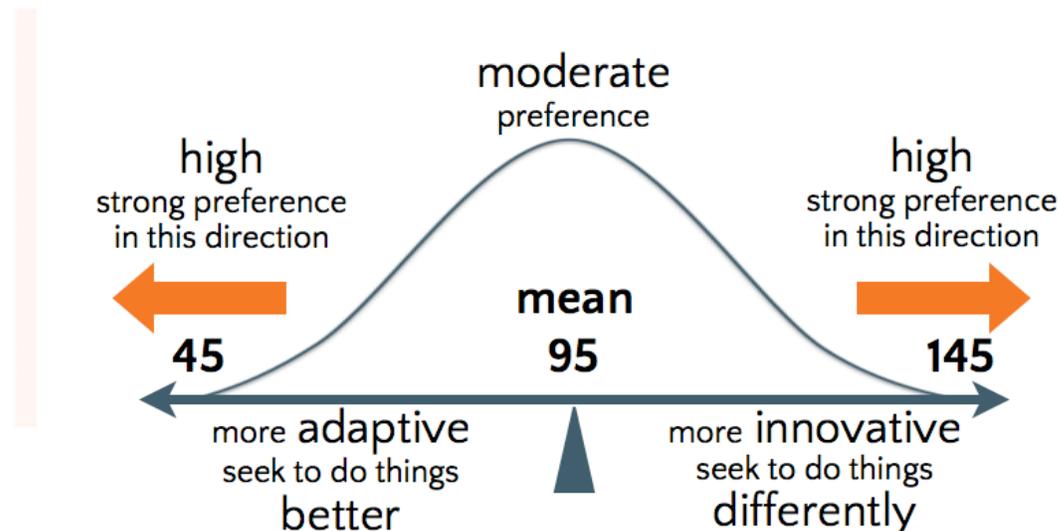# KAI Executive Summary

Thank you for taking the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory ("KAI"). The KAI is an assessment tool based on a well-regarded model of problem-solving style that was developed by psychologist Michael Kirton, known as Adaption-Innovation ("A-I") Theory. The theory posits a continuum between two styles – *adaptive* and *innovative.* Where a person falls on the continuum describes how the person prefers to deal with the paradox of structure, which is the seemingly incongruent notion that structure both enables and limits problem solving.

Under A-I Theory, the preferred problem-solving style of people who are more *adaptive* is to leverage the system in place, as-is, to solve problems. The types of change the more *adaptive* advocate for are improvements; they want to make the *current system* better. They tend to be more risk averse because they don't want to damage the current system, and they prefer a consensually agreed upon structure within which they solve problems.

People who are more *innovative* prefer the efficiency and flexibility of devising a solution and then modifying or *replacing the current system* or process to accommodate the better solution. They tend to be less risk averse and more interested in trying something different than their more *adaptive* colleagues.

The bell curve below illustrates that problem-solving styles occur across a normal distribution, with most people having a preferred style towards the middle of the continuum. This means that most people prefer leveraging and changing the current system to varying degrees depending on where they fall on the continuum. Thus, it's important to remember that a person is not an *adaptor* or *innovator.* Rather, it is the person's position on the continuum relative to that of a team member that determines who is more *adaptive* or *innovative* and by how much.

KAI Continuum

moderate
preference

high
strong preference
in this direction

high
strong preference
in this direction

mean

45   95   145

more **adaptive**
seek to do things
better

more **innovative**
seek to do things
differently

A person's KAI score is made up of three sub-scores: Sufficiency of Originality ("SO"); Efficiency ("E"); and Rules/Group ("R/G"). SO describes to the degree to which a person is free or cautious in sharing ideas. The more *adaptive* tend to have fewer ideas, but those ideas are typically concrete and ready to implement. This is because the more *adaptive* prefer to leverage the system or structure in place. The more *innovative*, on the other hand, tend to have more ideas and those ideas are just as likely to leverage the current system as they are to consider changing the system. Many of their ideas, however, are never implemented because they require drastic changes to the current system or are "too out there."

The E sub-score measures the degree to which a person prefers method, process, and structure in problem solving. The more *adaptive* prefer more method, process and structure than their more *innovative* colleagues who, by comparison, have a more emergent style of solving problems. In other words, the more *innovative* a person is, the more likely the person is to just dig into the problem, figuring it out as he or she goes along.

Finally, R/G measures how a person prefers to manage structure, which are rules and group norms. The more *adaptive* prefer adhering to the rules in place and acting consistent with group norms while their more *innovative* colleagues are willing to ignore rules that don't serve them and challenge authority and group norms.

Why is problem-solving style important and what do similarities and differences in scores mean for collaboration? The closer the scores are, the more similar the problem-solving styles. Remember, a person is not an *adaptor* or *innovator;* it is the relative positions on the continuum that measures differences in style. That is why someone is more or less *adaptive* or *innovative* than a team member.

The benefit to working with someone with a similar style is that you will likely work and focus your attention similarly, which means collaboration will likely be smoother. The downside is that you may tend to overlook the same concerns and solutions.

Conversely, the greater the difference in scores is, the greater the difference in problem-solving styles. The advantage to working with a colleague who is quite different is that you are less likely to overlook potential solutions and problems. The downside is that the style differences can be annoying and even disruptive to the collaboration. The key to overcoming feelings of annoyance is to replace them with appreciation borne of a greater understanding of the value that colleagues with differing styles bring to the team.

We look forward to exploring these benefits and challenges together! Until then, please reach out to us with any questions.