

# Personality: Everybody Needs One

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## Abstract

*The assumption of this paper is that the micro area of personality patterns provides an excellent starting place for understanding individual differences. There is a huge industry built around the dissemination of personality assessments. The tools must be viewed as guides, descriptors and not as definitive instruments. Because there are so many different assessment tools on the market, the value of them as "descriptors" may be confusing. By providing a comparison of the instruments, the author seeks to clarify some of that confusion and to encourage increased use of the assessments.*

The assumption of this paper is that the micro area of personality patterns provides excellent starting place for understanding of individual differences. Collegiate textbooks and corporate training manuals increasingly reflect the interest shown in studying the diversity of individuals who may or may not be in similar demographic categories. There is a huge industry built around the dissemination of personality assessments. The wide spread use of the tools suggests that the tools be viewed as descriptors rather than as definitive instruments. Because there are so many different assessment tools on the market, even the value of them as "descriptors" may be confusing. This paper seeks to clarify some of that confusion. Also, the author takes this opportunity to caution that users of the assessment tools be wary of creating a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in the use and discussion of descriptors and guides.

The significance of understanding personality has been well documented. Researchers typically use such Jungian-based instruments as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the five-factor model personality inventories (e.g., Boozer & Forte, 2004; Clinebell & Stecher, 2003; Gardner & Martinko, 1996, Hammer & Huszco, 1996; Ramsomair, 1994 in Heineman, 1995). Peter Drucker wrote of the impact of personality on performance (Drucker, 1999a) Organizations have increasingly relied upon personality assessments for purposes such as recruitment, selection, person-organization fit, and career development (Blustein, 1997, Hall, 1996, Nauta, 1998, and Kahn, 2002). Wayne State is one of many institutions of higher learning that works under the mantra that "Your personality type can play a large part in which career (s) would be most satisfying ... knowing your type is helpful in career planning.(Wayne State, 2007) A number of researchers have addressed the question of the relationships between psychological types and organizational roles (Steckroth, Slocum, & Sims, 1980), information systems (Davis & Elnicki, 1984), leader effectiveness (Green, 2005) and managerial effectiveness (Gardner & Martinko) A recent article poses the question: "Is there a 'retire early' personality type?" ( John Greaney , 2000). Management by Strengths (Postlewait,1999) is a personality-based approach to selling and customer service. A sweeping statement describing the common occurrence of personality interests might

include the work of the International Society for Astrological Research. On their web page, Munkasey goes to great lengths to compare the value of astrology and the Myers-Briggs Temperment Inventory. (Munkasky, 2007)

A second assumption is that the more an individual understands his own personality and that of others, the better able he is to comprehend how others perceive him and why they react to him as they do. There are numerous models explaining the reasons people behave as they do. The long-standing benefit of working with a model and an assessment tool is a personalization of the theory and logic behind the descriptors. A problem of terminology occurs for the novice. There is a natural tendency to think that each new assessment is giving new and different information. Yet it is not just the novice who struggles with the nomenclature! Researchers who have tried to link personality to other variables, such as leadership, identify semantics as being a major problem. (Judge, Bobo, Ilies and Gerhardt, 2002) There is a lack of consistent structure in describing personality...many of the same traits may be identified under different labels. Hughes et al (1996) noted the labeling dilemma made it almost impossible to find consistent relationships between personality and leadership even when they really existed." (Hughes, Ginnett, Curphy, 1996,p.179)

It is important to look for and establish relationships. To quote Peter Drucker:

*Like one's strengths, how one performs is unique. It is a matter of personality... Just as people achieve results by doing what they are good at, they also achieve results by working in ways that they best perform. A few common personality traits usually determines how a person performs (Drucker,a 1999).*

