

# PERSONALITY TYPING: A FIRST STEP TO A SATISFYING CAREER

*The authors believe in Typing, but have gone beyond defining Types to match Type characteristics with similar aspects of jobs that could lead to "perfect" careers.*

**By Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger**

**A**s Career Counselors or recruiters, we all aim for that "marriage made in heaven" between client and career. Wouldn't the world would be a better place if everyone couldn't wait to get up in the morning and head off to a job they loved? Just as Yentl, the fictional matchmaker, had her lists of characteristics to consider — breeding, intelligence, looks — we career counselors and recruiters rely on our own tools of the trade.

Traditionally, the "big three" factors we look for in helping clients find career satisfaction have been abilities, interests, and values. And we all know from experience that — on paper — these can yield some suitable matches between people and jobs. But traditional approaches to career satisfaction often end up like arranged marriages: serviceable, but loveless, relationships.

What's lacking is that special something called "chemistry." In the world of dating, this may (or may not) be undefinable. But in the world of career satisfaction it is known as Personality Type (or Type). To find our own career to love, we must *do what we are*.

## **Matching Type to Career**

As professional counselors, the authors believe that matching a person's personality type — sometimes called Typology or Psychological Type, but best known as the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (or MBTI)\* — to a career is the best guarantee of finding that job match made in heaven. We've been using Type successfully for more than a decade and are convinced that, while it isn't the only factor to consider, it is probably the most important.

Consider our client, Anne. When she came to us at age 30, Anne was completely burned out after seven years of teaching math to elementary school students. She was puzzled, for she loved kids and excelled at math. As far back as high school, and again in college, career aptitude tests and other assessments had clearly pointed her toward combining these interests.

By determining and discussing her Type, we showed Anne that she wasn't inadequate — no Type is. Indeed, she possessed many of the right qualifications for teaching. where traditional career counseling had failed Anne was in steering her into a job at the elementary school level.

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\*The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and MBTI are Registered Trademarks of Consulting Psychologists Press.

Anne's personality thrived on intellectual challenge, creative innovation, and opportunities to raise her level of competence, but none of these were found in the rigid structure of the public elementary school setting. The endless rules, standard textbooks, busy work, and strict lesson planning left little room for the intellectual stimulation and creativity she craved. Anne had tried to recharge her enthusiasm by switching grades, and even changing schools, but her powers continued to drain.

By adding the missing ingredient of what Anne is — her personality Type — we were able to determine a more suitable match. We suggested that she stick with teaching math, but at a higher level. So, Anne obtained a master's degree. She so enjoyed the flexibility and stimulation of the college environment that today she is pursuing her doctorate in addition to teaching graduate-level mathematics. She is experiencing job satisfaction as she has never had before.

Anne's case illustrates another reason why the traditional approach to career counseling is often inadequate. Not only does it fail to address who a person is, but it doesn't account for how individuals change. Over time, Anne's abilities, interests, and values evolved. At the age of 30, she only somewhat resembled the high school junior she had been when she was first advised to go into teaching math. As time goes on, so do we!

By learning from our life and work experiences, all of us become more attuned to who we truly are and which of our characteristics undergo change. Because the Type model is dynamic rather than static, it accounts for individual development over time.

## **A Brief History of Type**

Today, the widespread use of Type at Fortune 500 companies, in educational and religious institutions, and among career counselors and recruiters is largely the result of the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung and two American women, Katherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers. At the same time Jung was pursuing personality similarities and differences, Briggs was developing her own system for "typing" people. Upon reading the 1923 English translation of Jung's classic work *Psychological Types*, Briggs decided to adopt Jung's model and interested the exceptionally gifted Myers in her endeavor. Myer's work over the next 40 years clarified and expanded Jung's model from eight to the 16 Personality Types identified by the MBTI test.

## **The Four Dimensions of Personality Type**

A major premise of the Type model is that *only one* of the 16 Types best describes each person — the Type to which you are born will be the one you take to your grave. We may adjust our behaviors over time — or at a party versus a funeral — but our personal Type remains the same for life.

The Type model is a nonjudgmental system of understanding human behavior based on four aspects of the human personality:

### **! Extroversion vs. Introversion**

- How we interact with the world and where we direct our energy.

### **! Sensing vs. Intuition**

- The kind of information we naturally notice and remember.

## ! Thinking vs. Feeling

- How we make decisions.

## ! Judging vs. Perceiving

- Whether we prefer more structure or more spontaneity.

