



Where are you coming from?

THOUGH PRIMARILY USED IN THE CORPORATE WORLD, MBTI (MYERS BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR) CAN BE EQUALLY POWERFUL IN UNDERSTANDING ONESELF, SELF-IMPROVEMENT, NURTURING SELF-ESTEEM, AND CREATING HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

by Jamuna Rangachari

I just could not understand my teammates' unstructured approach to work. They felt that I was a structure freak. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test showed us that this was our way, the way we preferred to function. In the process, we understood each other better and became more effective together," says Sunanda Shastri (name changed), a young HR consultant with a leading consultancy firm.

"Quitting my accounting career was vindicated when I realised I needed to interact with people to feel complete," says Ajay Kalra, who is now

working in the HR department of an investment firm.

"This is who I am," exclaims Meena Tandon, who feels drained if social commitments leave her with no personal time.

We know that what works for one person does not work for another, and essentially, the MBTI model tells us why this is so.

The model sorts some of these psychological differences into four opposite pairs, or dichotomies, with a resulting 16 possible psychological types (see box). None of these types is 'better' or 'worse.' It is a clear indica-

tor of our style, with the result that some things are naturally easier for us to do, while some others require effort.

Where are you coming from?

"Come on, where are you coming from?" In the context of our discussion, I understood she meant she did not quite understand my point of view. The phrase was new to me. I smiled, and told her that I did not quite understand the new lingo.

Most people have a preference towards energy from either the outer or the inner world. Thus one of their facets, either the extroverted (E) or the

introverted (I), takes the lead in their personality and plays a dominant role in their behaviour.

This is not to be confused with the English meaning of an 'introvert' or 'extrovert'. One of my friends, for example, is an introverted person though she certainly is people friendly. Conversely, an 'introvert' in the commonly understood parlance, could have his/her energy-orientedness from the outer world.

Essentially, the difference between the two is:

Extrovert	Introvert
Acts first, thinks/reflects later	Thinks/reflects first, then acts
Feels deprived when cut off from interaction with the outside world	Regularly requires an amount of 'private time' to recharge batteries
Usually open to and motivated by outside world of people and things	Motivated internally, mind is sometimes so active it is 'closed' to the outside world
Enjoys wide variety and change in people relationships	Prefers one-to-one communication and relationships

How do we see the world?

"This painting was definitely on the other side of the room," said my four-year-old daughter Samyukta, when she visited her aunt after a gap of four months. Everyone was stunned at her observation and memory, more so as I am the sort who hardly notices such details. Now, I understand why this comes so naturally to her, while for me, it is not that simple.

The sensing (S) side of our brain notices all the sensory details of the present. It categorises, organises, records and stores the specifics from the here

and now. It is reality-based, dealing with 'what is.' It also provides the specific details of memory and recollections from events.

The intuitive (N) side of our brain seeks to understand, interpret and form overall patterns of the information that is collected and records these patterns and relationships. It speculates on possibilities, including looking into and forecasting the future. It is imaginative and conceptual.

While both kinds of perceiving are necessary and used by all people, each of us instinctively tends to favour one over the other. Specifically, the differences between the two are:

Sensing	Intuitive
Mentally lives in the now, attending to present opportunities	Mentally lives in the future, attending to future possibilities
Using common sense and creating practical solutions is automatic-instinctual	Using imagination and creating/inventing new possibilities is automatic-instinctual
Memory recall is rich in detail of facts and past events	Memory recall emphasises patterns, contexts, and connections
Best at improvising from past experience. Likes clear and concrete information; dislikes guessing when facts are fuzzy	Best at improvising from theoretical understanding. Comfortable with ambiguous, fuzzy data and with guessing its meaning.

How do we make choices?

Says Susan Varughese, a certified MBTI professional, "As a 'T' type, I always use logic to arrive at decisions, while my sister, as an 'F' analyses it always from an emotional perspective." With the understanding that MBTI has given her, there

is better synergy in their relationship.

The thinking (T) side of our brain analyses information in a detached, objective fashion. It operates from factual principles, deduces and forms conclusions systematically. The feeling (F) side of our brain forms conclusions in an attached and somewhat global manner, based on likes/dislikes, impact on others, and human and aesthetic values.

While everyone uses both means of forming conclusions, each person has a natural bias towards one over the other so that when they give us conflicting directions – one side is the natural trump card or tie breaker. The specific differences between the two are:

What is our action style?

"We will decide what to make tomorrow," my aunt said casually when she was expecting many guests the following day. The next day, she whipped up a wonderful meal without being ruffled

Thinking	Feeling
Instinctively searches for facts and logic in a decision-making situation.	Instinctively employs personal feelings and impact on people in decision-making situations
Naturally notices tasks and work to be accomplished.	Naturally sensitive to people's needs and reactions.
Easily able to provide an objective and critical analysis.	Naturally seeks consensus and popular opinions.
Accepts conflict as a natural, normal part of relationships with people.	Unsettled by conflict; have almost a toxic reaction to disharmony.

in the least. When an ingredient was not found, she just changed the menu!

Apart from her efficiency, this reflect-

Which are you?

ISTJ

Serious and quiet, interested in security and peaceful living. Extremely thorough, responsible, and dependable. Well-developed powers of concentration. Usually interested in supporting and promoting traditions and establishments.

ISTP

Quiet and reserved, interested in how and why things work. Excellent skills with mechanical things. Risk-takers who live for the moment. Detached and analytical, they excel at finding solutions to practical problems.

ISFJ

Quiet, kind, and conscientious. Usually puts the needs of others above their own needs. Stable and practical, they value security and traditions. Extremely perceptive of others' feelings. Interested in serving others.