Though there is a plethora of assessment tools and a wide acceptance of their use, it is important to note at this juncture that there seems to be a void of current to establish the validity and reliability of these models. It seems to me after a twelve month attempt to track down specific studies into the validity of Jungian instruments that the major support is anecdotal and historical. It is important to note that "People's implicit theories do not simply appear, fully formed out of nowhere." Rather they are "generated and refined over time as a result of people's experiences (Offerman quoted in..."(Judge, Bono, Ilies and Herhardt, 2002,p. 776) . Over sixty years ago, Sheldon and Stevens concluded: "It does not take a scientist to tell that no two human beings are identically alike, but it does require the discipline of systematic inquiry to give, in terms of scales and categories, a useful description of individual differences." (Sheldon 1942, p.2) Kluckhohn and Murray observed that every human being is : (1) not like every other human being; (2) like some other human beings; and (3) like no other human being. We are like all other human beings insofar as there is a **human nature** that describes "humanness." (Kluckhohn, 1955)

In describing personality, personality theorists attempt to show how we are the same as other humans and how we are different from them. The former concerns human nature, and the latter concerns **individual differences** One answer for the general acceptance of personality instruments is confirmatory bias. that is consistent with a belief or an hypothesis and to overlook or dismiss information that is inconsistent. Research on confirmatory bias ( Davies, 1997, 20 03 ;Kunda,Fong,Sanitioso and Reber 1993) offers

an explanation as to why users of MBTI, Personal Concept et al, accept the validity of the instruments. Respondents' *confirmatory bias* is defined as the tendency to seek out or to recognize information in the profile descriptors that correlate to their self concept. Students who use the results of the Personal Concept inventory most often (at least 99% of the time) agree with their profile and cite biographical incidences in support of the theory. This is consistent with Davies 2003 conclusion that "when generating both consistent and inconsistent thoughts, participants tended to produce supporting cognitions before contradictory cognitions." (Davies 2003, p. 741) He further concluded that positive strategy not only leads participants to seek out confirmatory evidence, but it also inhibits the retrieval of disconfirmatory evidence. ((Davies 2003, p. 741)

The purpose of this presentation is to offer an overview which stresses the sameness of existing Jungian theories. The author's research and twenty- year observation shows that while the nomenclature differs the concept is the same. Yet, the initial response of most people upon being asked to complete an assessment is void of any connection with previous personality assessment data. Once given the chart of similarities, they are able to build upon information from previous and subsequent assessment instruments. Learning theory states that learning is facilitated by connections with previous learning. The use of different instruments in different circumstances gives one the opportunity to build upon the theory.

The history of the study of personality merits review. There are many people who have contributed over the years. What follows is a discussion of those whose contribution most closely impacts the Personal Concept (or DISC): Hippocrates, Galen, Jung, Marston, Briggs, Myers, Piaget , Geier, and Mohler. More than two thousand years ago, people believed that in order to be healthy, they needed to have an even amount of the four major body fluids: black and yellow biles, blood and phlegm. Hippocrates (C.460-377/359BC) used the fluids as the descriptors of why people were different. These four fluids determined the functioning of body organs. The color of body biles was influenced by wine and food intake. It was the wisdom of the day that too much wine or contaminated food caused the liver to secrete an excess of yellow (sometimes darker) bile. Blood was apparent when bodily injury occurred. Phlegm was the byproduct of colds, flu, and congestion. Each of these fluids related to people's belief about health and personality. A Greek physician, Galen, (c. 130 AD -201AD) interpreted Hippocrates ideas using the terminology "sanguine, melancholic, choleric and phlegmatic" to describe the four dispositions. The four categories in current literature are called either the Four Humors or the Four Temperaments. Most of the instruments, however, are based on a form of Carl Jung's (1875-1961) work. Additionally, many models do claim historical roots that date back to Hippocrates. Models based on the work of these two men usually can be presented as having four classifications. Four as the number of distinct classifications has remained central to theories of, math, music, seasons, 4 corners of the earth, and stages (ages) of life. (Powell, 2007) Contemporary wisdom suggests that four is a convenient number to graph "circumplex" structure, and it is more easily remembered than more complex models. "Theories with more than 4 primary categories run the ...danger of becoming too complex to be helpful" (Powell, pp 3,4, 2007) Examples of other organizational behavior topics with circumplex structure include leadership and learning styles.

