



Working with Every Personality

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In small, family-run enterprises it is just as important to have good communication and trust between co-workers as it is in larger, corporate businesses. In fact, you could argue that it is more important since there are fewer people to spread the work between and disagreements can have major, negative impacts on the business. Previous editions of the Enterprising Rural Families Newsletter have dealt with managing conflict by using various tools and resources. But what can you do to prevent conflict from happening? While there is no sure-fire way to stop conflict before it erupts, there are different tools and techniques that can diagnose and mitigate probable causes of conflict.

One approach to conflict prevention is a study of personality types and individual preferences. There are several different personality assessments available today but one of the most widely used is the Myers-Briggs Personality Instrument (MBTI). The strength of the MBTI assessment is its strong basis in research and theory. Based on the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, mother and daughter team Katharine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers created an assessment in the 1940's that reports on individual preferences in four different dichotomies; each dichotomy consists of two opposite, but equally valid poles. These poles are the eight preferences, or patterns of behavior, that make up our psychological type.¹ Each type has its potential strengths and possible blind spots but every personality type is a reasonable way to be and exist.

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Tip of the Month

Many previous tips in the Enterprising Rural Families Newsletter have discussed different social media platforms and their numerous benefits. While most people are familiar with Facebook, and have personal and/or business accounts, not as many people are familiar with Instagram. Instagram is a free app (available for smartphones in both the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store) that lets you easily alter photos and share them with a wide audience. The app allows you to upload and share your photos with multiple platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr) with one click. Instagram allows you to transform mediocre photos into professional-looking snapshots in just a few easy steps.

Let's talk about some of the features of this app:

Newsfeed: Much like Facebook, Instagram allows you to amass followers and to follow other friends or entities. Their posts and videos show up instantly in your newsfeed. There are also similar privacy settings that allow you to dictate what you do and do not share with your followers.

Filters: Instagram offers numerous filters that you can apply to your photos to give them different effects. These photographic filters allow you to apply a variety of different looks to your photos with just a tap. Some filters make your photos appear black and white, pastel, sepia, or tinted. Other filters add a "glow" to your photos or make them appear softer/older.

Tools: After applying a filter, there are other picture editing options to choose from. You can increase or decrease the contrast, brightness, color saturation, or

the warmth. You can add color effects to the shadows and highlights in your photo. You can also adjust the sharpness or fade to make the photo appear clearer or fuzzier.

Posting: The final step in sharing your photo is to add a caption, and if you would like, a hashtag. Hashtags can be wonderful ways of tracking who is tuning into your message or sharing your photos. You can also start a hashtag campaign (like #shoplocal or #growninwyoming) to encourage your followers and customers to share your message or to post their own photos and videos of your products/services. When adding a caption, you can also tag others and add a location to your photo.

Activity: Instagram has an Activity feature that lets you stay up-to-date with likes, comments, mentions, and new

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followers. It also alerts you when your friends from Facebook join Instagram.

There are several benefits to using Instagram but here are just a few. First, pictures help you tell your customers a story about who you are and what products/services you have to offer. Advertising is much more effective when it includes a picture, image, or video. Instagram makes it easy to share your story. Second, the app allows you to put your best foot forward with customers by pre-

senting professional-looking photos and images. With not much effort or technical knowledge, you can take ho-hum photos and make them really stand out. Third, Instagram gives you the chance to connect directly with potential customers and/or clients through an easy-to-use platform. By linking your Instagram account to your Facebook account you can share pictures with both audiences with just one click. A simple search feature allows you to find followers and people that you want to follow. Fourth, Insta-

gram lets you access a large number of potential followers and customers. In December 2014, Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom announced that there are 300 million users accessing the site per month. Chances are that many of your customers are already on the app. It is one more way to keep your name and services in front of their face and in their minds. Instagram is fun and easy to use so get started today!
Information retrieved from: <https://instagram.com>.

By examining each preference, and determining where you identify, you can get a better feel for how your preferences will affect your behavior and your choices. It can also lead to revelations about your interactions with others and how their preferences may have influenced the outcome of those interactions. When we better understand ourselves and our own motivations, we will be better enabled to analyze interactions with others. And while we cannot change our personalities, we can adapt our behaviors to better suit the situation and the audience. Now we will examine each of the eight preferences and the implications that those preferences have for our communication and learning styles.

