AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATORS TO DEFINE PERSONALITY TYPE

Background

Before we begin discussing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI), it is worth describing why they are so important. To understand their importance, let's first explain the concept of personality type. This is best achieved by looking at each word in turn:

✓ *Personality.* In one respect, personality is the culmination of many key inherited and learned factors that are relatively specific to each of us. However, personality is much more than the culmination of the issues already discussed in the lower tiers of the profiling pyramid described in Chapter 9 of the book *Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation (which is discussed later).* Personality is also affected by genetic factors, such as temperament, which makes it a powerful force in shaping the way we all think about issues[1].

✓ *Type.* The study of personality would be almost impossible if every individual was unique, because gaining an understanding of the way we think would be too complex. To simplify the study of personality, psychologists have developed *trait theories*, which are used to identify the basic personality traits. Each set of traits can then be grouped into *Types*, so these can be used to describe categories of common personality characteristics.

You can therefore use information on personality type to look at common aspects of human psychology. Most importantly, by identifying the personality type of key members of your audience, you can gain profound insights into the way you need to put your message across. However, to predict the way in which the key members of your audience might think, you must use an appropriate psychological framework. There are many psychological frameworks available, but for the purpose of this book, I have used the MBTI, because:

✓ *The MBTI Provides Good Results.* The MBTI is generally accepted as a reliable framework for successfully predicting behaviour[2]. Most importantly, this reliability means that it can be used to predict specific differences in people, and then cope with those differences constructively[3].

✓ *The MBTI is Commonly Used.* This framework is the most commonly used model for personality profiling, as the test is taken over 2 million times annually[4]. Because of the prominence of this test, there is a substantial amount of research available to assist in understanding personality.

✓ *The MBTI Framework is Easy to Understand.* One of the main reasons for the wide acceptance of this model is that it is readily understandable by most people, and not just professional psychologists[5]. You therefore don't need to do a course, to get some very real benefits from this psychological framework.

✓ ***Using MBTI Information can Improve Effective Communication.*** Research by people like Yeakley[6] and Thompson[7] has indicated that you can improve the quality and persuasiveness of communication, by aligning a presentation to the personality profile of the audience. The MBTI can therefore provide a powerful tool for developing winning presentations.

So what is the MBTI?

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicators were developed by a mother/daughter team *(Katharine Briggs/Isabel Briggs Myers)*, so they could refine concepts in personality typing published by the eminent psychologist C.G. Jung[8].

To understand these different aspects of personality, the MBTI uses four separate facets of character *(which are known as functions)*. These functions are illustrated in Figure 1[9], and they each contain two opposing *dichotomies*. These dichotomies equate to opposite ends of a personality spectrum. For example, as shown in Function 1 at Figure 1 some people are extroverted and others might be introverted.
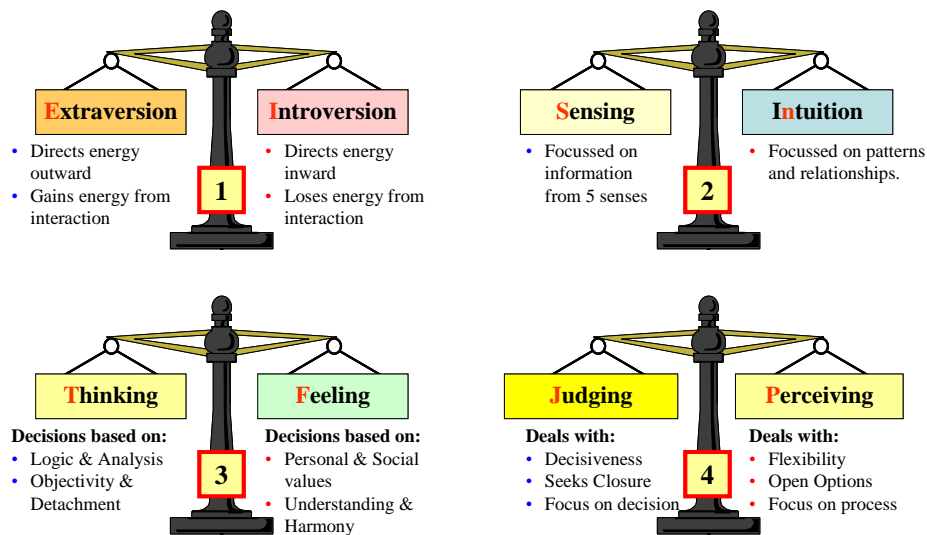

Figure 1: *The Four Functions and their Dichotomies*

The dichotomies within each of the four functions are:

✓ ***Function 1 - Orientation of Personal Energy (Extraversion/ Introversion).*** The first function describes the way in which a person wants to interact with the world. The preferences can therefore be described as:

➢ ***Extraversion.*** An Extravert mainly directs energy toward the outer world of people and things, and they appear to be energised by interacting with other people. When discussed within the MBTI, the single letter 'E' is used to denote a preference for Extraversion.

