

Beyond the Horizons Consulting

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Communication Skills, Part VIII

This is the eighth and final article in a series about communications in the workplace. In our August Newsletter we wrote about how Feeling vs. Thinking types and Judging vs. Perceiving types communicate. As promised, in this Newsletter, we examine how organizations themselves can have personality types and give you some tips on using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator with your business team. If you are new to our Newsletters, feel free to send along comments or questions to info@beyondthehorizonsconsulting.com.

Do Organizations Have a Personality Type?

When trainers do Myers-Briggs (MBTI) assessments on groups of people — whether it be a team, a division, or a whole organization — they can derive a dominant



or most prevalent type. If all individuals have an equal say, as for example on relatively small teams, then this could be a good way to type the team.

However, many other factors impact an organization's dominant type. Here are some of them:

- ◆ The mission or purpose of the organization — making a profit, serving human needs, furthering research, and the like.
- ◆ Corporate culture — what is viewed as acceptable practice for doing business, both within the orga-

nization and with the general public.

- ◆ The dominant personalities of key players — the CEO, the CFO, directors and policy makers.

Misconceptions about the MBTI

Very often I hear persons come away from an MBTI workshop with catch phrases such as, "I'm an ENTJ, so I'm a natural administrator," or "So-and-so is an ISFP — she's just not management potential." The MBTI is *NOT* a way to codify and classify people, putting them into boxes that limit their potential!!! Yes, each of the 16 types is distinctly different from the other 15, and each has specific gifts. Yet we must remember that *the MBTI is merely a tool*. As such, it needs to be used ethically and within the scope of its limitations:

- * It is not ethical to reveal others' personality types without their permission.
- * It is not ethical to pigeonhole people and to violate their dignity and potential as human beings by classifying or labeling them.

Besides that, many trainers do not qualify MBTI results by taking into account these three factors:

- 1 Many persons' behavior is strongly influenced by the kind of work they are currently doing, even though they may temperamentally not be suited for that type of work.
- 2 Innate personality type can often be skewed by outer circumstances and by one's environment.
- 3 At midlife, healthy development points toward "incorporating the opposites" into one's basic personality preferences.

We will illustrate each of these cases with some examples.

(Article continues on page 2.)

Case 1: Suppose you have an employee who comes to work tired and listless most of the time. This person is required by the nature of the job to be outgoing and friendly. However, his/her personality type is much more reserved and reflective (the Introverted rather than the Extroverted type). S/he is trying as hard as possible to fulfill the job requirements, but inevitably experiences an energy drain with this kind of work. Clearly, although this employee “puts on” an extroverted face, s/he would do better — and so would your organization — if s/he were placed in a more introverted position, say, copy writing for your advertising department or analyzing statistics for your research department.

Case 2: This is an extension of what we described in Case 1. We all know that there are many influences on a person from their infancy up to the present. They may have grown up in a family that was very “warm and fuzzy,” yet essentially be a more logical, stick-to-the-facts type of person. Will their family environment affect their personality preferences now? Of course! They will want to fit in with their family, their friends, their social group. Yet until they come to a deeper understanding of who they really are, there will be internal conflict. (We might say that this person struggles between his natural tendency toward Thinking and the pressures of a Feeling “family culture.”)

How will this affect you as employer? People like this will not be able to give you their best. They will be divided within, and you will sense that they are not “wholly on board.” The good news is that the MBTI can help them clarify their preferences, understand themselves better, and thus have more initiative and drive as an employee.

Case 3: Most trainers do not go into one of the most valuable aspects of the MBTI — that is, that **healthy development calls for understanding and greater utilization of the opposites in one’s MBTI portrait.** For example, if your MBTI portrait indicates preferences for ISTJ (Introvert-Sensing-Thinking-Judging), as you mature psychologically, you will learn to incorporate the opposites into your way of seeing things and making decisions. Those opposite preferences are ENFP (Extrovert-Intuitive-Feeling-Perceiving). Now you’ll never *BE* an ENFP, but you will feel more **balanced** to yourself and to others, and you will demonstrate more empathy and ability to communicate.

The MBTI is Fun!

Here are a couple of anecdotes that utilize MBTI concepts. Don’t let the simplicity of these examples get you into the

mindset that the MBTI is just fluff, though. But do enjoy the “dollop of personality pudding” in the following anecdotes.

SWEET REVENGE

An MBTI trainer divided her group into Js and Ps. She asked each group to “design a new library wing” while the other group watched. The Js went first. Someone had a bag of jellybeans, and in five minutes they had laid out a floor plan in jelly beans. Then it was the Ps turn. They complained about the assignment briefly. Then they ate the jellybeans.*



“HAVE A NICE DAY!”

This generic phrase can be interpreted in many ways. Each of the four temperaments will clearly mean something different from the other groups when they greet you with the above catch-all phrase.

- NTs will probably mean, “Have an interesting day!”
- NFs will probably mean, “Have an inspiring day!”
- SJs will probably mean, “Have a productive day!”
- SPs will probably mean, “Have fun today!”*

Keep in Touch

Do you have an employee who you know could perform much better or another who seems like a bad fit for the particular position? Do you have another employee who you want to groom for a management position? Perhaps one of our many assessments could help you improve workplace retention and motivation, as well as job fit.

We at Beyond the Horizons Consulting would love to hear from you. Have we been giving you some information you can put to good use? What questions might you have about improving management and teamwork? We are only a phone call or an e-mail message away.

*Anecdotes are from *Type Talk: The 16 Personality Types that Determine How We Live, Love, and Work*, by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen (NY: Bantam Books), pp. 81 and 54.

See page 3 for more information on our consulting services and how to contact us. We look forward to serving you!

Stay tuned to Beyond the Horizons Consulting Newsletters for timely information to solve your management challenges! Please feel free to write us at

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or to call us at 505-466-4990 to schedule a free, complimentary coaching session or consultation for your business needs.

Beyond the Horizons Consulting offers a variety of services for individuals, teams, and organizations.

- ◆ Individual coaching for managers is a process that begins by identifying your style, what you want to retain and strengthen, and what you want to modify. Objective assessments are part of the process, as are also a mutual give-and-take process of creative problem solving and supportive guidance.
- ◆ We offer group seminars on identifying and dealing with stress in a relaxing and supportive environment.
- ◆ Our team building seminars will help your team or department run more smoothly, whether it is a brand-new team or one that has been put together after a reorganization.
- ◆ Our communication seminars identify crucial parts of the communication equation and help you put them all together by using role play, among other practical, hands-on experiences.

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- ◆ We also offer group seminars utilizing excellent tools, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or the DISC.
- ◆ Our conflict resolution services help opposing parties identify mutual purpose(s) and restore harmony to your workplace environment.
- ◆ It is our pleasure to tailor a seminar to your company's, department's, or team's needs!

Take a look at our May and June, 2005, Newsletters to see our new, serene home, a place we invite you to take advantage of!

Call us to schedule a complimentary consultation for yourself or your business!

Our helpful Office Administrator, Stan, will work with you to schedule a meeting time that fits your schedule.

**Stan and Jean Eva can be reached at
(505) 466-4990**