Using MBTI to shape User Personas' personality

You are interviewing some people for building your User Personas or perhaps to explore how they will react to different product solutions. **Then you realize you need to know some personality traits in order to understand why they react the way they do**.

> *But how to identify personality traits in a quick feasible and credible manner instead of just based on observation?*

I make myself the same question some time ago, and here is how I solve it using MBTI.

Perhaps you have seen on my layout for User Personas, an area dedicated to "Personality". Personality it is a conflictive element seems exist a lot of research models and discussion about such a complex subject, but my purpose was not to achieve a deep understanding of personality, but found some elements that would allow me to outline some personality traits for a quick user modeling. **I didn't feel comfortable by using just my observation skills and choosing traits that seems to me most likely to that person.**

My goal was to find a solution that was suitable for daily practice, taking into account available resources and the necessary velocity required by agile methodology. That's why I decide to use a well know personality modeling: the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)** to quick draft personality.

The original MBTI questionnaire count with 93 forced-choice questions making their use unlikely in the context of a user testing. Besides to apply MBTI method there are rigorous and extensive methodology, but for my purpose of creating a basic "personality modeling" **I realized that I had to sacrifice thoroughness in order to gain in speed and efficiency.** That's why I decide to apply a very simplify questionnaire to identify MBTI type, that give me a quick idea of the silent personality traits for that persona-type.

This way, if I roughly identify the personality-type, I can resort to a lot of information about those types of people, and **the end result will be in general much more consistent that relying solely on my intuition**.

HOW?
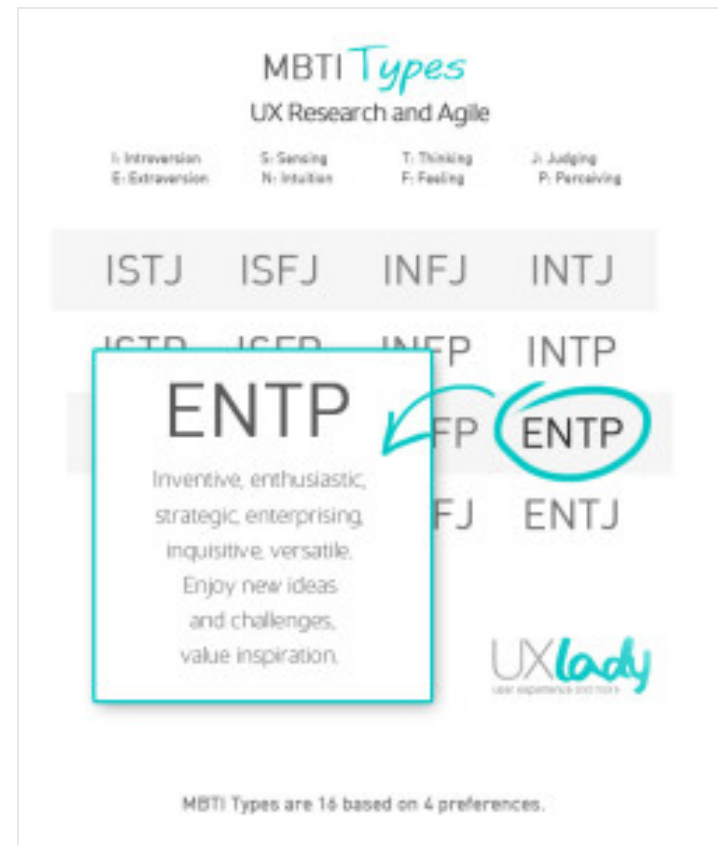
The method I apply consist, as I said, in **a very reduced questionnaire to determine the MBTI four letter code.** Between 4 and 16 questions, depending on the available time, and the type of study that is being carried out. For in-deep interviews normally you have more time, but when you are running a performance lab test in most cases time is a scarce resource.

Once I have the MBTI type I just check a table to locate the appropriate keywords (personality traits) for that personality-type.

Step 1. We ask participant to choose within alternative sentences.

Two questions by MBTI construct help us to identify more extreme types, or more ambiguous cases, but if you prefer could group all sentences from same type in a single phrase, or even split the two sentences in four, reducing thereby the possibility of a tie is given. When I get a draw, let my impressions of observation help me clarify the answer.