➢ ***Introversion.*** This preference is the opposite of Extraversion, because Introverts mainly tend to direct their energy toward the inner world of experiences and ideas. These people often pursue solitary activities, but this does not mean that
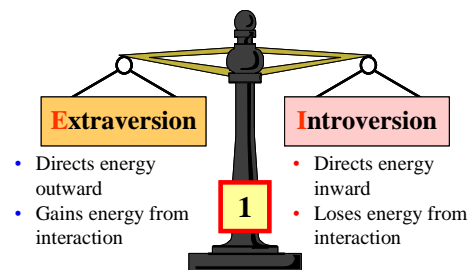
they do not like to be around people. It simply means that they tend to lose energy from social interactions. Interacting with other people can therefore tire them out. The single letter 'I' denotes introversion.

✓ *Function 2 - Perceiving Function (Sensing/ iNtuition).* Within the MBTI framework, this function describes the way in which people perceive the world around them. In other words, these dichotomies relate to the way in which we draw in information. The two dichotomies for this function are:
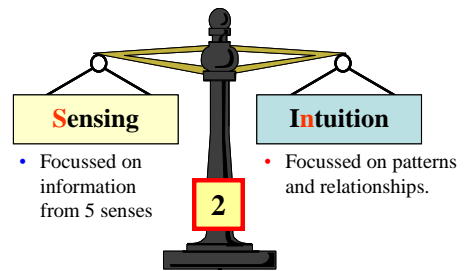
> *Sensing.* Individuals with a preference for Sensing, mainly focus on information perceived through the five senses. People who prefer this function therefore generally want to operate with concrete objects and facts. The Sensing preference is denoted by the letter 'S'.

> *iNtuition.* People who prefer to use iNtuition mainly look at the patterns and relationships that they see in the world around them. These people tend to be less preoccupied with concrete reality, and may spend more time thinking about what may be, rather than what is. In MBTI shorthand the iNtuition preference is shown by the letter 'N' *(Just to confuse everyone, and because the letter 'I' had already been used for Introversion).*

✓ *Function 3 - Judging Function (Thinking/ Feeling).* The Thinking/Feeling dichotomy is used to describe how people judge the information they have gathered, when they are making decisions. The two alternate preferences are:
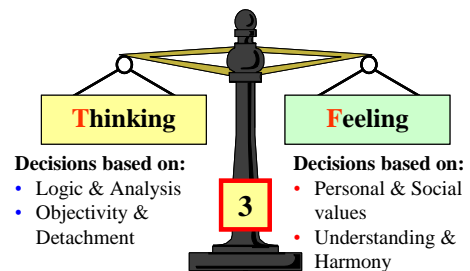
> *Thinking.* As the name suggests, people using the Thinking preference generally want to use impersonal, objective, and logical analysis for decision-making. The letter 'T' represents the Thinking preference.

> *Feeling.* The opposite of Thinking is Feeling. In this preference, the individual will be inclined to reach conclusions based on personal and social values, with a focus on developing understanding and harmony. In shorthand, the letter 'F' signifies this Feeling preference.

✓ *Function 4 - Decision Style (Judging/Perceiving Preference).* The final dichotomy describes a person's preferred decision style. In essence, this final function illustrates the way in which we all tend to balance our need to apply the Judging *(Thinking/Feeling)* and Perceiving *(Sensing/ iNtuition)* preferences. These opposing decision style preferences can therefore be described as follows:
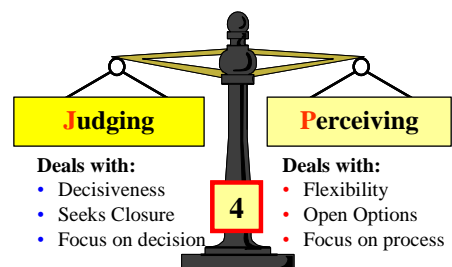
➢ ***Judging.*** People with Judging personalities typically seek closure through the decisive use of the judging function *(Thinking/Feeling)*, as illustrated in Figure 2[10]. The key to understanding this preference is therefore the concept of closure. For example, people with a strong inclination toward this end of the dichotomy are likely to finish the perceiving process as soon as they believe that they have enough information to make a decision[11]. The letter 'J' is used as shorthand for this preference.