ISFP

Quiet, serious, sensitive and kind. Do not like conflict, and not likely to do things which may generate conflict. Loyal and faithful. Not interested in leading or controlling others. Likely to be original and cre-

ative. Enjoy the present moment.

INFJ

Quietly forceful, original, and sensitive. Tend to stick to things until they are done. Extremely intuitive about people, and concerned for their feelings. Well-developed value systems, which they strictly adhere to.

INFP

Quiet, reflective, and idealistic. Interested in serving humanity. Well-developed value system, which they strive to live in accordance with. Usually talented writers. Mentally quick, and able to see possibilities.

INTJ

Independent, original, analytical, and determined. Have an exceptional ability to turn theories into solid plans of action. Highly value knowledge, competence, and structure. Have very high standards for their performance, and the performance of others.

INTP

Logical, original, creative thinkers. Can become very excited about theories and ideas. Exceptionally capable and driven to turn the-

ed her natural style, which is to rise to the situation, whereas I tend to plan most things in advance.

Everyone uses both judging (thinking and feeling) and perceiving (sensing and intuition) processes to store information, organise thoughts, make decisions, take actions and manage lives. Yet one of these processes (judging or perceiving) tends to take the lead in our relationship with the outside world.

A judging (J) style approaches the outside world with a plan. A perceiving (P) style takes the outside world as it comes. In other words, the differences between the two action styles are:

Based on all of this, there are sixteen different types of personalities (see box) each of which has a distinct trait.

Different strokes

So the understanding is there. Where does one go from there?

Judging	Perceiving
Plans many of the details in advance before moving into action.	Comfortable moving into action without a plan; plans on the go.
Focuses on task-related action; completes meaningful segments before moving on.	Likes to multi-task, have variety, mix work and play.
Works best and avoids stress when keeping ahead of deadlines.	Naturally tolerant of time pressure; works best close to the deadlines.
Naturally uses targets, dates and standard routines to manage life.	Instinctively avoids commitments, which interfere with flexibility, freedom and variety.

Team building? Career choices? Relationships? Better communication? Spiritual growth?

Where is MBTI most useful?

The answer is ... almost everywhere.

Self-esteem

"How is it that you cannot remember any details of the interiors?" Ankita, a homemaker, was often asked by her friends when she mentioned she had visited a new place. She always felt there was something seriously amiss with her, until she realised as an 'N', her orientedness was inward and not detail-specific.

Relationships and communication

The knowledge of MBTI has made Dhananjay Gokhale, a trainer in project management, who is also MBTI certified now, actively work on his weaknesses. "Generally my own style of formal communication is impersonal and point-based," he

ories into clear understandings.

ESTP

Friendly, adaptable, action-oriented. Doers who are focused on immediate results. Live in the here-and-now. Risk-takers who live fast-paced lifestyles. Impatient with long explanations.

ESTJ

Practical, traditional, and organised. Likely to be athletic. Not interested in theory or abstraction unless they see the practical application. Have clear vision of the way things should be.

ESFP

People-oriented and fun loving, they make things more fun for others by their enjoyment. Living for the moment, they love new experiences.

ESFJ

Warm-hearted, popular, and conscientious. Tend to put the needs of others over their own needs. Feel strong sense of responsibility and duty.

ENFP

Enthusiastic, idealistic, and creative. Able to do almost anything that interests them. Great people skills. Need to live life in accordance with their inner values. Excited by new ideas, but bored with details.

ENFJ

Popular and sensitive, with outstanding people skills. Externally focused, with real concern for how others think and feel. Usually dislike being alone. They see everything from the human angle, and dislike impersonal analysis.

ENTP

Creative, resourceful, and intellectually quick. Good at a broad range of things. Enjoy debating issues, and may be into one-upmanship. They get excited about new ideas and projects, but may neglect the routine aspects of life.

ENTJ

These people have an excellent ability to understand difficult organisational problems and create solid solutions. Intelligent and well-informed, they usually excel at public speaking.

To know your type, google MBTI for an online test

says, and now consciously avoids being too impersonal.

One can see that understanding and applying type theory to relationships can enhance communication, provide people with a better understanding of how they deal with conflict, and provide tools for a variety of situations including successfully making decisions and engaging in activities together.

Career choices

Though everyone can function in all areas, some areas are naturally easier for some people. As we saw earlier, Ajay Kalra just could not function in an accounting area, and became much more effective when he moved to HR.

Education

People with a preference for Extraversion prefer learning situations that allow them to talk with others and to be engaged with the environment. Those with a preference for Intraversion prefer learning environ-

ments that allow them quiet reflection, where they can process thoughts internally until they are more developed.

Dhananjay says, "As an ISTJ, I personally like a structured, agenda-based approach while learning and teaching. However, while facilitating the classes now, I see to it that the instructions and facilitation are such that it addresses almost all types."

Paradigm shift

The whole point of understanding ourselves is to break out of one's cocoon and shift one's paradigm.

Madhukar Sakorkar, an HR professional, emphasises this when he talks on the immense potential of this tool. "Type knowledge is meant to liberate you. One should refrain from taking shelter of the type – for example, I use 'Thinking' for making judgments, hence, I will always be a critic and not be able to compliment people."

In other words, there is no point of

knowledge, which is not used for self-improvement. In my own case, I realised that while a 'J' approach of pre-planning one's tasks is usually quite useful, a 'P' approach of going with the flow of things is sometimes necessary.

Where it all began

Jung published his book on psychological types in 1921.

After reading Jung's work, the mother/daughter team of Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers added a fourth dimension to Jung's scheme, focusing on how people deal with the outer world. The MBTI instrument was tested on friends and family during World War II with the mother-daughter team hoping to resolve conflicts and help match people to appropriate work.

Today, MBTI is one of the most widely used personality evaluation instruments in the world. ☺

*We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article.
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