For example, 2 Questions regarding to MBTI Information construct:
how one prefers to deal with information?. (See complete questionnaire below)

Which statement describes you better?
(Choose the one you feel more identified)*
Question 1:
I tend to focus on the reality of how things are. I pay attention to concrete facts and details. [Sensing S]
-OR-
I tend to imagine the possibilities of how things could be. I notice the big picture, see how everything connects. [Intuition N]

Question 2:
I prefer ideas that have practical applications. I like to describe things in a specific, literal way. [Sensing S]
-OR-
I enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake. I like to describe things in a figurative, poetic way. [Intuition N]

Step 2. Check personality types characteristics

Finally, once you have the user MBTI type, means the four-letter code, you check the below table "Personality traits by Personality Type" to select the characteristics (keywords) that suits more to you participant, considering both the above self-reported data and face-to-face in-line reading, behavior and body language.

So now you have a lot of information available (check references at the bottom) about each personality

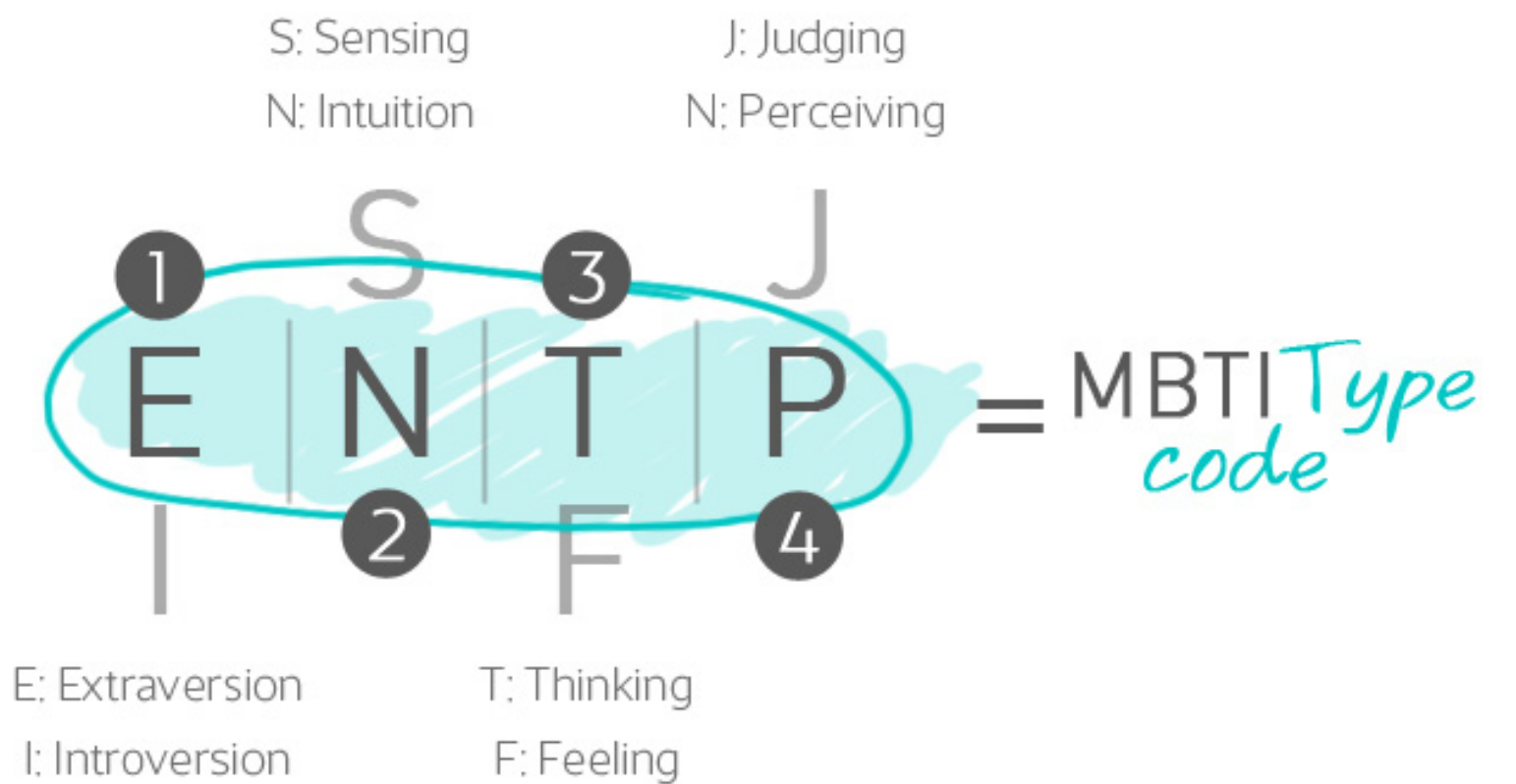type that will helps you to make a clear mental model of that person.