These are referred to as "dimensions" because each can be pictured as a continuum with opposite extremes and a mid-point. Everyone's personality shows a "preference" for one side of the scale or the other. It may fall at an extreme or lie quite close to the midpoint. Even though all of us operate on both sides of all four scales in our daily lives, we each have an innate preference for one side or the other, not unlike left or right handedness. A closer look at each of these four dimensions follows in sequence:

### (E) Extroversion Vs. Introversion (I)

It was Jung who first coined the concepts of "extroversion" and "introversion" to describe the worlds in which we interact and how our preferred world energizes us. In everyday usage we think of these terms as meaning "talkative" or "outgoing" versus "shy" or "quiet," but that only begins to touch on their significance as applied to Type.

The E/I dimension is the real focal point of one's energy. Phil, a true extrovert, puts it this way: "When I return from a trip to the store, my wife always asks me, 'Well, was it a success?' She's not referring to how many items I've found on my shopping list or what I paid for them. She knows that as an extrovert, I'm turned on by meeting people and bumping into friends. What she's rating is the head count of the acquaintances I've seen!"

#### A Summary of Some E/I Differences

##### Extroverts (E)

Act, then think.  
Tend to think out loud.  
Talk more than listen.  
Communicate with enthusiasm.  
Respond quickly; enjoy fast pace.  
Prefer breadth to depth

##### Introverts (I)

Think, then act.  
Think things through in their heads.  
Listen more than talk.  
Keep their enthusiasm to themselves.  
Respond only after thinking things through.

#### E/I Career Implications

In the workplace, extroverts gravitate to jobs that allow for a good deal of verbal interaction with others. Introverts do well in situations that require focus and the management of one task at a time.

Like Phil, extroverts focus their energy and attention outside of themselves. They naturally seek out others, whether one-on-one or in large groups. Because extroverts need to experience the world in order to understand it, they thrive on lots of activity. When looking at any situation, extroverts ask themselves "How do I affect this?"

Introverts, on the other hand, enjoy spending time alone in order to “recharge their batteries.” Because they try to understand the world before they experience it, much of their activity goes on mentally, in their inner world. Where an extrovert might find too much time alone draining and counter-productive, an introvert may become turned off and tired by the clamor of a cocktail party. Introverts step back to examine a situation, asking themselves “How does that affect me?”

In our society, extroverts enjoy an advantage, since about 75 per-cent of the American population is extroverted. This helps explain our national fondness for fastfood and 10-second “sound bites” on the news. Extroverts are often on the go and generally are not keen on in-depth analyses. Introverts make up the remaining 25 percent.

### **(S) Sensing Vs. Intuition (N)**

The second dimension of Personality Type concerns the kind of information we naturally notice. Some people focus on “what is,” while others see “what could be.” While both approaches are valid, they are fundamentally different.

“Sensors” literally gather data using their five senses. They concentrate on what they see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Sensors trust what is real and concrete and seek documentation and measurement to back it up. They operate in the present and focus on what is happening at the moment.

“Intuitives” like to read between the lines and look for meaning among the hard facts. Intuitives value imagination and trust their own intuitions and hunches. They see the big picture and are oriented toward the future and what might be, rather than what is.

Obviously everyone uses their five senses to relate to the world, but intuitives prefer their “sixth sense” to derive meanings, relationships, and possibilities from facts. Just as intuitives can “sense,” sensors can “intuit” to solve problems or make interpretations. Again, while each of us uses both sensing and intuition in our daily lives, each of us also has a preference for the kind of information we take in.

As an intuitive, Stu might rely on his sense of direction to get him to a new place while Kay, a sensor, would look at a map. Kay would likely read the instruction manual before assembling her son's new bike, while Stu might just “wing it” and end up with a few extra nuts and bolts. Sensors make up some 75 percent of the American population and intuitives the remainder.

### A Summary of Some S/N Differences

#### Sensors (S)

Like new ideas only if they have practical applications.  
Value realism and common sense.  
Like to use and hone established skills.  
Tend to be specific and literal, give detailed descriptions.  
Present information in a step-by-step manner.

#### Intuitives (N)

Like new ideas and concepts for their own sakes.  
Value imagination and innovation.  
Like to learn new skills; become bored easily after mastering.  
Tend to be general and figurative, use metaphors and analogies.  
Present information through leaping in a round-about way.

#### S/N Career Implications

Sensors prefer to work with real things and apply their past experience to solving problems in concrete ways. Intuitives apply their appreciation for complexity to solve problems that are more theoretical and that require the use of their imaginations.

### (T) Thinking Vs. Feeling (F)

The third dimension of Personality Type refers to the way in which we make decisions and reach conclusions. “Thinking” describes impersonal decision-making, whereas “Feeling” refers to decisions based on personal values.