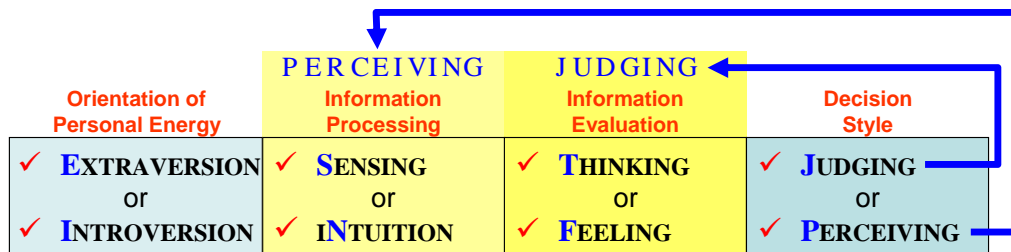| Orientation of Personal Energy	PERCEIVING Information Processing	JUDGING Information Evaluation	Decision Style
✓ EXTRAVERSION or ✓ INTROVERSION	✓ SENSING or ✓ INTUITION	✓ THINKING or ✓ FEELING	✓ JUDGING or ✓ PERCEIVING

Figure 2: *The Decision Style in Relation to the Judging/Perceiving Functions.*

➢ ***Perceiving.*** At the other end of the spectrum, a Perceiving person tends to focus on information collection. For this reason, an individual with this preference may want to keep their options open. This preference stems from their focus on collecting more data, rather than seeking closure. Within the MBTI dichotomies, the letter 'P' denotes this preference.

As individuals typically show preferences in each of the four functions, there are 16 combinations of personality types, as shown in Figure 3[12]. Each of these types is simply a way of showing the preferences that an individual has toward each of the dichotomies. For instance, a person classified as an ISTJ would tend to be driven by their preferences for the Introversion (I), Sensing (S), Thinking (T) and Judging (J) dichotomies.

	SENSING TYPES		INTUITION TYPES		
INTROVERSION	ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	JUDGING
	ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	PERCEIVING
EXTRAVERSION	ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	
	ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	JUDGING
	THINKING	FEELING		THINKING	

Figure 3: *The 16 Myers/Briggs Personality Types*

However, unlike many other personality-typing systems, the MBTI does not say that there are only 16 types of people in the whole world. This is an important part of the MBTI approach, because most people simply do not fit neatly into fixed pigeonholes.

The MBTI is a much more flexible approach.   This approach states that each of the dichotomies in our personality simply illustrate our preferences, or comfort zones.   The strength of the preference for one dichotomy or the other is what is important.   You can understand this concept by thinking about the four functions (E/I, S/N, T/F and J/P) as though they were the slides on a graphic equaliser.   We can then start to think about different people's personality type in the manner illustrated in Figure 4[13].

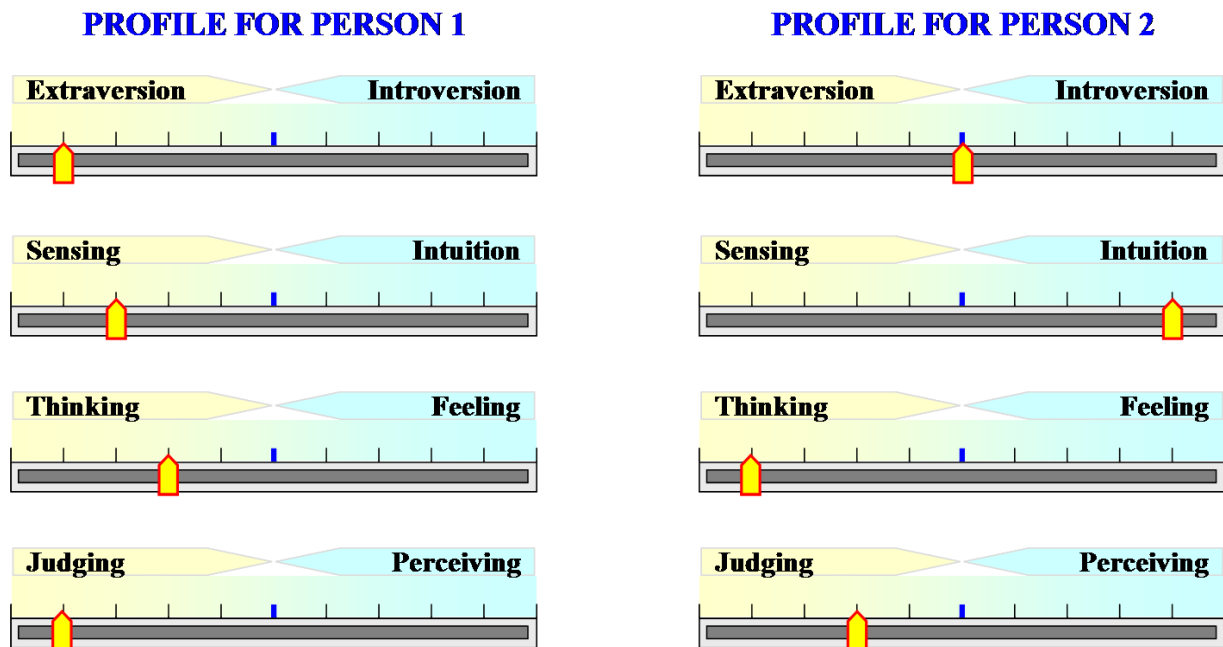**PROFILE FOR PERSON 1**   **PROFILE FOR PERSON 2**