WHAT?

IMPORTANT: Describe MBTI method require several post just for it, so I will present the method shortly, but you must check the references to understand better what MBTI is.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator it is a psycomethric method (1940s) based on Carl G.Jung Theory of Psychological type (1020s). In MBTI method, personality types are defined based on four main constructs: Favorite world, Information, Decisions, Structure (preferences) each one is defined by opposite pairs (dichotomies). From all possible combinations results 16 personality-types.

MBTI constructs (preferences):

1. Favorite World: Extraversion or Introversion. Refers to where and how one directs his or her attention and energy — on people and things in the outer world, or alone in the inner world.

2. Information: Sensing or Intuition. Refers to how one prefers to deal with information — by focusing on the basic information, or by interpreting and adding meaning.

3. Decisions: Thinking or Feeling. Refers to decision making — objectively, using logic and consistency, or subjectively, considering other people and special circumstances.

4. Structure: Judging or Perceiving. Refers to how one interacts with the outer world — with a preference towards getting things decided, or for staying open to new information and options.

S: Sensing   J: Judging
N: Intuition   N: Perceiving

① ③
E | N | T | P = MBTI Type code
② ④
I   F

E: Extraversion   T: Thinking
I: Introversion   F: Feeling

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)   UXLady.com

WHY?

Why identify personality traits it is important?

- Any user modeling will be complete without a personality profile. We know now that most human decisions are driven by personality and mood.

- Help us to create more realistic scenarios and mental models for each user persona.

- Help us to better determine what need each user-type.

- Personality will be use for established persona behavior and response during the construction of an Experience Map.

- Personality tags and Openness/Neuroticism gauge are a clear tool for help Product Managers, developers and designer to put on the persona's shoes.

- Once you have many interviews of the same user persona type, you may found out some personality traits are more likely of that group.

I have the impression that in most cases, particularly with small UX teams, practitioners tends to just point out some personality traits that seems more prominent during the interview, without applying any particular method and guided primarily by the subjective observation… at least that was what I did before, Instead with this method -extremely

simplified- I feel I have a more reliable tool for lead my observation and achieve some understanding of the different personality traits. What do you think?

RESOURCES

Table of Personality traits by MBTI

(!) Important: **I created this table using information from different sources, and in some cases, make my own interpretations trying to link personality traits with preferences when interacting with systems,** so if you want to be more rigorous, please use the MBTI profiles that you can find in the references (Keep learning).