Thinkers pride themselves on their ability to be objective and analytical. They prefer logical decisions. Feelers consider how much they care about an issue and what they feel is right; they pride themselves on their empathy and compassion.

Because the terms “thinking” and “feeling” carry certain connotations, many people find it hard to choose between these preferences. Furthermore, society promotes gender stereotyping by encouraging women to be more feeling and men more thinking. In reality, the population is divided pretty equally between thinkers and feelers, with men making up about 65 (not 100) percent of the thinkers, and women making up some 65 (not 100) percent of the feelers.

Faced with falling revenues, Susan, a vice-president of marketing, was forced to cut her sales force. Larry, a senior salesman, had 30 years with the company, a solid record of accomplishments, and was a highly competent employee. At 27, Gene was clearly a rising star, having hit “Salesperson of the Month” four months running after only three years of employment.

A thinker, Susan decided to let Larry go and retain Gene. That night she discussed it with her husband, Bill. “Some fine reward for years of loyalty!” was Bill’s shocked response. As a feeler, Bill considered the difficulty the older man would have in finding new employment and the fact that he had two kids in college. He felt that the “young hot shot” would get more offers than he could handle. Susan regarded her decision as perfectly logical. She liked Larry well enough, but the bottom line ruled. Gene contributed more to her equation while Larry, a senior employee, cost more with his higher salary and more expensive health insurance premiums.

## A Summary of Some T/F Differences

### Thinkers (T)

Step back, apply impersonal analysis to problems.  
Value justice and fairness, one standard for all.  
Naturally see flaws and tend to be critical.  
May be seen as heartless, insensitive, and uncaring.  
Consider it just as important to be tactful as truthful.  
Believe any feeling is valid if it “makes sense” or not.  
Are motivated by desire to be appreciated and to help others.

### Feelers (F)

Step forward; consider effect of actions on others.  
Value empathy and harmony; see the exception to the rule.  
Naturally like to please others; show appreciation easily.  
May be seen as overemotional, illogical, and weak.  
Consider it just as important to be tactful as truthful.  
Believe any feeling is valid if it makes sense or not.  
Are motivated by desire to be appreciated and to be helpful to others.

### T/F Career Implications

Thinkers prefer work that allows them to analyze things logically and to apply objective criteria to decision making. Feelers often find their greatest satisfaction in helping people, either directly or indirectly.

## (J) Judging Vs. Perceiving (P)

The final dimension of Personality Type concerns whether we prefer more structure or more spontaneity in our lives. People with a preference for judging are happiest when they've made decisions, matters are settled, and their lives are structured. Judgers seek to organize and control their lives, but are not necessarily judgmental (opinionated). Perceivers prefer flexibility and like to stay open to all kinds of possibilities. They seek to understand and experience life rather than control it.

A fundamental difference between judgers and perceivers is their reaction to closure. Judgers feel tension until closure is reached and are naturally pulled toward making decisions. Perceivers avoid closure at all costs since they regard decision-making as a stressful cutting off of their options. The American population appears to be fairly evenly split on this dimension with about half judgers and half perceivers.

## Putting It All Together

Each of the 16 Personality Types is so much more than the sum of the four preferences. The richness of the Type model and its insightfulness in predicting career satisfaction results from the synergism each combination of characteristics yields.

In the authors' experience with Personality Type, we have derived our own formula for career satisfaction based on four ingredients, each of which is a more subtle or complex aspect of Type.

The first ingredient in our formula is that an individual's *work must be in sync with that person's temperament*. The four temperaments, identified by psychologist David Keirse and considered by many to be the heart of the personality, are Sensing Judgers (SJ), Sensing Perceivers (SP), Intuitive Feelers (NF) and Intuitive Thinkers (NT). These are described as follows:

*Sensing-Judgers (SJ)* make up about 38 percent of the American population. They are realistic and decisive “traditionalists.” Their core values include: belonging, duty/service, and commitment to society. SJs are the great maintainers of institutions.

*Sensing-Perceivers (SP)* make up another 38 percent of the population. These are realistic and spontaneous “experiencers.” Their core values include: action/excitement, experiencing the moment, performance, and skill. SPs are often risk takers and pragmatists.

*Intuitive-Thinkers (NT)* make up but 12 percent of the population. They are imaginative and logical “visionaries.” Their core values include: knowledge, competence, and power. NTs are great long-range thinkers with high standards for excellence.

*Intuitive-Feelers (NF)* make up the last 12 percent of the American population. They see possibilities related to people and are idealists. Their core values include: meaning and uniqueness, becoming and relationships/ cooperation. NFs strive to be catalysts for positive change in themselves and others.

