

DISC vs. MBTI

by Dr. Tony Alessandra



I am often asked about the difference between DISC and MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®) and if there's an advantage in using one over the other...

Both DISC and MBTI are assessment tools that provide insight into personality and behavior. Both are widely respected and used by individuals, organizations, institutions, and corporations worldwide. There are, however, a few notable differences between DISC and MBTI:

The DISC assessment is shorter in length than MBTI (typically 24-30 questions for DISC versus up to 90 questions for most MBTI tests).

MBTI sorts individuals into 16 4-letter types. According to Wikipedia:

Extroversion (E)/ Introversion (I) Extroverted types learn best by talking and interacting with others. Introverted types prefer quiet reflection and privacy.

Sensing (S)/ Intuition (I) Sensing types enjoy a learning environment where the material

is presented in a detailed, sequential manner. Intuitive types prefer a learning atmosphere where an emphasis is placed on meaning and associations.

Thinking (T)/ Feeling (F) Thinking types desire objective truth and logical principles and are natural at deductive reasoning. Feeling types place an emphasis on issues and causes that can be personalized while they consider other people's motives.

Judging (J)/ Perceiving (P) Judging types will thrive when information is organized and structured, and they will be motivated to complete assignments in order to gain closure. Perceiving types will flourish in a flexible learning environment in which they are stimulated by new and exciting ideas.

DISC focuses primarily on four dominant behavioral types:

Dominance - These are forceful, take-charge people: direct, decisive, determined and often domineering. They're born leaders who are neither shy nor subtle.

Influence - The friendly, enthusiastic High 'I' styles want to be in the middle of the action, whatever and wherever it is. They most value admiration, acknowledgement, and applause.

Steadiness - Steady styles are the most people-oriented of the four styles. Having close, friendly relationships is one of their highest priorities.

Conscientiousness – 'C' styles are analytical, persistent, independent, and well organized. They prefer to work quietly alone, emphasizing accuracy and "correctness".

MBTI assumes that personality is fixed and unlikely to change, while DISC is more open to the possibility that different situations and environments might bring out different behavioral traits in an individual.

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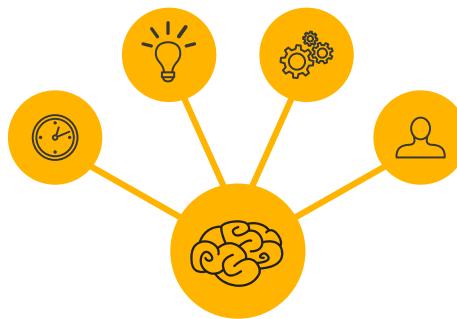


MBTI is largely an indicator of how people think internally. DISC measures how personality translates to external behavior.

Generally speaking, MBTI is a good assessment tool for the individual looking for self-knowledge. MBTI results tend to be very personal and typically reveal a great deal about an individual's inner self. Although this may sound like an advantage over DISC, this can in fact be a weakness. Because MBTI is so deeply personal and is based on a large amount of revealing data from the extensive MBTI questionnaire, people who take the MBTI may often feel uncomfortable sharing their results with others. This could make MBTI unsuitable or difficult to use in a public environment such as a business, organization, or corporation where team building exercises, corporate retreats, staff training, sales meetings take place.

Also, with 16 different personality types and acronyms that are often confusing, MBTI language often fades from the memory of the casual user very quickly. MBTI test-takers are often unable to retain useful information from their personality profile. DISC, on the other hand, offers all of the

advantages of MBTI, but with a more user-friendly interface. The simple acronym "DISC" is easy to remember, and therefore makes a much more lasting impression on users. It's typical for individuals taking the DISC assessment to remember their results years after taking the initial assessment.



Because the DISC assessment is specific to whatever environment you have in mind when taking the assessment, results tend not to be as intimate or personal as MBTI. It's easier for individuals taking the DISC assessment to share their results, confident that though the assessment results might reveal their work personality, their private self can remain protected.

Major advantages for DISC over MBTI for most situations:

People remember DISC long after they hear about it. Other models, such as MBTI, are more difficult to recall. It is hard to apply what you cannot remember.

DISC is easy to apply and is less theoretical than MBTI. Both are solid and widely used. It's not a matter of which model is right, but which one best suits the intended use.

DISC can easily be visualized and explained in a circular or quadrant diagram. MBTI may be helpful, but difficult to diagram in a simple manner. DISC can be illustrated in a way that even young children can understand. However, DISC is not so simplistic that it cannot yield in-depth insights.

DISC is not just for self-understanding; it provides a framework to understand others and adjust how you relate to them. MBTI is also helpful in this regard. However, to effectively apply the MBTI model for two people, you would then need to remember the right combination of 8 letters for both individuals and then attempt to figure out the implications on your relationship. DISC can be as practical as helping a Guarded person learn to be a little more aware and Open when the situation calls for it.

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