence with consistency can be linked to strong performance in the workplace, this should also be associated with a track record of achievement and progress.

Generally in high stakes selection, high acquiescence and the associated splits on the profile should be considered as areas for further exploration. Cross-referencing is essential. Similarly, very low acquiescence can be a sign of self-criticism or a lack of motivation to complete (a lack of motivation may also be associated with low consistency).

Low consistency is a warning and users should explore why the consistency is low - but is not an indication of faking in itself. Often fakers, fake quite consistently.

Where acquiescence is high or low, we tend to see lower normative-ipsative agreement in the response summary and we can then hone in on areas of distortion with normative-ipsative splits in the psychometric profile itself.

3. Normative-Ipsative Splits pinpoint specific areas for discussion

For each Wave dimension, there is a rating score (normative) on a nine point scale and a score based on the ranked data (ipsative). The scoring system compares the rate and the rank score for each dimension and flags a Normative-Ipsative (N-I) split on the profile where there are three or more stens difference between the two scores on the same dimension. These splits highlight dimensions where an individual has responded in significantly different ways to the two response formats and provide the Wave user with specific areas to cross-reference and probe further.

Where there is high or low acquiescence, you will typically see a number of N-I splits on the profile.

If an individual is “faking good” and over exaggerating their capabilities, then this is likely to be demonstrated by a number of splits where the normative scores (N) are higher than the ipsative (I). These dimensions require exploration to see whether the high ratings can be substantiated with evidence and examples or whether the individual has potentially over exaggerated their capabilities.

Conversely, where there is low acquiescence and a number of splits and where the I is higher than the N, the individual may have undersold themselves or in unusual instances even be “faking bad”.

If there a number of large splits (five stens or more), this would be considered unusual and should raise questions for the user. These dimensions should be priorities for exploration.

4. Motive-Talent Splits

The average number of Motive-Talent Splits on the Wave Professional Styles Profile is four. Where there are significantly more splits, this can be indicative of someone who is career plateaued or simply in the wrong job, but it can also be a possible indicator of a “non-genuine” response particularly if accompanied by a large number of N-I splits (i.e. 10 or more N-I splits including one or more large splits of five stens or more).

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5. Overall Profile Pattern

When considering faking, in addition to response styles, things to look for across the profile generally are:

- Lack of self-criticism
- No sections which appear to be weaker
- Is it “too good to be true?” you may have an outstanding candidate but you may not!

6. Cross-Referencing

We encourage active cross-referencing of Wave data with CV, application form and other assessment data. Some examples are listed for Wave Dimensions below.

Wave Dimensions	Check with other Data
Interpreting Data	Are aptitude test results inline? Is the quality of analysis in problem solving and written work similar?
Generating Ideas	Is there a track record of producing ideas? Check the personal contribution made to innovation (not just in a team situation where the idea could have come from someone else).
Directing People	Is there a track record of working effectively with and leading other people? What evidence is there of taking responsibility for others? Was there evidence of assertion in the group exercise?
Convincing People	Seek examples of where they have changed the course of events through persuasion? Are there examples of their negotiating skills winning others over? How well did they influence in the presentation or the interview?
Team Working	Discuss their role in teams and their contribution to positive team work. What collaborative behaviours did they show in group exercises?
Embracing Change	Discuss the size and scale of change they have dealt with. How have they adapted to changing requirements?
Managing Tasks	Look for evidence of project planning and management to both time and budget. Check examples of prioritising e.g. inbox or planning exercises.
Pursuing Goals	Look for evidence of career progression, outstanding quantifiable results and examples of achievement in the face of adversity.

In Summary

Most Wave profiles are completed straightforwardly and provide an accurate profile of individuals’ talents and motives, preferred culture and competency potential.

If there is a question about whether a profile is genuine or not, consider the six factors listed. The Response Summary page in the Expert Report and the unique Normative-Ipsative Splits on specific Wave Dimensions, present users with a pinpoint guide on where to probe and explore further.

If you have any questions on the interpretation of the Response Summary and/or Normative-Ipsative splits, please email info.uk@savilleconsulting.com or call 020 8619 9000.