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
Quiet / Serious / Practical / Matter-of-fact / Realistic / Responsible / Logical / Organized / Traditional / Loyal*Value Traditions	Quiet / Friendly / Responsible / Conscientious / Loyal / Considerate / Kind / Stable / Practical* Seeks harmony * Value Security and traditions	Conscientious / Committed / Organized / Decisive / Original / Sensitive / Individualistic* Seek meaning and connections in ideas. Want to understand	Original / Creative / Determined / Organized / Skeptical / Independent / Analytic / Thinker* A demanding user in terms of performance and standars.
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
Tolerant / Flexible / Observers / Practical / Analytic / Logical / Quiet / Reserved / Risk-takers / Detached* Value Efficiency	Quiet / Friendly / Sensitive / Kind / Pacific / Loyal / Flexible / Open-mind* Like control and personal space. * Appreciate the beauty and aesthetics* Like originality and creativity	Idealistic / Loyal / Curious / Quiet / Reflective / Idealistic / Laid-back / Adaptable / Flexible* Seeks Understand * Respect his values	Theoretical / Quiet / Contained / Flexible / Adaptable / Skeptical / Critical / Analytical / Logical / Original / Reserved / Individualistic* Seek logical process and knowledge
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
Flexible / Tolerant / Pragmatic / Spontaneous / Friendly / Adaptable / Action-oriented / Impatient / Practical / Simple* Seeks and value: Focus on immediate results, easy and concrete, problem-solvers	Outgoing / Friendly / Accepting / Hedonistas / Practical / Flexible / Spontaneous* Seeks people-oriented (social), fun-loving, new experiences.* Hate: Impersonal	Warmly / Enthusiastic / Imaginative / Spontaneous / Flexible / Idealistic / Creative / Open-mind* Seeks/Value: A lot of information, user comments, new ideas.	Quick / Ingenious / Stimulating / Alert / Outspoken / Analytic / Easy-bored / Creative / Resourceful / logical* Seeks: New and stimulating interactions and ideas* Hate: Routine
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
Practical / Realistic / Matter-of-fact / Decisive / Organized / Logical / Traditional* Seeks/Value: Velocity, problem-solve, efficiency, logical standars, coherence and consistency.	Warm-hearted / Conscientious / Cooperative / Popular* Seeks/Value harmony, traditions and security.	Warm / Empathetic / Responsible / Sociable / Popular / Sensitive / People-focus* Seeks/value: Information about other users, social features* Hate: Impersonal or	Frank / Decisive / Assertive / Outspoken / Little patience / Intelligent* Seeks: Knowledge* Hate: Illogical or inefficient systems and disorganization.

		non-human vision.	
* Like Control and predictable systems.			

Full questionnaire:

Q. Which statement describes you better?

(Choose the sentence with what you feel more identified)

FAVORITE WORLD	
EXTRAVERSION (E)	INTROVERSION (I)
I could as a talkative and outgoing person. I tend to work out ideas with others, think out loud.	I could be described as a reserved person. I tend to think things through inside my head.
I like to be in a fast-paced environment. I usually enjoy being the center of attention.	I prefer a slower pace with time for contemplation. I'd rather observe than be the center of attention.

INFORMATION	
SENSING (S)	INTUITION (N)
I focus on the reality of how things are. I pay attention to concrete facts and details.	I imagine the possibilities of how things could be. I notice the big picture, see how everything connects.
Prefer ideas that have practical applications. I like to describe things in a specific, literal way.	I enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake. I like to describe things in a figurative, poetic way.

DECISION	
THINKING (T)	FEELING (F)
I tend to make decisions in an impersonal way, using logical reasoning. I Value justice, fairness.	I tend to base my decisions on personal values and how my actions affect others. I value harmony, forgiveness.
I enjoy finding the flaws in an argument. I could be described as reasonable, level-headed person.	I like to please others and point out the best in people. I could be described as warm, empathetic person.

STRUCTURE	
JUDGING (J)	PERCEIVING (P)
I prefer to have matters settled. I thinks rules and deadlines should be respected.	I prefer to leave my options open. I see rules and deadlines as flexible.
I prefer to have detailed, step-by-step instructions. I often make plans, want to know what I'm getting into	I like to improvise and make things up as I go. I'm spontaneous, enjoy surprises and new situations.

KEEP LEARNING…

I warn you that the MBTI is extremely addictive and fun!

Research about how MBTI type could Influence Task-Oriented Technology Use. http://www-users.cs.umn.edu/~ludford/MBTI_Interact.pdf

The Myers & Briggs Foundation: http://www.myersbriggs.org/

Nice explanation of several personality theories and methods, incluidng MBTI and 'Big 5' Factors: http://www.businessballs.com/personalitystylesmodels.htm

Similar to MBTI, also based on Jungian typology : http://www.celebritytypes.com/about.php

Personality-type details:

By the Myers & Briggs Foundation: http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/the-16-mbti-types.asp

By celebrity types (click left menu) http://www.celebritytypes.com/

Take a test!. Online versions of MBTI test:

http://www.celebritytypes.com/test.php

http://www.celebritytypes.com/big-five/test.php

(Spanish)

http://www.odiseajung.com/tipos-psicologicos-jung-mbti/test-myers-briggs-mbti/test1.php