Should I use an Ipsative test in Selection?

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Some test publishers do publish ipsative (forced choice) tests for use in selection. However, caution is required here. If your test is purely ipsative, then you should not use it in selection. See the references below for reasons why. The main reason relates to the fact that whilst you can compare your candidate's relative strengths with an ipsative test, you cannot compare them to others. In selection of course, the aim is to compare one candidate with another. That said, recent developments allow for the use of ipsative questions within selection. Some recent tests provide for dynamic ipsative questions wherein these questions will only appear if the candidate has not presented a clear picture of themselves on a particular test scale. An alternative to this is the modified ipsative scale where candidates are asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement. Again, if these items are presented alongside normative (non-forced-choice) items, they can be used in selection.

> "In sum, the standards required of tests used for employee selection are quite strict with regards to validity and reliability of the selection instruments. As such, the limitations inherent with ipsative measures pose too great a threat to the validity of the selection tools to make it a useful instrument for selection on a trait-by-trait basis". p. 549

Meade, A. (2004). Psychometric problems and issues involved with creating and using ipsative measures for selection. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 77, 531-552.

In addition to the above reference, for those seriously interested in exploring the misuse of ipsative personality tools we strongly recommended one of the most prominent articles in the area:

Blinkhorn, S.F., Johnson, C.E., & Wood, R.F. (1988). Spuriouser and Spuriouser: The use of ipsative personality tests. Journal of Occupational Psychology, 61, 153-162.