

FEBI™ 2.0 -

Making Pattern Distinctions Clearer than Ever

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No less than the exemplary leaders we work with, we at Focus Leadership are committed to continuous learning and improving what we do. For the past 5 years in which we've used the FEBI™



(i.e., Focus Energy Balance Indicator), with clients and coaches around the world, we have continued our research into the energy patterns – the Driver, Organizer, Collaborator and Visionary – and this powerful instrument that measures them. We now know more about the energy patterns as factors of personality, how different questions are interpreted by different types of people, and how to better discriminate close patterns in one's preference order, all of which we bring to bear in improvements we've made to create FEBI 2.0.



In this paper we briefly describe why, what, and how we changed the new version of the FEBI, and what that means for using the instrument.

* The FEBI 2.0 research team also included Mark Kiefaber and Bob Caron of Focus Leadership. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of Paul Connelly of PPI.

Why did we change?

The FEBI was already strong and validated on par with the other popular personality assessments in the field. So why did we change anything? First, we were listening to our FEBI-certified coaches who would often ask us about how to coach when all pattern scores were in the moderate range or close to one another. While balance among the patterns is not particularly rare (since everyone has access to all 4 patterns), we wanted to see if we could tease apart close patterns and break ties. We also came to recognize from our own coaching and comparison with other instruments, that our moderate range was overly broad. Based on the past 5 years of FEBI use, we were able to rerun a factor analysis using a broader, multi-cultural dataset. In that factor analysis, we found some questions that did not factor as cleanly as expected. For all of these reasons, we wanted to make some changes.

Our goal in upgrading the FEBI was to see if we could better distinguish close patterns, refine or clean up any “suspect” questions, while increasing the overall validity and reliability of the instrument.

What did we change?

We made changes to 3 aspects of the FEBI. First, we changed a number of questions in the survey itself. Based on statistical analysis, focus groups, and other qualitative analyses (more on that in a moment), we changed about 20% of the questions and refined (tweaking the wording but not changing the meaning) another 30%. We refined or culled out questions that were too positive, too negative, or too ambiguous.

The second thing we changed was the FEBI scale. We switched from a 5-point scale to a 7-point Likert type scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. This was consistent with giving people more scoring choices in the middle.

Lastly, we changed the scoring algorithm and the percentile distribution for attributing a score to a particular range (i.e., Very Low to Very High). In the past, the Moderate range was defined as the middle 65% of the scores, while Very Low and Very High were defined as less than 5% at the extremes. In FEBI 2.0, we've moved to a scale more consistent with the NEO and Hogan assessments in which Very Low and Very High are the extreme 10%, Low and High and the next 20% in each direction, and Moderate is the middle 40%.

What didn't change?

Overall, the FEBI report remains the same. The energy pattern descriptions, leadership styles, risk areas and development tables have not changed in FEBI 2.0. The report still includes both an overall energy profile as well as the forced-choice preferences around 24 Work Behaviors coded by the pattern that does them best. Other than the scale on the overall energy profile, and the wording on a couple of the Work Behaviors, the FEBI 2.0 report looks the same as before.

What were question changes based on?

We put the FEBI through the standard psychometric validation paces with a sample of over 1300. We looked at validity, both internally and externally, as well as reliability. By "validity" we mean: is the assessment measuring what we want it to measure? To help us answer that, we re-ran a factor analysis (which looks at how questions group together), and re-examined questions that grouped more than one way or in a way we didn't expect. We also correlated FEBI questions with another "gold-standard" instrument, the NEO PI-R, and re-examined questions that did not correlate as expected.

In addition, we used focus groups and subject experts to conduct a qualitative, face validity analysis, which surfaces how questions land and feel subjectively. This process led to refinements to reduce inconsistent interpretations of the questions from different people.

In examining reliability of the FEBI we ask: are we consistent in measuring what we measure? We examined all question distribution statistics, and took a close look at (Cronbach's) Alpha, a measure of internal consistency. In FEBI 1.0, we already passed a standard of goodness for psychometric instruments (with Alpha > .7 for all patterns), but for FEBI 2.0, we worked to get this number even higher by re-examining any questions that hurt reliability and re-testing as we made changes.

And the results are...

FEBI 2.0 is showing improvements across the board. From a validity standpoint, questions in FEBI 2.0 are factoring more cleanly, are more consistent in their social desirability (i.e., being neither too positive nor negative), and are eliciting the responses we expect from focus groups. We are also seeing stronger correlations comparing FEBI 2.0 with the NEO PI-R. From a reliability standpoint, we're seeing an even stronger Alpha for all patterns (> .8), well above the benchmark for a reliable psychometric assessment.

Statistics aside, we've also learned a great deal in the process. For example, we saw that questions that were negatively worded (e.g., "I am told I'm inflexible.") did not factor cleanly, often landing not only where we expected them (Organizer in this case), but also in a 5th factor that seemed anxiety-related, akin to "negative emotions" in models like the NEO. We also noticed that some patterns had more negatively-worded questions than others. Since our intent was to tease out patterns, not anxiety, we reworded such questions in FEBI 2.0.

We also learned some subtleties that will help FEBI 2.0 distinguish close patterns. For example, questions around creativity factored into both Collaborator and Visionary and, in the original FEBI, it was hard to separate the two. However, we found that action-oriented creativity questions factored clearly with Collaborator, whereas idea-oriented creativity factored clearly with Visionary, and we refined the wording of questions accordingly.

Finally, we learned that some traits, even though one pattern might do them better than the others, are just too socially desirable to be good pattern discriminators. For example, multitasking is an activity that Collaborators particularly thrive at, however to meet the demands of today's workplace, everyone sees themselves as a multitasker, not just Collaborators. As another example, "seeing the big picture" is something best done in the Visionary pattern. But since every leader has learned that seeing the big picture is important, people tend to pick it as a top Work Behavior, whether they use Visionary energy to do it or not. In cases like these, we changed question wording to get at the same idea in a less socially desirable way.

What does this mean for using the FEBI?

As mentioned earlier, the FEBI report has changed little, and the basic way you coach with it is the same as before (see, for example, the downloadable companion article on *The Patterns in Coaching*). By comparison with the original FEBI, you will notice more scores outside the moderate range in FEBI 2.0, as well as fewer pattern ties.

In the overall pattern profile, all pattern means are scaled to 100 (as in FEBI 1.0), however 10 points are approximately half a standard deviation in FEBI 2.0, whereas they were a full standard deviation in the original FEBI. What this means is that pattern preferences within a few points of one another are not statistically significant and could be different on a

subsequent taking of the instrument. Similarly, people having scores within a few points of a range divider (between, say Low and Moderate) will exhibit elements of both, and it would be good to validate which one feels closer to the person's experience (and/or your experience of them).

We're excited by what we've learned about the energy patterns and the FEBI over the past 5 years. And we're pleased how that has come together in a more robust FEBI 2.0 with cleaner pattern distinctions, measured with even greater consistency.

Our research continues still, including an expanded FEBI-NEO correlation study across a wider demographic sample. We will also repeat our earlier FEBI-360 studies on the new version of the FEBI to compare self-reported FEBI data with inputs from others. We also learn from you: your questions, your insights. As you work with the new FEBI, we welcome hearing your feedback and experiences; visit us at www.focusleadership.com.

Focus Leadership, LLC, founded by Dr. Ginny Whitelaw and Mark Kiefaber, is dedicated to energizing the development of whole leaders. Read more at www.focusleadership.com.



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