Personality Type and Learning Style of the Intro to Business Student: A Bridge to Stronger Teams

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Introduction

Personality testing is frequently used by business organizations in evaluating candidates during the hiring process and in employee development to build stronger teams. It is important for business students to gain an understanding of their own personality type and be able to identify how their personality characteristics will strengthen business teams. Stronger relationship skills will enable ministry in business to flourish.

One of the most popular personality tests used in business is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. It is estimated that over 2.5 million people take the Myers-Brigg test each year and the test is used by 89 of the Fortune 100 companies (Paul, 2004,p. xiii). We feel it is important for business students to be equipped to discuss their personality test results with future employers and be able to articulate the strengths and weaknesses they bring to a business team.

The Myers-Briggs test is based on the research of Carl Jung as described in his book Psychological Types written in 1921. Based on Jung's theories, Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs designed a survey of diagnostic questions to help individuals identify their personality type (Duhe, 2009, p.142). The Myers-Briggs test identifies four personality characteristics described in four sets of dichotomies: extravert-introvert, sensor-intuitive, thinking-feeling, and judging-perceiving. There are many similar personality tests that take the same approach and describe these four personality characteristics.

Students in the Introduction to Business course to submit their results from a personality test that is similar to the Myers-Briggs test. This test is administered free of charge by our university Career Services department as part of the career assessment test called MyPlan. All Freshmen students are encouraged to complete MyPlan during the university orientation process. The MyPlan personality test gives the students results in the form of the same four letters as the Myers-Briggs personality test.

In the Introduction to Business class, students are guided to use the results of the MyPlan personality test to help them better understand themselves and to develop their team-building skills. One of our course objectives as stated in the course syllabus is to help our students "understand where they best fit in to the field of business given their own strengths and abilities." One way that we address this objective is to help our students analyze their personality profile using the MyPlan Career Personality Test. We have found this test to be useful in helping students identify their individual personality traits, the extent to which they exhibit those traits, and how those traits can be effectively used as a team member in the business environment.

The MyPlan Career Personality Test is not a comprehensive personality test in that it focuses on just four personality characteristics; however, these particular characteristics are very useful in identifying an individual's approach to business decision-making and team-building skills. God has created us as people with an amazing ability to communicate on a complex level and the ability to live in highly complex relationships with other people. That high level of communication and relationship-building sets us apart from all other created beings. We were created with those qualities, in part, so that we would be able to communicate and build a lifelong close relationship with God.

In the beginning, God created two people and gave them work to do together that required their cooperation and communication. Business is all about relationships – people working together to make

products and services. Business is about building relationships with customers, suppliers, owners, investors, and employees. We can help our students to become more effective team members by helping them develop a better understanding of themselves and the individuals on their team.

One aspect of this paper will be to explain how we use the MyPlan Career Personality Test to help our students understand themselves and their fit as a business team member. We encourage students to understand the usefulness of the personality test as a way to 1) identify certain personality characteristics in themselves and others, 2) to identify their strengths in team-building and 3) to identify their approach to business decision-making. The second aspect of the paper will be to present results of five years of personality testing of our business students. Finally, we will discuss how faculty can adapt teaching methods in the classroom to more effectively connect with students of differing personality traits.

Using Personality Type Analysis in the Introduction to Business Course

At the beginning of the semester, the students are placed in business plan groups of five-six students where they complete a semester-long project resulting in a business plan report. On the day we discuss personality types, one of their group assignments is to consider what team-building strengths their personality type brings to the group. The students will identify on a worksheet how many students of each trait are in their group and discuss a strength that trait brings to the group.

Extravert-Introvert

The first dimension of personality measures to what degree an individual interacts with other people as an extravert or an introvert. The extravert is energized in a group and prefers being with people rather than spending time alone. In a business setting, an extravert feels more productive working on a team and develops ideas best through discussion with others. The person who is an introvert gains energy through time alone processing ideas through reflection. They often prefer to communicate and organize their ideas in writing before communicating verbally.

