

Introduction to Myers-Briggs® Type and Leadership

Selected Sample Pages

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Second Edition



About the Author

Sharon Lebovitz Richmond is a leadership coach and management consultant. She has led consulting practices in several companies, focused on organization effectiveness, leadership development, and change management. She has taught at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, through their Center for Leadership Development and Research. She developed and led the global Center for Change Leadership at Cisco Systems. For more than 25 years, Richmond has partnered with hundreds of executives, boards, and leaders, helping them develop the leadership capabilities and skills they need to run agile, competitive organizations. She is passionate about leveraging type knowledge to improve leadership and has chaired or served on the Association for Psychological Type International (APTi) board of directors for three terms.

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I owe my deepest thanks to the many leaders and practitioners whose work with personality type precedes mine. Thanks also to my clients and colleagues over these past 25 years. I have learned from your leadership journeys, and you have enriched my own beyond measure.

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Introduction

Organizations today face two major leadership issues: (1) an anticipated shortage of leaders, and (2) the increasing challenges of leadership in a global environment.

TOO FEW LEADERS, TOO MANY DEMANDS

For more than 25 years, prestigious business organizations have predicted or described a global shortage of leaders. These studies come from such respected sources as McKinsey & Company (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998; Ghemawat, 2012; Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014), Hay Group (Garoznik & Spreier, 2008), World Economic Forum (2015), and The Conference Board (2015). In the *WEF Outlook on the Global Agenda 2015*, lack of leadership ranked third in critical issues for participating organizations: 86 percent of respondents indicated “we have a leadership crisis in the world today.” More than 60 percent of companies suffer leadership shortages that harm their performance; nearly one-third expect the lack of talented leaders to further harm their performance going forward.

This shortage of leaders is fueled by a number of ongoing changes. Accelerating globalization of business in the 2010s continues to drive both a need for more leaders worldwide and the ongoing distribution of knowledge and skills throughout organizations. These changes follow on two decades of fewer managers, which has resulted from an aging managerial workforce, fewer middle managers remaining after the downsizing of the 1990s, and the continuing organizational flattening of the 2000s. These changes and others have resulted in a dramatic broadening of demands on the remaining leaders.

The explosion in organizational complexity over the past several decades has led to new challenges for leaders:

- The work being done is increasingly complex.
- Performance expectations are escalating, and people must manage with fewer resources and broader spans of control.
- The workforce is increasingly diverse and dispersed across time zones and frequently across continents.
- The pace of change continues to accelerate.
- Leadership increasingly requires the ability to influence others outside traditional hierarchical structures.

This all adds up to leadership being more demanding than ever before.

PERSONALITY TYPE AND LEADERSHIP

As leaders seek to engage others and inspire them to accomplish their organization’s objectives, they rely on a broad spectrum of abilities, such as

- Making good decisions in ambiguous conditions
- Communicating and pursuing a clear vision
- Building effective working relationships
- Making full use of each person’s abilities
- Being adaptable and open to change, and helping others do the same
- Tolerating, even inviting, healthy disagreements and conflict

Acquiring abilities such as these is a tall order. Luckily, leaders today have many resources available to aid their growth and development. Leadership development strategies often include the use of personality assessments and coaching, both to help identify leaders and to develop their capacities. One of the most powerful tools used for such development is the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) assessment.

More than 50 years of research looking for links between personality type and leadership has yielded one clear finding: There is no “perfect” type for leadership. While there are greater concentrations of certain types among leaders, there is ample and growing evidence that

FIGURE 2 | JUNG'S EIGHT MENTAL PATTERNS—FOUR INWARD, FOUR OUTWARD

	Inward		Outward	
Perceiving Processes	S _i	Introverted Sensing	S _e	Extraverted Sensing
	N _i	Introverted Intuition	N _e	Extraverted Intuition
Judging Processes	T _i	Introverted Thinking	T _e	Extraverted Thinking
	F _i	Introverted Feeling	F _e	Extraverted Feeling

Jung asserted that everyone uses all eight of these mental patterns, but with differing degrees of awareness and ease. Review Table 2 to understand what each of these patterns contributes to how you make sense of the world. You may want to take a few minutes to try the suggested activity for experiencing each pattern.

