

A TEST FOR MEMORY OF NAMES AND FACES

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Socially as well as in business the ability to remember the names and faces of people previously met is very desirable and is sometimes absolutely necessary. The growth of practically every sales organization depends largely on repeated orders from customers who have become attached to the house through the personality of a salesman. A salesman cannot make a good impression without being able to call his customer by name, and while in making routine calls he may use a memorandum to refresh his memory on any customer whom he is about to see, such a preliminary opportunity for "coaching" is not always afforded. The customer may be met unexpectedly on a train or on the street, and an immediate introduction to a third person would require that the name be recalled at once.

No further argument is necessary to emphasize the importance of the matter and this report will present an attempt which has been made to find a means for discovering the existence of the ability in question.

The test proper consists of 100 men's pictures, approximately two inches square, clipped from a college annual, and pasted in rows on a large sheet of paper. The pictures are numbered consecutively from 1 to 100. Duplicates of 20 of these pictures are pasted on a card of smaller size. Under each of these 20 pictures is typed one of twenty common names. No first names are used, nor are any pictures of women used. The subject is instructed as follows:

"You will be shown the pictures of 20 men for five minutes. Each man's name is under his picture. At the end of five minutes you will be shown the pictures of 100 men, among which are scattered the 20 which you saw just previously. You will be asked to recognize those 20 and to name as many of them as possible."

There is no time limit for the recognition of the faces and the recall of the names, and the subject is allowed to go over the pictures more than once. If a face is named differently at one time than at another, no comment is made and the last declaration is recorded. The subject is informed as to the number recognized and named, without regard to the number of errors.

In scoring, 5 points are allowed for each face correctly named and 1 point for each face correctly recognized and not named. This gives a possible maximum of 100 points. One point is deducted for each false recognition. In further work 20 recognitions will be allowed without penalty for errors. On the original basis the scores for 72 subjects varied between 10 and 92.

The first question is in regard to the reliability of the test, and to measure that it was repeated on 33 subjects after an interval of not less than one week. The subjects were psychologists and college students. In the second trial a different selection of 20 pictures was used, and with names different from the original. The Pearson correlation between the scores in the two trials was .78. In the second trial there was occasional evidence of greater confidence and other slight adaptation to the work so that the median rose from 37 in the first trial to 43 in the second. On the whole however, the performances were quite consistent with each other.

Compared to the work of some other experimenters, the relation between recognition and recall is here quite high, the Pearson coefficient for 50 cases between recognition and recall of names being .61. There is here of course a high degree of association between the two.

The next step is to discover what relation, if any, ability in the test bears to ability in actual life. Before each subject was tested he was asked to state his conception of his own ability to remember people whom he met. In three cases of exceptionally high known ability and in one case of exceptionally low ability, there was perfect agreement with the test. In most of the other cases modesty, or over-confidence in the natural manner of expression, or ignorance due to lack of attention to the matter reduced each statement to a level, which as an indication of ability was without significance. In about 90% of the cases the answer was: "I'm not very good at remembering people's names; I can remember their faces much better."

To get a measure of ability in actual practice ten members of the psychology department of the Carnegie Institute of Technology who had taken the test were introduced under experimental conditions to seventeen students who were strangers to them. The attempt was made to have conditions as nearly as possible duplicate an actual situation,—as for instance a reception. The strangers (students) were given arbitrary names, selected for frequency in ordinary life. The ten psychologists stood in line. A stranger was introduced to the person at the head of the line, and they engaged

in the ordinary form of pleasant conversation. At the end of one minute psychologist number 1 introduced the man talking to him to psychologist number 2, and then the second stranger was presented to number 1. This was continued at one minute intervals until all the students had been introduced. As soon as a student completed his one minute with the last psychologist he passed out of sight into an adjoining room. When all the students had been through this process a visible number was pinned on the coat of each, the psychologists provided with paper, and the two groups thrown together. The psychologists re-engaged the students in light conversation and endeavored to recall the names and enter them, numbered, on the paper which they carried. A very cordial spirit of experimental honesty naturally was maintained by the psychologists. As much cannot be said for the students who were asked to go through the corresponding performance of recalling the names of the psychologists. In view of the fact that they failed to observe the proper spirit their records were discarded. The records of the psychologists are as follows:

	Rank in Test			Rank with People
	1st trial	2nd trial	Combined	
A	1	3	1	1 5
B	2	2	2	1 5
C	3	4	3	3
D	4	8	6	6
E	5	5	5	9
F	6	1	4	7
G	7	7	7	4
H	8	9	9	8
I	9	6	8	5
J	10	10	10	10

There is of course a very considerable difference between associating names with pictures, and meeting a number of strangers and keeping their names in mind. The social factor in the latter case is very prominent and if a person is so constituted that the temporary balance of the mental factors involved is slightly disturbed thereby, then his memory for names will be comparatively much less effective than his memory under different circumstances. Such a change is noticed in subjects E and F, who drop from ranks 5 and 4 with the pictures to 9 and 7 with the people. Personal acquaintance with the subjects gives the explanation suggested above, as it does also the rise in rank of subjects G and I. G and I might be considered rather social than studious, while E and F are just the opposite.

The agreement between the test rank and the rank with

people is comparatively close, especially with the extremes. In fact it is almost too close. It is not sufficiently clear that the situation with the seventeen strange students gave a positive indication of the abilities of the psychologists, although their rank positions were approximately as each had anticipated. Further tests of the same kind are highly desirable.

A second method, and the ultimate one, for checking the test if it is to be used for selecting men for business positions, is to give it to people who have well recognized ability for remembering names and faces, and whose positions actually require it,—such as hotel clerks, office window tellers, etc. A very important difficulty of the test became apparent when it was given to a number of such people. Brief, intense study of something unusual, such as the test required, is absolutely foreign to their habits. They had all been out of school for a considerable number of years and were rather lost for a method of procedure. Artificial associations were not easily formed. In the ordinary course of their work most of the people with whom they deal are conspicuous for some particular phase of their business. There are a number of helps for placing each man. This suggested that in the twenty stimulus pictures of the test it is not enough to have simply the men's last names. Accordingly, without changing the requirements above recalling the last name only, each picture has been given a full name, the man's occupation and place of business, and the town in which he lives, as:

Fred W. Hamilton, reporter, *Evening Sun*, Buffalo, N. Y. This method has not been tried out sufficiently to show what the results will be.

To use the test exclusively on prospective insurance salesmen it has been suggested to insert the kind of data that is most important for an agent to know when he meets a prospect; such things as age, marital condition and dependents, and occupation. A similar practice could be followed with other specialized groups.

A change in the technique has been adopted tentatively to relieve the recall of the names from dependence on previous recognition of the faces. After the twenty pictures are shown with the names, etc., the same twenty pictures only are presented, but in different arrangement, each numbered. This gives a score for the recall of names. Then for the recognition of faces those same twenty are to be identified, without naming, in a group of 100. For the present at least further study should be made on recognition at the same time as the work on recall, although later the recognition may be dropped in order to simplify the test.