We encourage the students to use their understanding of both the extravert and the introvert type to determine whether they agree with the test results. It is important for students to consider how strong their personality preference is based on their percentage results. A student may exhibit both traits to differing degrees. For example, an individual may be 60 percent extravert and 40 percent introvert and will see both behaviors in themselves at various times.

The students will be working with both extraverts and introverts in their group. When working on a team with an extravert, there should be time spent talking through the project ideas. Extraverts need to think out loud, generate ideas as a group, and list ideas on a white board. Introverts appreciate having time to analyze a problem individually before sharing ideas as a group. It is especially helpful for introverts if an agenda is given ahead of the meeting time so they can begin formulating their ideas and how to express them.

An extravert who is leading a group (or a company) may need to remind their team from time to time that they are “just thinking out loud” so that others do not stop generating new ideas believing that the leader has already made a decision. Once introverts have had time to reflect and clarify their ideas they need to contribute those ideas. Others on the team may help by asking for their contribution on a regular basis. The team should not assume that just because an introvert is silent that there is agreement. All team members must learn to share their ideas and work toward consensus.

Sensor-Intuitive
The second personality trait considers how an individual prefers to process information. A sensor tends to rely on facts that can be seen, heard, and touched. A sensor will focus on the details and evaluate evidence to solve problems. On the other hand, the intuitive person likes to consider the "big picture", not just the details. They have an ability to see patterns and relationships in the data (Russo, 2012). They want to interpret and find out why. The intuitive prefers to analyze how the plan fits into the environment and can often identify what the group is missing in their analysis. Intuitives look into the future and like to consider "out of the box" ideas.

A productive team needs both sensors and intuitives in order to work well and solve problems. We advise the students to ask a sensor in their group to state the facts and pertinent issues in the problem the group is working on. When implementing a plan, the sensor excels at laying out a step-by-step process for accomplishing the objectives. In problem solving, intuitives can easily step back from the specifics to consider the broader objectives. The team should encourage the intuitives to work on how this plan fits the objectives and to answer the question of why the team is adopting this plan. Intuitives can take time with the group to consider if there are any other creative options that would solve the problem. Intuitives love to be encouraged to dream. Sensors will eventually need to bring the group back to reality.

Thinker-Feeler
The third personality trait considers an individual's approach to making decisions. Thinkers prefer to use their logic and sense of fairness in making a decision. They trust an analytical approach to arrive at the right decision. The feeler places more importance on how the decision will affect the people involved.

On a team, the thinker will be valued for their analysis of all the issues to arrive at the most rational decision to accomplish the key goals and objectives. The feeler is very important to the successful team in being able to consider each person's viewpoint and in striving to build consensus. The feeler will see when deadlines would put stress on the individuals involved. They are often gifted in persuasiveness and are able to gain agreement on the team and eventual agreement and adoption of a plan by the organization. Most people will be somewhere on the continuum of the dichotomy between thinker and feeler and will exhibit both traits to varying degrees. A 100 percent thinker and 100 percent feeler will need to work harder to understand and value each other's perspective. A lack of understanding and communication could create significant roadblocks for the team.

Judger-Perceiver
The final personality trait also has a strong influence on the decision-making process. A judger exhibits the qualities of decisiveness, organization, and control. They like decisions to be made quickly so they can eliminate uncertainty and move into organizing the implementation process. A perceiver will delay making a decision for the purpose of gathering more information and considering every possible alternative. They like to be flexible and keep their options open. This is a person who is more willing to take risks and often has skills that make them a successful entrepreneur.

With this trait in particular, we remind the students that the terms used in identifying the personality types are words defined by psychologists and do not necessarily equate to commonly held definitions. "Judgers" are not judgmental people, and "perceivers" are not especially perceptive. These are just the psychological terms used in the personality tests and must be carefully defined.

Personality Types of Business Students 2011-2016

The students in the Introduction to Business course take an online personality assessment measure made available through the university's Career Services office. After they learn about the different personality type dichotomies and their individual personality type in particular, they use this knowledge as part of a career plan assignment as well as in their work on the group business plan project. After having taught the class for five years, we thought it would be interesting to investigate the relationship between the different personality types and students' choice of major. The data in this section represents the breakdown of personality types and business majors over the past five years.

