

CLD1-9



The Influence of Personal Characteristics

Personality, Culture and Environment

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One of the simple facts about leadership is that you can't be a leader by yourself. Multiple definitions of leadership exist—some estimate more than 350—and all of them include the concept of interacting with other human beings. Fundamentally, leadership involves human interaction. Thus, understanding ourselves, our temperaments and why we tend to respond in certain ways is important in our development as a leader and in working with others to reach shared goals. The essence of who we are has been shaped by the influence of our culture and personal environment. These factors are reflected in our skills, interests, and abilities which ultimately help us to reach our leadership potential.

Personality

Personality can be defined as the complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual. Style is made up of many behaviors, and becoming aware of our personality style or temperament type can help us identify our strengths and weaknesses. Understanding our own personality will provide greater insight into why we respond in certain ways and, even more important, it will help us understand and appreciate the differences in others.

Behavior = Genetics + Environment (Personality)

In other words... Understanding personality doesn't mean you can predict behavior.

In the 1920s Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, developed a theory of psychological types to help people understand personality differences. Later Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs built on his work and developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instrument, which is used around the world to help people understand their behavior style when interacting with other people. Identifying your personal style is the beginning of developing your leadership core. It allows you to see your behavioral responses and also provides an opportunity to see how these differ from others. Behavioral responses are not *good* or *bad* but simply part of us!

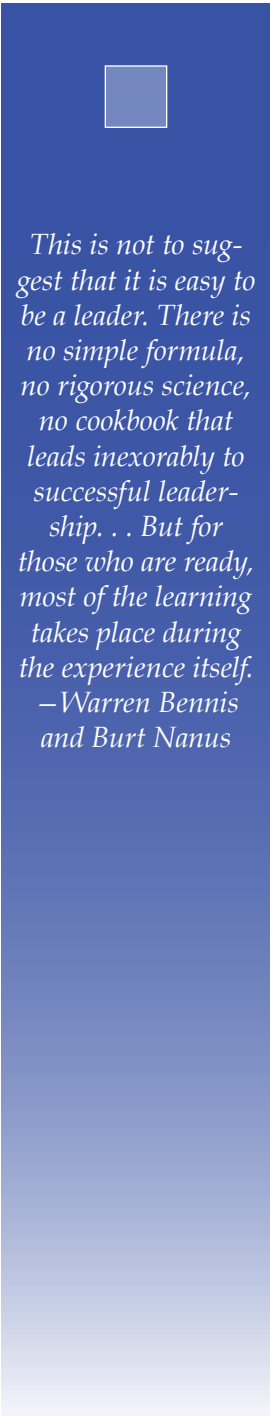
Myers-Briggs Preferences

There are four preference scales in the Myers-Briggs Type Instrument, with each scale containing opposite dimensions. From these preferences 16 MBTI types are identified.

Extrovert-Introvert: Reflects your orientation to the outer or inner world.

Extrovert	Introvert
Talkative	Thoughtful
Speaks first, thinks later	Thinks first, may or may not speak
Energized by large numbers of people	Fatigued by large numbers of people
Unloads emotions as he/she goes along	Bottles up emotions and guards them

Example: The extrovert will help new groups get acquainted and feel comfortable. The introvert will be acquainted through observation and listening



This is not to suggest that it is easy to be a leader. There is no simple formula, no rigorous science, no cookbook that leads inexorably to successful leadership. . . . But for those who are ready, most of the learning takes place during the experience itself.
 – Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus



Sensing–Intuitive: How you prefer to take in information.

Sensing	Intuitive
Focuses on facts	Likes to use imagination
Sees details easily	Sees the big picture
Knows through experience	Values hunches
Likes prescribed procedures	Likes solving new problems

Example: The sensing person will never make a recipe unless they have all the ingredients. The intuitive person will say, “It doesn’t matter, I’ll just substitute what I do have.”

Thinking–Feeling: How you make judgments about what you have perceived.

Thinking	Feeling
Wins people with logic	Wins people with persuasion
Decides impersonally	Makes decisions based on human value
Doesn’t need harmony	Gets upset with arguments and conflict
Responds to words such as “objective,” “criteria” and “justice”	Responds to words such as “values,” “harmony” and “appreciate”

Example: If forced to choose between truthful and tactful, the thinking person will choose truthfulness. If forced to choose between truthful and tactful, the feeling person will choose tactfulness.

Judging–Perceiving: How you deal with the outer world.

Judging	Perceiving
Lives in a decisive, planned, orderly world	Lives in a spontaneous, flexible way
Takes pleasure in finishing projects	Takes pleasure in starting projects
Tries to avoid last-minute stress	Feels energized by last-minute pressure
Establishes deadlines and takes them seriously	Sees deadlines as mere alarm clocks

Example: The judging person has the report completed two weeks before the deadline. The perceiving person starts the night before the report is due (if that early).

Your psychological type results from a combination of your preferences for each pair of words. At times we can use either word of the pair, depending on the situation and the type of response that is needed for the group; however, we find one more natural and use it more frequently. The effective leader will work with a group and determine what behavior will be most effective. For example, a group of several “perceiving” members may need someone to help them establish a deadline and make decisions about the project. As the leader, this may not be your preferred behavior; yet, you know that the group needs someone to help them make decisions and move forward. Simply put—you adapt.

For more information on types and a personal profile, take the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II at <http://www.keirsey.com/sorter/instruments2.aspx?partid=0>.

Environment

The environment that surrounds us refers to conditions and factors under which we learn and develop. Your environment includes your formal education (schools, sports, training) and non-formal education (family setting, friends, etc.). Much of leadership development comes from the opportunities we take advantage of throughout our lives. The child on the playground who organizes her friends in a game of dodge ball has leadership experience. Regardless of socioeconomic differences, geographic differences, educational attainments or rural vs. urban backgrounds, everyone can be a leader. The degree to which an individual learns from successes and failures, trials or triumphs plays a major role in the leader he or she becomes. For years the debate between “leaders are born vs. leaders are made” has flourished among scholars. Ultimately, becoming a leader is up to the individual. Through experiences, leadership skills can be developed, knowledge can be gained and individual attitudes can be expanded to develop effective leaders.

Personality vs. Behavior

Personality and behavior are not the same. Understanding personality doesn't mean we can predict behavior. Personality is what we are born with and it does not change over time. Our environment impacts our responses to situations. When combined they equal behavior.

Culture

Culture can be defined as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group, the characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time. In the south we drink sweet tea and in the north, an order of tea brings you a pitcher of hot water and a tea bag. In the U.S., volunteering is an expected practice; however, in many countries volunteering to serve those beyond your family is not considered a normal activity.

In today's world, culture tends to refer to "global" differences. Technology has allowed people from distant countries to come together on many levels. Even though we are more connected and more aware, we still find ourselves saying such things as, "He is really different" or "I can't believe she. . ." Intellectually, we understand that people are different and that much of those differences are cultural. Yet, we find ourselves questioning *why* they are different. When we think of cultural differences, we often assume the differences are because of ethnic background; however, cultural differences can exist in the same city or town or among the same group of people.

Our culture is a part of our everyday existence, and our decisions are based upon our customary beliefs, values and goals. Our beliefs, values and goals are an important part of what makes us good leaders, but we must remember that not everyone shares the same beliefs, values and goals. A good leader takes cultural beliefs and customs into consideration when making decisions or determining a course of action.

Summary

We have all been shaped by our personalities, our environment and our culture. Our ability to serve as leaders is a direct result of how we apply our knowledge of ourselves, our personality and our temperament; the environments in which we have lived; and the cultures that influenced our lives. The choice to be a leader is yours.

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