The next two ingredients concern the inherent hierarchy of functions Myers described for each Type. This ranking addresses only those preferences reflected by the middle two letters of one's Type. These are known as the functions S (Sensing), N (Intuition), T (Thinking), and F (Feeling).

For each Type, one function is dominant — the captain of the ship. The auxiliary function, or second in command, tempers the dominant. The third function in the hierarchy is always the opposite of the auxiliary, and the fourth, the opposite of the dominant. Our second ingredient for career satisfaction is that the job *must make good use of the dominant and auxiliary functions*.

By looking at whether a person is by nature an extrovert or introvert, we arrive at the third ingredient in our satisfaction formula: work that *allows the dominant and auxiliary to be used naturally*. For *extroverts*, this translates into careers where they use their dominant function in the outer world, primarily directing it toward other people, and their auxiliary function in their inner world. For introverts, the opposite applies.

For example, a person who extroverts his intuition likes to talk about his ideas and see them be made real in the world. By contrast, a person who introverts her intuition prefers to think through her ideas before talking about them, examining the meaning of related thoughts in her head. By the same token, someone who extroverts thinking enjoys discussing the pros and cons of a decision with others, debating the logic of differing viewpoints. Someone who introverts thinking engages in a similar process, but inside her head, weighing and critiquing information in a private manner.

The final ingredient in our formula for career satisfaction maintains that one's work *must take into account that person's Type development*. As stated earlier, although a person's Type remains the same throughout the individual's lifetime, natural evolutions take place. Type development refers to a lifelong process of gaining access to all the Type preferences, especially the third and fourth functions.

There are important career implications for where one is in his or her Type development. For most career changers (ages 30 to 45), the development of the third function can mean that work which may have been unsuitable earlier in life will now be potentially challenging and enjoyable. It is important to determine where a client is in his or her development and then to analyze any potential career or job for the kinds of tasks it requires.

### A Summary of Some J/P Differences

#### Judgers (J)

Have a “work ethic”: Work first, play later (if there’s time).  
Set goals and work toward achieving them on time.  
Prefer knowing what they are getting into.  
Are product-oriented (emphasis on completing tasks).  
Derive satisfaction from finishing projects.  
See time as a finite resource; take deadlines seriously.

#### Perceivers (P)

Have a “play ethic”: Enjoy now finish the job later (if there’s time).  
Change goals as new data become available. Like to adapt to new situations.  
Are process-oriented (emphasis on how task is performed).  
Derive satisfaction from starting projects.  
See time as a renewable resource; see deadlines as elastic.

#### J/P Career Implications

Judgers prefer jobs where they get to make decisions and exercise control. Perceivers prefer work situations that accommodate their need for flexibility and their talents for adapting.

### Enter the CLPP

Guidance in administering and scoring the MBTI instrument has long been available to career professionals. But until recently, few resources were aimed specifically at applying Type results to the career matching and job-search processes. From our work with career seekers over the past decade, the authors have developed a series of profiles of the 16 Personality Types that link each Type with current career information. Named “The Career/Life Planning Profiles” (or CLPP), each is an inventory of work-related strengths and weaknesses of the particular Type, defines criteria for career satisfaction, offers a list of potentially satisfying occupations, and recommends ways to conduct a job search that capitalizes on strengths and compensates for potential blindspots. (See “Putting Type to Work,” a sample profile that accompanies this article.)

### To Move Ahead...

As professional counselors, the authors are convinced that Personality Type is an integral factor in job satisfaction; we consider it to be the state-of-the-art tool that no career counselor should be without. It is, however, not a simple tool to use, requiring of those who use it a good deal of study and training before they can apply it ethically and effectively. (In fact, the publishers of the MBTI instrument have recognized the potential for abuses and so restrict its access to individuals meeting their requirements. Also, the Association for Psychological Type has developed a set of guidelines for MBTI testing which are available to counselors interested in the process.) But used with caution and intelligence, Typing can help counselors help clients of all kinds make decisions to take jobs or move into careers that not only fit their personalities well . . . but sometimes fit perfectly.

### Resources

*Association for Psychological Type (APT)*, 9140 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, MO 64114. 816/444/3500.

*Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. (CPP)*, 8803 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

Myers, Isabel Briggs, and Mary H. McCaulley. *Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1985.

*New England Type Institute (NETI)*, 23 South High Street, West Hartford, CT 06119. 203/233-1396.

*The Temperament Research Institute*, 16162 Beach Boulevard, Suite 117, Huntington Beach, CA 92647. 714/841-0041.