In determining a student's personality type it has already been mentioned that we use the MyPlan Career Personality Test as the instrument to measure personality type. This test was developed by MyPlan as an instrument to help people in choosing career paths that most complement the strengths and different attributes of their personality (Development, n.d.). The MyPlan website explains the thorough process that was followed to develop the test, which according to their stated goals was to be consistent with the typological models that counselors were accustomed to using such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a trademark of Consulting Psychologists Press Inc. (Myers-Briggs type Indicator, n.d.) and the Kiersey Temperament Sorter II (Kiersey, n.d.). Users taking the MyPlan Career Personality Test receive a four-letter personality type score similar to the one received using these other popular personality tests.

The MyPlan Career Personality test has been used as the personality measure in our course for the past three years. Prior to that, the students in our course used the Jung Typology Test (JTT), which is copyrighted by HumanMetrics.com (Jung, n.d.) and available on their website. The results of the JTT also yield a four-letter personality type score similar to the instruments mentioned previously. Prior to 2013, our school did not use MyPlan so this instrument was not available. When the school began to use MyPlan, which is a package of four career-related inventories including the Career Personality Test, we opted to use the results from this test as the students already complete all four career instruments as part of the course.

Our data includes 399 business students from the Introduction to Business course who identified as one or a combination of these majors: Accounting, Finance, Global Business, Information Technology Management, Marketing, Management, and Sport Business Management. Students were asked to submit their four-letter personality type from their MyPlan results. As Table 1 shows, the majority of students showed higher preferences in the dimensions of Extravert, Sensing, Thinking, and Judging.

Table 1

Letter	Count	Percentage
E	240	60%
I	159	40%
N	135	34%
S	264	66%
T	227	57%
F	172	43%
J	302	76%
P	97	24%

Table 2 shows the combination of personality traits exhibited by our business students:

Table 2

Personality Type	Number of Students	Percentage of all Majors
ESTJ	65	16.29%
ISTJ	63	15.79%
ESFJ	50	12.53%
ENFJ	44	11.03%
ISFJ	26	6.52%
ENTJ	23	5.76%
ESTP	23	5.76%
INTJ	20	5.01%
ESFP	14	3.51%
ISTP	13	3.26%
INFJ	11	2.76%
ENFP	11	2.76%
ENTP	10	2.51%
ISFP	10	2.51%
INTP	10	2.51%
INFP	6	1.50%
Grand Total	**399**	**100.00%**

The most common combination of personality traits is ESTJ followed closely by ISTJ. The only differing dichotomy between these groups is the dimension of extravert vs. introvert, showing that approximately 32 percent of the students share the STJ dimension in their personality type.

Table 3 shows the combination of the two middle dimensions, Sensing-Intuitive and Thinking-Feeling. This data shows that 41 percent of the students tested as ST, sensing-thinkers. This particular combination has been studied previously, especially as it relates to learning styles. McClanaghan (2000) describes the ST type as individuals who "want concrete, specific information and need to know what is right and wrong."

Table 3

Letter(s)	Count	Percentage
ST	164	41%
NT	63	16%
SF	100	25%
NF	72	18%

Students by Major

After looking at the business students as a whole, we analyzed the four-letter combination of personality traits by major. For students who identified as double majors, we used the first identified major as the basis for categorizing the students. The complete breakdown is as follows:

Table 4

Count of Business Majors	**Major**							
Type	**ACCT**	**FIN**	**GLBUS**	**ITM**	**MGMT**	**MRKT**	**SBMGT**	**Grand Total**
ESTJ	10	13	2	8	19	9	4	65
ISTJ	19	8	4	4	19	7	2	63
ESFJ	8	10	3	4	10	10	5	50
ENFJ	4	9	2	9	9	11		44
ISFJ	5	3		4	8	3	3	26
ENTJ	4	4	1	4	9	1		23
ESTP	5	3	2		4	7	2	23
INTJ	6	3	2		5	3	1	20
ESFP				1	5	4	4	14
ISTP	6	1		1	2		3	13
INFJ	3	1	1	1	3	2		11
ENFP		1		1	4	4	1	11
ENTP		2	1	1	2	4		10
ISFP	2	2		1	2	2	1	10
INTP	2	3	2	1		1	1	10
INFP		1		3		2		6
Grand Total	**74**	**64**	**20**	**43**	**101**	**70**	**27**	**399**