The philosophies of the two Greek physicians provided inspiration for the work of

psychologists Carl Jung ( 1875-1961 ) and William Marston ( 1893-1947) Jung's approach to psychological types came from a clinical psychoanalysis perspective. For a period of his professional life he was a close collaborator with Sigmund Freud ( 1856-1939) in his research efforts to understand human behavior. Jung seemed to be more practical in his work and attempted to provide lay people with a model for understanding personality types. He stressed the two levels of conscious and unconscious. Years later, Marston proposed a third layer of projected type.<sup>1</sup>

Jung divided the psychic energy or attitudes into the categories he labeled as "introvert" and "extravert." He described these general attitude types as being "...distinguished by the general interest or libido movement ...differentiated by their particular attitude to the object" The introvert, therefore, considers how his libido can be withdrawn from the object. The extravert, on the other hand, "...maintains a positive relation to the object. To such an extent does he affirm its importance that his subjective attitude is continually being oriented by and related to the object.( Jung 1921) In twenty-first century terms, an "introvert" directs psychic energy inwardly; whereas an "extravert" directs psychic energy to the environment and those who inhabit it. The assumption is that we are all born with a healthy balance which we seek to maintain.

Jung also identified a four-part structure which he used alongside his introverted-extraverted attitudes. The four functions are arranged as opposite pairs: Thinking and Feeling (different ways of deciding and judging) and Sensation and Intuition (gather and perceiving information). He conceived of each of these as being an independent dimension of human behavior and that "together they create a four-dimensional space in which all forms of human experience abide." (Fudjack, p. 42007) It was Jung's belief that each person has a natural orientation towards one of the four functions, and a second dominant from the other pair. So, in total, there could be sixteen possible combinations of an attitude and two functions.

The popular Myers-Briggs Inventory purportedly was developed by a mother-daughter team in an effort to understand Isabel Myers' husband. In 1917 Katharine Cook Briggs (1875-1968) had begun a lay study into personality. She developed a four quadrant framework: social, thoughtful, executive, and spontaneous. After reading Jung's typology (1923) she and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, incorporated his theory and published a mystery novel *Murder Yet to Come* (1929) using the types. Neither woman had any training in psychology or isometrics. Their sample was about 20 of their closest friends and relatives whom they questioned over a two year period, 1942-1944. Eventually, after others' began to collect data, Educational Testing Service published the instrument newly named "Myers-Briggs Type Indicator." In 1971 Myers created the Typology Laboratory at the main campus of the University of Florida.

William Marston (1893-1947) received three degrees from Harvard. The Massachusetts native earned his Bachelor's degree in 1915, law degree in 1918, and a Ph.D. in psychology in 1921. His research in understanding a person's personality and behavior, as determined by individual will and power led to the publication of two books, *Emotions of Normal People* (1928) and *Integrative Psychology* (1931.) Marston further explored personality by describing how individuals respond to their environment. His research led him to conclude that people behave along two axes with their actions tending to be either passive or aggressive depending on their perception of the environment as

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<sup>1</sup> Three profiles: Private , Public and Projected.

being either antagonistic or favorable. Building on the “introversion extroversion,” The other concern was for their emotions. Marston basically stated two principles: a) individuals view their surroundings as positive or negative and b) persons view themselves as more powerful or less powerful than those surroundings. By placing the axes at right angles, he formed four quadrants or descriptors: Dominance, Influence, Submission and Compliance. Thus the model was born. He successfully applied his theory when he consulted with Universal Studios in 1930 to help them transition from silent to talking movies. DISC came about as a byproduct of his desire to develop a measurement of mental energy. INSERT LINDA Supposedly it was a friend of Marston's and not Marston who used the instrument and gave birth to the "self help" focus of DISC use. In 1958 after buying the copyright for Marston's work from his widow, John Geier developed the DiSC , Personal Profile system. He then founded Performax (later purchased by Carlson Learning Center, now called Inscape.) In 1980 Jack Mohler and Thomas C. Ritt combined their understanding of Marston's work into the Personal Concept instrument, DISC.