Tieger, Paul D., and Barbara Barron-Tieger. *Do What You Are Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company 1992.

Tieger, Paul D., and Barbara Barron-Tieger, *The Career/Life Planning Profiles*. Published 1992 by Communication Consultants, P.O. Box 4313, La Mesa, CA 91944-4313. 203/233/1396.

## **Putting Type to Work**

As developed by the authors, The Career/Life Planning Profiles (CLPPs) go beyond Personality Type definitions to relate the various aspects of each Type to similar aspects of actual jobs and careers. This sample profile is for the Type ENFP, which represents approximately 5 percent of the American population.

## **ENFP**

**Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeling, Perceiving**

### **Brief Personality Description**

ENFPs are full of enthusiasm and new ideas. Optimistic, spontaneous, creative, and confident, they have original minds and a strong sense of the possible. They are curious, perceptive, and keen observers who notice anything out of the ordinary. Naturally adaptable, they are most interested in the new and novel and figuring out what makes people tick.

ENFPs value inspiration and can be ingenious inventors. Sometimes nonconformists, liking to open up new avenues for thought or action — and then keep them open! In carrying out their ideas, they rely on inspiration stimulated by problems or impasses. They treat people with sympathy, gentleness, and warmth and are ready to help anyone with a problem. They often care about the development of others, tend to avoid conflict, and like to keep a wide assortment of relationships alive.

### **Possible Blindspots**

Since they are so intrigued with possibilities, ENFPs have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time and making decisions. Prioritizing helps them avoid wasting their time and squandering their considerable talents. After tackling the problem-solving portion of a project, they may lose interest and not apply the self-discipline necessary to complete what they've started.

Not particularly well organized, they benefit from teaming up with other, more realistic and practical people. This usually suits them fine anyway, since ENFPs don't like working alone, especially for extended periods of time. They are not interested in details and may not bother to collect all the information they need in order to carry out a particular activity and therefore run the risk of never getting past the “bright idea” stage. They are more effective when they consciously attend to the actual world around them and gather more realistic data and impressions to make their innovations workable.

## **Work-Related Strengths**

- ! Are innovative thinkers and good problem-solvers.
- ! Can combine their talents with interests and abilities of others.
- ! Find it easy to transfer skills to new fields or interests.
- ! Are skilled at matching people with tasks and/or positions.
- ! Are good at understanding and motivating people.

## **Work-Related Weaknesses**

- ! May not be well organized or good at setting priorities.
- ! Have trouble following through on details of a project.
- ! May become bored and are easily sidetracked.
- ! Don't usually enjoy anything repetitive or routine.
- ! Are usually less effective working alone.

## **Criteria for Career Satisfaction for ENFPs Include Work That...**

- ! Lets them interact with a diverse group of people, on a variety of projects, motivated by creative inspiration.
- ! Lets them create new ideas, products, or services that will help other people, then see their projects become reality.
- ! Is fun, challenging, and always varied.
- ! Rarely requires them to handle the follow-through, routine details, or maintenance of a system or project.
- ! Lets them work at their own pace and schedule, with a minimum of rules or structure and the freedom to act spontaneously.
- ! Lets them meet new people, learn new skills, and continually satisfy their curiosity.

## Popular Occupations

Some occupations that offer potential for satisfaction include (but are not limited to) the following:

Advertising account executive	Newscaster
Advertising creative director	Ombudsman
Artist	Pastoral counselor
Career counselor	Playwright
Cartoonist	Preschool teacher
Character actor	Psychologist
Clergy	Public relations specialist
Columnist	Publicist
Conference planner	Rehabilitation worker
Consultant	Reporter/editor
Copywriter	Sales: intangibles/ideas/services
Homing director	Screenwriter
Human resource development trainer	Social scientist
Interior decorator	Social worker
Inventor	Speech pathologist
Journalist	Strategic planner/researcher
Marketing consultant	Teacher: liberal arts/special education
Musician/composer	

## Recommendations for the Job Search

Pathways to success for ENFPs include using their abilities to:

- ! Create their own job opportunities.
- ! Develop and use their active network of contacts.
- ! Impress their interviewer with their natural enthusiasm and confidence.
- ! Consider and keep several options open.
- ! Be resourceful in getting job interviews.

To overcome potential blind-spots, ENFPs should:

- ! Pay attention to the realistic facts of a career search.
- ! Be aware of their tendency to leap before they look!
- ! Work on developing self-discipline and stick-to-it-iveness.
- ! Not put off making decisions.
- ! Follow through on all phases of the job search.

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