The personality type most represented in each major is highlighted in Table 4. Note that Management is identified twice because the same number of students tested for two different four-letter types. The following breakdown summarizes the most popular personality types within each major and the corresponding percentage of students within that major that is noted:

ESTJ Highest match for Finance (20%) and Management (19%)
ISTJ Highest match for Accounting (26%), Global Business (20%), and Management (19%)
ESFJ Highest match for Sport Business Management (19%)
ENFJ Highest match for Information Technology Management (21%) and Marketing (16%)

Further drilling down individual majors we wanted to identify the individual dichotomies by major. The results are represented in Table 5.

Table 5

Accounting		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	31	42%
I	43	58%
N	19	26%
S	55	74%
T	52	70%
F	22	30%
J	59	80%
P	15	20%

Finance		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	42	66%
I	22	34%
N	24	37%
S	40	63%
T	37	58%
F	27	42%
J	51	80%
P	13	20%

GLBUS		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	11	55%
I	9	45%
N	9	45%
S	11	55%
T	14	70%
F	6	30%
J	15	75%
P	5	25%

ITM		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	28	65%
I	15	35%
N	20	47%
S	23	53%
T	19	44%
F	24	56%
J	34	79%
P	9	21%

Management		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	62	61%
I	39	39%
N	32	32%
S	69	68%
T	60	59%
F	41	41%
J	82	81%
P	19	19%

Marketing		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	50	71%
I	20	29%
N	28	40%
S	42	60%
T	32	46%
F	38	54%
J	46	66%
P	24	34%

SBMGT		
Letter	**Count**	**Percentage**
E	16	59%
I	11	41%
N	3	11%
S	24	89%
T	13	48%
F	14	52%
J	15	56%
P	12	44%

Summary of Table 5

E	All majors except ACCT had a majority of students as E
I	Only ACCT students had a majority of students as I
N	No majors had a majority of students as N
S	All majors had the majority of students as S
T	ACCT, FIN, GLBUS, and MGMT had a majority of students as T
F	ITM, MRKT, and SBMGT had a majority of students as F
J	All majors had the majority of students as J
P	No majors had a majority of students as P

Personality Types and Learning/Teaching Methods

As business professors, it is helpful to understand the personality types of our students and adapt the teaching style and classroom learning environment to help our students learn most effectively. According to our data, 60 percent of our business students are extraverts. They learn best by articulating concepts. They don't really "know" a concept until they have discussed it. For the extravert, it is helpful for a professor to periodically pause a lecture over concepts and provide a brief discussion time among pairs of students to answer a question or problem that applies the concept. In a situation where students have come to class with prepared homework assignments, it is helpful to set up four-person groups to have a brief discussion over the paper or problem assigned. For an extravert, all discussion opportunities will increase learning and retention of the concepts. Discussion also raises an extravert's enjoyment and comfort level in the learning environment. Their preference is to interact with others.

An introvert thrives in the learning environment by having an opportunity to think independently about a concept first before being asked to discuss it. During a lecture, they will busily jot down notes and spend time thinking over a concept. It will be helpful to give students some time to think about an answer and jot down their ideas before discussion with other students. This would benefit both types as extraverts need to practice organizing their thoughts and introverts will find it difficult to contribute verbally without some thinking time.

Between sensors and intuitives, sensors tend to be the high performers in the accounting academic environment. In their 1993 study, Nourayi and Cherry found that the sensing type of individuals "demonstrate better performance in accounting courses in general." Our data shows that 66 percent of our business students are sensing students. They feel comfortable with detailed instructions. They naturally like to focus on facts and details and organize information into lists that can be easily memorized for the exam. Sensors are equipped to create a step-by-step solution to a problem. Give them that kind of work to do and the sensor will thrive. As a probable sensor mentioned in a recent course evaluation "I liked how [the professors] walked us through the business plan step by step. They were very clear in their expectations."