Figure 4:   *MBTI Profiles for Two Individuals*

In this diagram, we have represented the strength of two people's preferences as sliding pointers.   When the slider is at either end of the scale, this indicates a very strong preference one way or the other.   However, once the pointer moves away from the ends of the slide, the individual's preferences become more balanced.   For example, you can assess Person 1 in Figure 4 as showing strong preferences towards Extraversion.   Person 2, however, does not seem to demonstrate a strong preference either way.   The advantage of this MBTI approach is that we can start to understand how likely it is that a person will prefer to act in one way or another.

Although this *'limitless shades of grey'* approach within the 16 MBTI types is one of the real strengths of this framework, it would simply be too difficult to use the system for presenting if we left it there.   Fortunately, the whole model can be further simplified by grouping the types in relation to the individual's Perceiving *(Sensing/iNtuition)* and Judging *(Thinking/Feeling)* preferences.   This creates four key groups of personality type, as shown in Figure 5 *(overleaf)*.   These four groups *(ST, SF, NF, and NT)* use the two centre letters from the MBTI type.

The Four Types	ST	SF	NF	NT	
	SENSING TYPES		**INTUITION TYPES**		
INTROVERSION	I**STJ**	I**SFJ**	I**NFJ**	I**NTJ**	**JUDGING**
	I**STP**	I**SFP**	I**NFP**	I**NTP**	**PERCEIVING**
EXTRAVERSION	E**STP**	E**SFP**	E**NFP**	E**NTP**	
	E**STJ**	E**SFJ**	E**NFJ**	E**NTJ**	**JUDGING**
	THINKING	**FEELING**		**THINKING**	

Figure 5: *Defining the Four Types*

These four groups are particularly useful to presenters, because the two middle functions are typically the most important aspects for communication.   This importance is illustrated in Figure 6[14], which shows that these two centre functions are the ones people rely on, when making decisions.
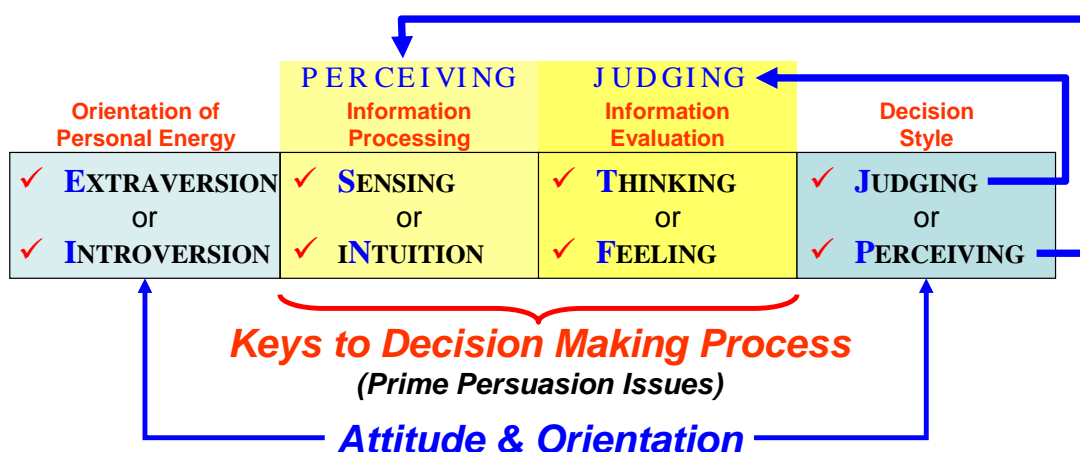

Figure 6: *The Centre Letters – The Prime Persuasion Issues*

Additionally, where it is possible, you should also take into account the Decision Style (J/P) of your audience members[*].   This preference is used to determine how quickly the target audience is likely to want to shift from perceiving to judging activities.   For example, an understanding of this function will help you to shape the amount of information you will deliver in a message, before the person will believe you.