Understanding this history, enables us to understand better the plethora of copycat assessments for which each one claims a copyright. The bibliography includes many of the books currently available to explain a specific set of four quadrant categories and descriptors. As noted, there are dozens of different personality testing instruments available from licensed providers or free of charge on the internet. The free ones are usually superficial overviews, while the more expensive ones are backed by claims of research validity and provide manuals and guidelines for the use of the information.

Each instrument or assessment tool offers a schematic tool to help classify human behavior. Much like a snowflake, each classification is similar, but no two are the same. During a six- month effort to find validity and reliability on these various programs, I came up with only one. I also came up with the threat to turn my call over to the company's legal department in response to the question “How do you know that your instrument is valid and reliable.” The most common response was that their tools were based on observation and that over the time of their use the hypothesis formed had proven adequate to assist people in their initial quest to understand who they are and why they may view life differently than others in their environment. Most people who sold the instruments state that the tangential goal is to assist people in their interpersonal relationships and the need to understand others before trying to be understood.

The following chart indicates the similarities of the more commonly used assessments.

The grid below shows the similarities between the vocabulary used in the DISC profile and in many of the other instruments.

Hippocrates.....	CHOLERIC		Hippocrates.....	SANGUINE	
Myers-Briggs.....	...Intuitive Feelingt		Myers-Briggs.....	Sensing Perceiving	
Keirsey.....	Rationals		Keirsey.....	Artisan	
Marston.....	ARTISAN		Marston.....	INDUCEMENT	
DSI.....	DOMINANCE		DSI.....	CONCEPTUAL	
Wilson & Merrill-Reid.....	DRIVER		Wilson & Merrill Reid.....	EXPRESSIVE	
Mohler & Performax.....	DOMINANCE		Mohler & Performax.....	INFLUENCE	
Luscher.....	RED		Luscher.....	YELLOW	
Freud.....	GENITAL		Freud.....	OMITTED	
Smalley.....	LION		Smalley.....	OTTER	
Maccoby.....	JUNGLE-FIGHTER		Maccoby.....	GAMESMAN	
Lifo.....	CONTROLLING/TALKING	<b>D</b>	<b>I</b>	Lifo.....	ADPATING-DEALING
Lefton.....	Q1 DOMINANT-HOSTILE			Lefton.....	Q4 DOMINANT-WARM
Littauer/LaHaye	POWERFUL		Littauer/LaHaye	POPULAR	
Hippocrates.....	MELANCHOLIC	<b>S</b>	<b>C</b>	Hippocrates.....	PHILEGMATIC
Myers-Briggs.....	SENSING Judging			Myers-Briggs.....	INTUITIVE/THINKING
Keirsey.....	GUARDIAN		Keirsey.....	IDEALIST	
Marston.....	SUBMISSION		Marston.....	COMPLIANCE	
DSI.....	BEHAVIORAL		DSI.....	ANALYTICAL	
Wilson & Merrill Reid.....	AMIABLE		Wilson & Merrill Reid.....	ANALYTICAL	
Mohler & Performax.....	STEADINESS		Mohler & Performax.....	COMPLIANCE	
Luscher.....	BLUE		Luscher.....	GREEN	
Freud.....	ORAL		Freud.....	ANAL	
Smalley.....	GOLDEN RETRIEVER		Smalley.....	BEAVER	
Maccoby.....	COMPANY MAN		Maccoby.....	CRAFTSMAN	
Lifo.....	SUPPORTING/GIVING		Lifo.....	CONSERVING-HOLDING	
Lefton.....	Q3 SUBMISSIVE-WARM		Lefton.....	Q2 SUBMISSIVE-HOSTILE	
Littauer/LaHaye	PEACEFUL		Littauer/LaHaye	PERFECT	

Figure 1 Chart of Comparison

Shortly before his death, Peter Drucker wrote an impressive article for the Harvard Business Review in which he stressed the need for self-knowledge. I would have liked to have interviewed him concerning his views on assessment tools such as those shown here. He wrote that most of us are sadly lacking in the area of self-knowledge:

*Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong. Throughout history, people had little need to know their strengths. A person was born into a position and a line of work: the peasant's son would also be a peasant; the artisan's daughter, an artisan's wife, and so on. But now people have choices. We need to know our strengths in order to know where we belong.*(Drucker, 1999 a)

I believe in the value of the four quadrant instruments as a way to begin an objective discussion of individual differences. I put this tool into practice each semester in the selection of teams. Students reported greater satisfaction with the team experience when each of the four quadrants has been represented as a strength by a team member.