The Interaction Between Your Preferences

Your four-letter type describes a dynamic system, not a static picture. The interaction between your preferences plays an important role in how you express your type. For each type, two of the eight patterns described above take precedence over all the others. These are referred to as your favorite process, which Jung called the *dominant function*, and your second process, which Jung called the *auxiliary function*.

- **Favorite process.** This is the mental process you use most habitually. It is represented by one of the middle two letters of your four-letter type along with a subscript letter, “e” or “i,” showing whether you use it outwardly (e) or inwardly (i).
- **Second process.** Your second process complements your favorite process. If your favorite process is one of the perceiving processes (used in taking in information: S or N), your second process is a judging process (used in making decisions: T or F). Again, a subscript letter, “e” or “i,” identifies whether you use it outwardly (e) or inwardly (i).

Combined, your favorite and second processes indicate how you understand your world and make decisions.

The subscript letters “e” and “i” attached to your favorite and second processes also balance each other. If, as indicated by the first letter of your type, you prefer Introversion (I), your favorite process typically operates inwardly and is less visible to others. Your second process balances this by operating outwardly. If you prefer Extraversion (E), your favorite process typically is used

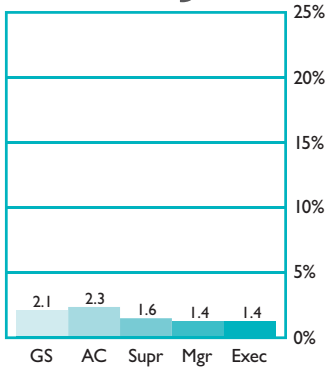
outwardly, visible to and engaging the people and things around you, and your second process creates balance by being oriented inwardly.

This is a critical distinction in how type differences are expressed. People who prefer extraversion express their favorite process outwardly, and others interact with that favorite process, which can feel like “what you see is what you get.” On the other hand, people who prefer Introversion keep their favorite process inside, expressing their second process outwardly, and others may sense that “still waters run deep.” This is one reason it is difficult to guess another person’s type preferences accurately.

Your third process, which Jung called the *tertiary function*, is the preference opposite your second process. For example, if your second process is Sensing (either extraverted or introverted), your third process will be Intuition. Your *fourth, or least preferred, process* is the preference opposite your favorite process. For example, if your favorite process is Feeling (either extraverted or introverted), your fourth process will be Thinking. Figure 3, on page 10, shows the type dynamics of ESTJ to illustrate this structure more clearly. Notice that the subscript “e” (for Extraversion) or “i” (for Introversion) indicates the direction (outward or inward) in which that process is typically used.

Using your favorite and second processes is usually as easy as writing with your preferred hand and takes no more attention than that. Using your third and fourth processes is more like writing with your other hand. It definitely takes more energy and concentration, can be more tiring, and often turns out a bit shakier in terms of results. But you certainly can use these processes, and you’ve probably done so many times, even in the past few days.

infj



2.1% of global sample
1.5% of entire leader sample

INSIGHTFUL MOTIVATORS



I get so tied to my vision of the future that it's hard to include others' views. But I really value including these perspectives, so I convene a small subteam where I can really listen to the differences. Then I can recraft my vision into a more powerful one.

