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Tools in your Success Kit, Part III

September's and October's Newsletters each dealt with a powerful tool in your success kit, both personally and professionally. In September we focused on the Personal Interests, Attitudes, and Values instrument as a way to understand what is really important to you. This instrument is valuable to management as well, because it helps supervisors and bosses gauge what will motivate their employees to do their best.

In October, we focused on Spiral Dynamics, a tool that not only helps us understand ourselves but also gives us a broader understanding of levels of consciousness among both smaller and larger groups — all the way



from your community to the international level. Working with these levels of consciousness allows us to introduce seeds that will eventually lead to better communication, respect and utilization of human resources.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

In this Newsletter we will focus on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, one of the oldest and most accurate personality type instruments in use today. (**Refer also to the MBTI link on this website.**) The MBTI is an “oldie but a goody.” It’s based on the seminal work of the eminent psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, and was put into instrument form over several decades by the mother-daughter team, Katharine Briggs and Isabel Myers. What is astounding about this instrument is all the research that went into making it a valid and reliable assessment, up until the time it was taken over by the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, NJ, and then promoted through the Center for Application of Psychological Type, which still continues to offer exciting variations and applications of the instrument. Because the MBTI is both reliable and valid, it *does* measure what it purports to measure, and its reports are remarkable reliable and accurate.

The MBTI generates 16 different personality types. Each of these can be further defined by doing the Step II instrument, which yields more detailed facets of a personality, along with tips to enhance communication, problem solving, decision making, change management, and conflict management. These are ideal in coaching managers and supervisors and in work with a supervisor-employee dyad.

Several authors, including Kiersey and Bates, have come up with “temperaments” by sorting the 16 personality types into four simplified categories. In working with teams, use of temperament can often be helpful. Persons belonging to the same temperament group generally have similar ways of viewing a situation and similar ways of coming to viable solution

solutions to problems. Bringing all four temperaments to the decision table gives a manager the broadest possible playing field from which to choose/combine approaches to a given situation. For a fun exercise about the four temperaments, experiment with “Have a Nice Day!” at the end of this article!

There are several reasons why you as an employer or manager should consider using the MBTI with your employees. First of all, everyone (without exception) is interested in themselves! When the boss offers an in-service workshop for employees, in which they can learn and talk about themselves, they feel important and appreciated. What better way to boost morale in your organization!

Secondly, you will gain valuable information about your employees that will help you to make assignments that are actually suited to a particular employee’s talents and natural interests. You will also learn how best to communicate with and motivate that employee. As they say, different strokes for different folks! When you are instrumental in making someone feel valued and appreciated, that person will work ten times better for you. Not only that, s/he will feel part of a team effort. The image that I see here is that the “cogs and wheels” of your enterprise are humming along in perfect coordination.

Misconceptions about the MBTI

Very often I hear persons come away from an MBTI workshop with catch phrases like, “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 classify and codify people, putting them in boxes that limit their potential !!! Yes, each of the 16 types is distinctly different from the other 15 types **and** each has specific gifts. We must remember that the MBTI is a **tool**. As with any tool, the most important thing to remember is that it needs to be used ethically and within the scope of its limitations. *It is not ethical to reveal another’s personality type without their permission. It is also not ethical to pigeonhole a person and to violate their dignity and potential as a human being by classifying them and “shelving them.”*

Besides that, many trainers do not qualify results of MBTI testing by taking into account (1) the fact that many persons’ behavior is strongly influenced by the kind of work they are currently doing; (2) the fact that innate personality type can often be skewed by outer circumstances and by

one’s environment; and (3) the fact that at midlife healthy development points toward “incorporating the opposites” into one’s basic personality preferences.

- 1 I’d like to illustrate this first point by using some specific work-related examples. Suppose you have an employee who is a customer-service representative 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 basic personality type is much more reserved and reflective. 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.
- 2 Case number 2 is an extension of what we’ve looked at in number 1. It’s just saying that there are many external 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 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. 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 MBTI can help them clarify their preferences, understand themselves better, and thus have more initiative and drive as an employee.
- 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, as you mature psychologically, you will learn to bring in the opposites into your way of seeing things and making decisions. Those opposite preferences are ENFP. Now you’ll never BE an ENFP, but you will feel more **balanced** (to yourself

The Value of the Assessment for Busi-

self and 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 MBTI is just fluff, though. But do enjoy the "dollop of personality pudding" in the following examples.

Sweet Revenge

An MBTI trainer divided her group into Js and Ps (*representing two of the eight preferences tested on the MBTI*). 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 quite 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!"

If you're curious to find out more about these temperaments and how type and temperament can be used to improve communication in your organization or enterprise, call us at Beyond the Horizons Consulting and speak with Jean Eva about setting up a free, no-obligation consultation. We'll be glad to answer any questions you may have and tailor a program to your needs!

Call Today! (505) 466-4990