The startling reality for me last year was that the basic four-quadrant model as an indicator of a person's personality or his preferred style of interacting with his environment had not been supported by statistical research.<sup>2</sup> For the most part the proof of validity is anecdotal and historical. I have been guilty of using these various instruments for over twenty years. I have used the Personal Concept unquestioningly. Others have cited it in their dissertations. The fact that there is a dearth of adequate research in support of theories of personality does not deter textbook authors and other corporate trainers from using assessments in their teaching. The empirical research that is being done is built around null hypotheses. The practitioner-oriented perspective is that there is value in tools of assessment because they are productive in generating conversations around a topic. Self-graded assessments provide non-threatening information as feedback. I believe that it is important to have theories and assessments validated empirically in addition to being anecdotally formulated.

A by-product of undergoing the research for this paper was the discovery of numerous online resources. Several, such as the Personality Project (<http://personality-project.org/perproj/other.html>) provide assessment tools as well as conference updates and scholarly articles. Even at that site we were unable to locate empirical research that addressed the question or correlation of information which paints a person's preferred with a broader sweep.

People further benefit from the understanding of different personalities because of the insight provided in working with other people. Our students are learning that taking the responsibility for relationships is an absolute necessity. Regardless of our position within the organization, professor, intern, manager, consultant, new-hire, student, president, building honest relationships is our responsibility to all of those with who we interface; those whose work we depend on as well as those who depend on our own work. In our organizational behavior classes we stress that the hierarchal order is no longer the only way of meeting objectives. Trust runs organizations more than "command and control" force. People do not need to like one another to trust one another. Trust means that they understand one another. The Platinum Rule encourages people to do unto others as others would like for them to do. (Allssandre, 1992 )

Drucker further explains the importance of interpersonal skills and sensitivity.

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<sup>2</sup> While the people answering inquiries at Inscape were unable to provide any research, I have located references to Geier's 1972 dissertation which purports to prove the validity and reliability of Marston's work.

*The first is to accept the fact that other people are as much individuals as you yourself are. They perversely insist on behaving like human beings. This means that they too have their own strengths; they too have their ways of getting things done; they too have their values. To be effective, therefore, you have to know the strengths, the performance modes, and the values of your coworkers. ...*

*Bosses are neither a title on the organization chart nor a "function." They are individuals and are entitled to do their work in the way they do it best. It is incumbent on the people who work with them to observe them, to find out how they work, and to adapt themselves to what makes their bosses most effective. This, in fact, is the secret of "managing" the boss.*

*The same holds true for all your coworkers. Each works his or her way, not your way. And each is entitled to work in his or her way. What matters is whether they perform and what their values are. As for how they perform- each is likely to do it differently. The first secret of effectiveness is to understand the people you work with and depend on so that you can make use of their strengths, their ways of working, and their values. Working relationships are as much based on the people as they are on the work (Drucker, 1999a).*

Much of performance depends on the works' ability to communicate, persuade, and resolve differences of opinion, and to explain multiple perspectives. Researchers and practitioners with increasing frequency turn to the results of personality tests in their efforts to build interpersonal skills (Berens, 2001; Gardner & Martinko, 1996; <http://www.performanceprograms.com> 2004). Over twenty years of teaching and consulting, I have found that teaching personality styles provides a wonderful jump-start to self management and relationship building topics. It is my hope to help to transform at least one person from *being* "an ordinary worker into an outstanding performer." (Drucker, 1999a) I believe that four quadrant assessment tools are one of the avenues to take.

My colleagues and I are involved in a longitudinal study which seeks to ascertain reliability of the Personal Concept and possible statistical correlation with validated tools which measure approaches to conflict, learning style, and leadership. We welcome the feedback and input of conference participants.

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