–INFJ leader in an international nongovernmental organization



	Assets: INFJ leaders tend to...	Challenges: INFJ leaders tend to...
Setting Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate direction based on internal inspiration or insights emerging from their strong sense of the right way to go rather than a well-reasoned argument Easily see and describe how the vision will benefit others Decide quickly to get missing information they deem important Provide specific goals to be accomplished in order to achieve the vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complicate things by seeking significance when utility would be enough Underuse objective analysis, especially concerning time and money Struggle sometimes to articulate their vision so that others can see it as clearly as they do Feel driven to set a direction quickly, causing them to overlook conflicting information
Inspiring Others to Follow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspire and engage others with their passion for the direction Be inclusive of many views in a way that honors the integrity of all Listen well and place a high priority on maintaining good relationships Seek consensus, but not at the expense of closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fail to be directive enough when needed; be uncomfortable telling others what to do Struggle to separate their role as manager from their role as friend, leading to indirect or vague feedback on poor performance Fail to delegate effectively, robbing others of valuable stretch assignments that would help them grow Fail to recognize political nuances and thus lose influence
Mobilizing Accomplishment of Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display an optimism that is contagious, inspiring others to work hard for promised results Move quickly to action; make a great role model for others Be willing to tear apart the entire current system if it will make reaching the goal easier Be practical in their actions, moving step-by-step to build on people's commitment and passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get bored with implementation, especially when having to do tasks taken over from others Struggle to delegate tasks that they know don't appeal to colleagues Be uncomfortable with conflict and create team norms that value amicability over results Signal tolerance for mediocre performance by not addressing it or giving only vague feedback

Selected Sample Pages

10 PERCENT STRETCH

Moving Beyond Your Comfort Zone

Expanding Your Leadership Mind-Set

In addition to guiding a team toward an enlightened vision, recognize that debate and overt arguments are part of a democratic approach that improves process and yields results.

Tailoring systems to meet individual needs is valuable for gaining commitment, but organizational needs rightly take priority over individual concerns at times. Try seeing the organization as an entity that, when healthy, contributes to individual and global well-being. Such a view will help you advocate more strongly for your organization's interests.

Imagine situations that would require directive leadership and exercising strong authority. Then be prepared to use such an approach when a situation in your organization requires a stronger voice than you may typically use.

Developing Additional Skills

Public speaking. Learn strong speaking skills to reach more people publicly with your view of the future.

Conflict facilitation. Become comfortable with having uncomfortable discussions in the group and then letting the group sort out the issues.

Broadening Your Style

Your innate optimism can cause you to skip over unpleasant details, so practice staying in the moment. Identify what exactly is happening now rather than what you imagine will happen next.

While remaining sensitive to people issues and being supportive, encourage open communication. By asking individuals to state their views publicly, you may find you can build commitment within the group more quickly.

Your internal focus and desire to take quick action may divert your attention from communication. Before you start implementing a change, ask yourself whether you have explicitly stated your thoughts to others. To strengthen buy-in, be sure to be transparent with your organization or group about your intended plans.

Changing How You Relate to Your Context

Balance your learning and developmental orientation with stating clear expectations for others' performance. Work with people on aligning their beliefs and mind-set in support of the behaviors you want to see.

You may be so driven to take action that you skip important data gathered early on. Make sure to share your ideas and seek feedback before you create your action plan.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATH

$N_i \rightarrow F_e \rightarrow T \rightarrow S_e$

Introverted Intuition (N_i). Take time to allow your vision to evolve. Support your creative needs by spending time alone while an idea germinates.

Extraverted Feeling (F_e). Balance the pressing idea with time spent sharing your ideas while you're still developing them. This will allow others to contribute and can help you increase buy-in to the vision.

Thinking (T). Project what your vision will look like when you bring it to life, using analytic tools to model the results of putting your ideas into practice. Include others in identifying the pros and cons of various options to help you see potential gaps in the plan.

Extraverted Sensing (S_e). Focus on reading the specifics of each situation in the moment using body sensations and staying focused on the present. You will pick up on cues that increase your political awareness and will also notice when you need to rest, exercise, or take time for yourself in order to reenergize and do your best work.

TIPS FOR COACHES AND MENTORS

Supporting INFJ Leaders

Appreciate them for their ability to distill the essence of complex issues and ideas in an accessible way; for their sincere inclusion of many views and perspectives; and for their commitment to global well-being.

Offer to help them with objective analysis that will improve a decision or direction; with translating goals for the organization into metrics for evaluating performance; and with ensuring that succession processes don't give some people an unfair advantage over others.

Give them feedback on times when they assume they understand others' feelings without verifying those assumptions; on when you see them avoiding confrontations that would move the dialogue forward; and on how they can become more comfortable with their power as a leader.