The intuitive is less interested in the details and facts and wants to see the "big picture" first. In a recent semester of managerial accounting, the topic each week was a different "cool tool" of cost analysis for business decision making. We discussed tools such as break-even analysis, budgeting, and present value analysis for capital investment decisions. In the course evaluation, a student complained "Sometimes it would be nice to have a very clear, structured overview of what is being covered and how that fits in to the whole…it seems like all we are doing is looking at little pieces of the puzzle, but not the whole." An intuitive is uncomfortable when they can't figure out where the pieces fit into the big picture. In some cases, the professor may provide the framework. In other teaching situations, the students may be challenged to consider the big picture themselves and identify patterns and meaning.

In the third dichotomy, thinking and feeling, 57 percent of our business students are thinking students. It is important to remember that this trait indicates how people make decisions and that all individuals are somewhere on the continuum between relying on logic and a sense of fairness in making decisions to being strongly influenced by how the people in the situation will be affected. An ethical question based on violation of the rule will seem clear to a thinking student who will just respond by pointing out that, obviously, the action is contrary to the rule and the person violating the rule is acting unethically. The feeling student will want to consider the best way to handle the situation considering the perspectives

of the people involved. From a teaching perspective, it is helpful to explore questions related to how to communicate with the people involved and how to convince the individuals to do the right thing. The thinking students wants to do the logical action based on the objectives; the feeling student wants to do the right thing in the right way while first understanding the impact on the people involved and finding a solution that will gain consensus of everyone involved. A professor's questions that lead both the thinking student and the feeling student to a full and satisfactory solution (and an appreciation for each other's perspective) will have taught invaluable problem-solving skills.

The judging student prefers to make decisions quickly and move into implementing a solution based on a plan. Our data indicates that 76 percent of our business students are judging students. In the classroom, the judging student will plan their work and complete their assignments on time or even get their work done early. They do well with detailed instructions and a clear understanding of how the assignment will be graded. They will expect the teacher to follow the class schedule and return graded assignments as scheduled. In analyzing cases, a judging student may jump to a conclusion too quickly in order to get the work done (Brightman, n.d.) The judging student should be challenged to provide alternative courses of action and identify advantages and disadvantages of various options to require them to do more in-depth analysis.

The perceiving student prefers to postpone completing assignments in order to gain more information. They look for new and different ways to accomplish their objectives. They are energized by the pressure of finishing work at the last minute. For long-term projects, the teacher may break the project into smaller parts with individual deadlines so that the student can receive feedback and complete the work in a timely way. Perceiving students like "spontaneity and keeping options open as long as possible." (Morgan, 2008)

As noted in our data, over 30 percent of our students are classified as STJ's with the variable being they are either introvert or extravert. This combined group shares many learning styles. For example, learning is improved when the material presented is practical, presented logically, repeated in several forms, and presented at a moderate pace. For the STJ, learning is hindered when the material presented lacks practical application and appeals to one's inner feelings. What differentiates the introvert from the extrovert in this group would be that the introvert would prefer a systematic approach where extroverts would thrive with group work and active learning methods such as debates, contests, and brainstorming. (Learning, n.d.)

Central to our school's mission is to help develop men and women who are not only competent professionally, but who are also personally discerning and able to influence their professions and culture through service and leadership anchored in biblical truth. In other words, we want to prepare our students for marketplace ministry.

We begin this task on day one in our Introduction to Business course. We want students to start from their first day as business majors to learn how to be effective witnesses for Christ in the world of business. One of ways in which we can accomplish this is through having them learn about their own personality and how they can use their unique God-given strengths to help further the kingdom. In Romans 12:4-6a we are reminded that "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. For we have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us" (NIV). God has made each of us unique and has equipped us individually for different kinds of service.

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