Extraversion/Introversion

Perhaps the most familiar of all Myers-Briggs dichotomies, the Extraversion-Introversion pairing is often misunderstood. Many people mistakenly believe that this preference is about being “shy” but it really indicates where you prefer to focus your attention. Extraverts tend to focus on the outer world of people and activity. Interacting with others, taking action, and talking aloud typically gives Extraverts energy. Introverts however, like to focus on their own inner world of ideas and experiences. They typically get energy from reflecting on thoughts or feelings.² It is not always as easy to spot an Introvert as you might think; they have often gained social skills and competencies to work with others successfully. They can even be the person “out front” in a business or an organization. The difference is that while Extraverts would be happy to work with others all day (and into the evening), an Introvert will eventually need some time alone to recharge his or her batteries.

When working with Extraverts and Introverts, there are some important things to keep in mind so that both sides feel comfortable, connected and valued. Extraverts tend to prefer to communicate by talking and are usually sociable and expressive. These people like to talk through their ideas; they are typically summed up with the phrase “do-think-do.” An Extravert I know says, “I don’t know what I’m thinking until I hear [myself say] it out loud.” People who prefer Introversion are usually seen as private and contained since they like to think things through before talking about them. Typically better at communicating through writing, Introverts can be summed up with the phrase “think-do-think.” In group settings, Extraverts are more likely to take the initiative in work and relationships; Introverts are less likely to take initiative unless it is really important to them.³

When it comes to learning a new role or task, Extraverts are collaborative learners. They typically like to talk things through with others and they show a high degree of preference for active, experimental learning. Their intellectual curiosity can be aroused by group work and peer-to-peer learning. Introverts are more likely to have an observational learning style. Since they like reflection, it is best to give them time to think about an issue or question before requiring a response. They need a chance to block out external distractions before they can process their thoughts and feel comfortable giving the best answer.⁴

Sensing/Intuition

When trying to make decisions it is important to receive solid, reliable information. According to MBTI theory, we have different preferences for taking in information and the kind of information that we like and trust. People who prefer Sensing like information that is concrete and factual. They trust experience and information that revolves around the five senses. Sensing types observe and remember specifics that they use to build carefully and sequentially towards a conclusion. People who prefer Intuition are more comfortable looking at the big picture.





They look for patterns and connections between facts and they relate those patterns back to the larger meaning. It is not uncommon for Intuitive types to have a hunch about some future possibility that they cannot fully explain but just know to be right.⁵

Both types in the Sensing-Intuition dichotomy have specific needs related to communication but Intuitive types' needs may outweigh those of Sensing types. When communicating an idea or story to a group it is best to start with the big picture to ensure that Intuitives know the overall point or destination

and then move to the specifics that will satisfy the Sensors. People who prefer Sensing can appreciate a big picture but they need it followed by specifics and greater detail so that they can fully grasp the point. If you start by communicating all of the details, Intuitives will be desperate to understand the larger concept and may check out of the conversation.

The preference for Sensing or Intuition also plays a role in learning styles. People who prefer sensing tend to like to learn information in a sequential way; they are comfortable with multi-step processes. People who prefer Intuition like theory and abstract concepts; they like using their imagination and theorizing on possibilities. Intuitive types tend to have holistic learning style. Both sides of this dichotomy can be creative but research shows that Sensors are adaptive while Intuitives are innovative.⁶

Thinking/Feeling

Once we have the necessary information we go about making a decision in different ways. The Thinking-Feeling dichotomy is about how we make decisions and the types of criteria we prefer to use. Those who prefer Thinking tend to solve problems with logic; they generally like to use objective standards to analyze and weigh decisions. This can lead to Thinking types as being labeled "tough minded." When making decisions, people who prefer Feeling usually like to consider what is important to them and to others. Rather than following universal standards, Feeling types generally rely on personal and/or group values to make decisions. Because our values are deeply personal and subjective, Feelers may have trouble explaining how they arrived at their decision. Since thinking about how a decision will impact others is a vital part of their decision-making process, these people usually get labeled "soft hearted."⁷ It is very important to note that both types use rational decision-making processes; our personal preferences dictate whether we use subjective or objective criteria and it is critical that we recognize each different, yet equally valid approach.

Furthermore, imperative to our understanding of each type's approach to decision-making is recognizing the difference in each type's definitions of "fairness." Both Thinking and Feeling types highly value fairness as an important piece of the decision-making process but when they mention it, they mean different things. Thinkers define fairness as everyone is treated equally; Feelers define it as everyone is treated as an individual.⁸ While Feelers want to take everyone's unique situation into account, Thinkers do not like to focus on personal or emotional considerations. Thinkers tend to communicate information in the form of logical, cause-and-effect analysis with particular emphasis on the rationale. Feeling types want others to feel included in decision-making and so will work very hard to invite others and make them feel included. They will typically communicate the underlying values of decisions and any strategies for mitigating negative impacts that might result from the implemented decision.⁹