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[*]   To help you in this respect you can download a very useful form, which allows you to use Emblematic Analysis to ascertain another person's MBTI profile.   You can get this form from the following web site:
http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion_influence/EmblematicAnalysis.pdf .
This free instrument lets you accurately identify the MBTI of other people, without them having to fill out an MBTI questionnaire.   Detailed research, which tested this form, indicates that it is likely to be at least as accurate as the person filling out a validated instrument on themselves.

Using the information

I hope that this information will be of assistance to you. This MBTI framework can be applied to significantly enhance numerous aspects of your interpersonal relationships. As an example, you can use this knowledge to substantially improve your ability to communicate with other people. You can read more about this approach in the book *'Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation'*.
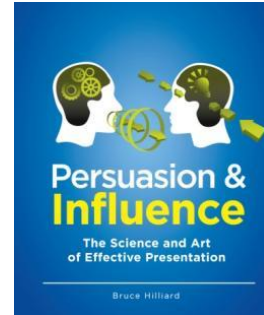
This ground-breaking book simplifies wide-ranging research into the psychology of effective communication, so anyone can apply the powerful techniques needed to communicate more effectively and influence other people. In practical terms, this means that you can readily use this information to optimise any message, whether you need to teach others, sell something, or just generate personal success.

You can order a copy of this book online at the following web site: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00GWC00AA.

Additionally, you can get more information on collecting profile information on individuals by downloading the document at the following web location: http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion_influence/CollectingInformationExamples.pdf .

You can also download other free *(and very useful)* documents from this web site: http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion_influence.html

Alternatively, if you have a query and you would like to contact the author, you can send an email to info@seahorses-consulting.com.

ENDNOTES

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Research for Psychological Type Theory'. Research in Psychological Type, Volume 6, pp. 5-23.

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9. Model developed from information at Briggs Myers, I., McCaulley, M.H., Quenk, N.L. Hammer, A.L., 1998, *'MBTI Manual.   A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator'*. 3rd Edition, Consulting Psychologists Press Inc, Palo Alto, p. 6 and Keirsey, D., Bates, M., 1984, '*Please Understand Me. Character and Temperament Types'*. Prometheus Nemesis Book Company, Delaware. pp. 14-24.

10. Model developed from information at Briggs Myers, I., McCaulley, M.H., Quenk, N.L. Hammer, A.L., 1998, *'MBTI Manual.   A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator'*. 3rd Edition, Consulting Psychologists Press Inc, Palo Alto, pp. 24, 27.

11. Briggs Myers, I, McCaulley, M.H., Quenk, and N.L., Hammer, A.L., 1998, *'MBTI Manual.   A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator'*. 3rd Edn. Consulting Psychologists Press Inc. Palo Alto. p. 26.

12. Model developed from information at Briggs Myers, I, McCaulley, M.H., Quenk, and N.L., Hammer, A.L., 1998, *'MBTI Manual.   A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator'*. 3rd Edn. Consulting Psychologists Press Inc. Palo Alto. pp. 31 and 38.

13. Model Developed from information at Briggs Myers, I, McCaulley, M.H., Quenk, and N.L., Hammer, A.L., 1998, *'MBTI Manual.   A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator'*. 3rd Edn. Consulting Psychologists Press Inc. Palo Alto. pp. 5-6.

14. Adapted from information at: Briggs Myers, I., McCaulley, M.H., Quenk, N.L. Hammer, A.L., 1998, *'MBTI Manual.   A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator'*. 3rd Edition, Consulting Psychologists Press Inc, Palo Alto, pp. 6, 31 and 38. Borchert, R., Jensen, D., and Yates, D. *'Hands-on and Visualization Modules for Enhancement of Learning in Mechanics: Development and Assessment in the Context of Myers Briggs Types and VARK Learning Styles.'* ASEE Annual Conference, Charlotte, NC, [Online] http://www.usafa.af.mil/dfem/research_info/ed_research/paper_final3.pdf,   and Keirsey, D., Bates, M., 1984, *'Please Understand Me. Character and Temperament Types'*, Prometheus Nemesis Book Company, Delaware, pp. 13-24.