

Why Choose the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)?

Contributed by Joan Eison

What is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)? The MBTI is a model of personality typing that provides insight into how and why people understand and approach the world in different ways. The indicator provides a useful way of describing personalities by looking at their preferences on four scales which combine to yield one of sixteen different types. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions on the MBTI, just as there are no right or wrong types. In fact, all types are good types!

More than three million MBTIs are administered annually in the United States and it is also used internationally and has been translated into many languages.

In all applications of the MBTI, the emphasis is on understanding valuable differences between people. Knowing type not only helps individuals appreciate their own strengths, gifts and potential growth edges, but also helps understand and appreciate how and why others may differ from you. Knowing that these differences are valuable can truly lead to more constructive communication and relationships. Having different preferences simply leads people to having different interests, different ways of behaving and different ways of viewing the world. People who have different type preferences tend to have different strengths and potential areas of needed growth.

What does type mean for everyday life? The MBTI was originally developed to help people gain a better understanding of themselves and a better understanding and appreciation of others. Two particular opportunities for growth present themselves: first, we can see our potential blind spots and go on to develop our own less preferred functions. And second, we can learn to value the differences that others bring to our lives, and we can learn to seek the input of others who have that complementary perspective.

The MBTI has been found to be useful in:

- Resolving conflict

- Building productive teams

- Enhancing problem solving and decision-making

- Predicting and dealing with reactions to organizational change

- Strengthening associate-leader interactions
- Identifying and capitalizing on supervisor/employee/co-worker communication styles
- Capitalizing on individual differences, diverse perspectives and approaches
- Understanding organizational issues and needs

The MBTI does not:

- Measure how well people use their preferences
- Measure values and motivation
- Assess level of skill in which preferences are used
- Reliably indicate intellect, knowledge or skills
- Evidence that any of the 16 personality types are incapable of performing any job or jobs
- Indicate for selection or exclusion of positions
- Appear to predict success
- Show that any one type stands out at the top

The benefit that can be obtained from the Myers-Briggs is directly proportional to the individual's personal desire and commitment to participate and to apply their learning. Without personal desire, change is typically limited and short term.