This dichotomy also impacts our individual learning styles. Thinking types tend to prefer an orientation to fact-based, serialist learning and methodological study. These people may need to know the reason/logic behind an assignment or a request in order to fulfill it. Feeling types tend to prefer a holistic learning style and may need more reassurance in the early stages of learning.¹⁰

Judging/Perceiving

The final dichotomy of the Myers-Briggs Personality Type is all about our attitude/orientation to the outer world and how we implement decisions. Some people use the Judging preference as a way to come to conclusions and achieve closure quickly. Others use the Perceiving preference to think about decisions and research op-



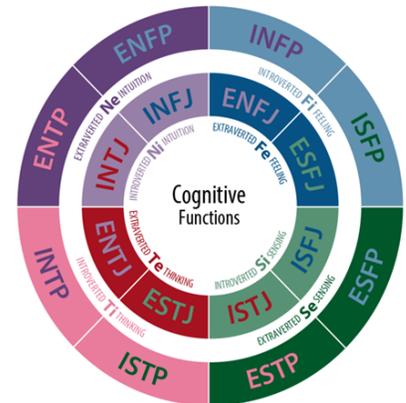
tions as long as possible before making a final decision.¹¹ People who prefer Judging typically have scheduled, organized approaches to assignments/tasks. They usually like making short- and long-term plans, setting checkpoints along the way to ensure that their goals are reached. Judgers like having things decided so that they can avoid the stress of doing things last-minute. People who prefer Perceiving typically like to be spontaneous and flexible; they prefer for decisions/tasks/plans to be open-ended so that they can change them at will. This means that Perceivers are usually more adaptable to change and may deal with it better than Judgers. As opposed to Judgers, Perceivers feel energized by last-minute pressures and will often say that is when their brains “turn on.”¹²

When communicating about decisions, Judgers and Perceivers will differ but there are things you can do to help the two types work better together. Judging types tend to communicate information after a decision has been made and implemented while Perceiving types tend to prefer to talk before the final decision has been made so that there is still time for adjustments. Perceiving types like to build flexibility into the plan while Judging types are not as comfortable with changes/tweaks.¹³ When working together, especially on a project with a due date, it is good for both types to have conversations up front and agree on a plan that meets the needs of both parties. The plan should include the midcourse corrections, updates and progress toward closure that Judgers need while leaving some room for flexibility and option generation to satisfy the Perceivers.

When learning a new task or role, Judging-Perceiving types have different needs. Judging types usually like content-based learning that allows for independent study. They tend to thrive in learning environments that are structured and goal-oriented. Perceiving types tend to be tactile learners who do best in an open, collaborative environment where their intellectual curiosity is free to roam.¹⁴

Conclusions

The Myers-Briggs theory of personality type is a useful tool for understanding ourselves and our motivations. It allows us to apply what we have learned to others and potentially gives us greater insight into their preferences as well. However, it is important to understand that people are more than just the sum of their parts. Just as we all have our innate preferences (nature), there are conflicting forces in the outer world (nurture) that affect us as well. Work, family, friends, and culture all have an impact on who we are and how we behave. Life will always require a balance between nature and nurture; remaining true to our inner, natural self while adjusting to the demands of the outside world.



And while our personality type might give us clues to areas of personal strengths, it should not discourage us from trying to grow and improve our weaknesses. Type theory does not (and should not) dictate what we will and will not be good at; rather, it can give us a guide to potential growth opportunities. Like the old adage “where there is a will, there is a way” personality theory shows us that we can grow, develop and cultivate skills to exceed at whatever we put our minds to. If you can harness your strengths, while working on your weaknesses, you can be a valuable part of any team or enterprise.

¹ Briggs Myers, I. *Introduction to Type*, 6th ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 1998.

² Ibid.

³ Briggs Myers, I. *Introduction to Type*, 6th ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 1998.

⁴ Briggs Myers, McCaullley, Quenk, & Hammer. *MBTI Manual*, 3rd ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 2003.

⁵ Briggs Myers, I. *Introduction to Type*, 6th ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 1998.

⁶ Briggs Myers, McCaullley, Quenk, & Hammer. *MBTI Manual*, 3rd ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 2003.

⁷ Briggs Myers, I. *Introduction to Type*, 6th ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 1998.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Briggs Myers, McCaullley, Quenk, & Hammer. *MBTI Manual*, 3rd ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 2003.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Briggs Myers, I. *Introduction to Type*, 6th ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 1998.

¹³ Briggs Myers, McCaullley, Quenk, & Hammer. *MBTI Manual*, 3rd ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 2003.

¹⁴ Briggs Myers, McCaullley, Quenk, & Hammer. *MBTI Manual*, 3rd ed. CPP Inc. Mountain View, CA. 2003