



Book 10 Career Essentials

Putting Your Personality Type to Work

Donna Dunning
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Recommendation

Consider your personality type. Are you an extrovert or an introvert? Do you emphasize logic or feelings? Not sure? If you want to improve your work performance and move up in your career, knowing your personality type is crucial, says psychologist Donna Dunning. As the author of this book’s precursor, *What’s Your Type of Career?*, she has closely examined the impact of personality type on choosing a positive career path and has concluded that personality type continues to affect your professional success even after you’ve found the right job. In this guide, she explores that premise in depth by offering an abbreviated Myers-Briggs personality type test and then explaining how your natural preferences influence your work performance. Optimally, once you know your tendencies and inclinations, you will make choices that suit you and lead to your professional success. To that end, Dunning outlines 10 career-boosting strategies and explains the strengths and weaknesses of eight categories of work preferences in each strategy. *BooksInShort* recommends this informative, highly accessible book to all professionals interested in applying a bit of practical psychology and cognitive science to their career advancement plans.

Take-Aways

- People approach work one of eight ways, based on their Myers-Briggs personality type.
- They are “Responders, Explorers, Expeditors, Contributors, Assimilators, Visionaries, Analyzers” or “Enhancers.”
- Knowing your individual work style helps you adapt and apply 10 career-building strategies. First, set professional goals that mesh with your natural proclivities.
- Second, maintain a positive outlook, so people will enjoy working with you.
- Third, take ownership of your career by managing your own progress and development.
- Fourth, become a good listener so you can learn more from others. And fifth, become a strong, relatable speaker so others will be receptive to you.
- Sixth, “cultivate your curiosity.” Build your reputation as a savvy, up-to-date employee.
- Seventh, focus and organize your thinking, so you can solve problems and make sound decisions. And eighth, surpass expectations and take on more responsibility.
- Ninth, embrace change and uncertainty. Try to view situations from many perspectives and consider several possible outcomes.
- Tenth, promote your achievements to gain recognition and expand your network.

Summary

Who Are You?

Trying to get ahead in your career without understanding who you truly are is like striving to reach a destination without a map. Once you identify your personality type

and how you prefer to work, learn and interact, you will see a clearer path to achieving your personal and professional goals.

“The starting point for your career development is self-awareness.”

Adopt these 10 fundamental strategies to become more successful and more satisfied with your work:

1. “Ask Yourself for Directions”

Everyone has a unique vision of his or her professional achievements. How you individually define success depends on your interests, talents, principles and disposition, as well as your experiences. Having a crystallized idea of your personality type will help you clarify your work preferences, so you can set career goals based on your natural inclinations. Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers expanded upon Carl Jung’s theories about personality type in creating their popular test, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). You can take an abbreviated version of this assessment to find out which personality category you fit – or better yet, have a psychology professional administer the full test for you.

“Moving in a career direction that uses your natural preferences increases your chances of career success.”

The patterns in which people interact and operate fall into four pairs. You will naturally favor one trait of each pair, giving you a four-letter code for your personality type.

Various combinations of the traits result in 16 possible personality types, expressed by elements’ initials, which are:

1. **“Extroversion (E) and Introversion (I)”** – The extrovert’s view is, “Let’s talk this over,” but the introvert’s instinctive reaction is, “I need to think about this.”
2. **“Sensing (S) and Intuition (N)”** – When receiving information, the sensing person says, “Just the facts, please,” and the intuitive person’s response is, “I can see it all now.”
3. **“Thinking (T) and Feeling (F)”** – The thinker asks, “Is this logical?” whereas the feeling person wants to know, “Will anybody be hurt?”
4. **“Judging (J) and Perceiving (P)”** – The judging person’s impulse is, “Just do something,” while the perceiving person urges, “Let’s wait and see.”

“When you use your natural preferences and strengths every day, work becomes more interesting and rewarding.”

The 16 personality types translate to eight general approaches to work:

1. **“Responders (ESTP and ESFP)”** – “Act and adapt” is the responder’s motto. These workers observe what is going on around them and identify challenges and opportunities. They react quickly and make great improvisers.
2. **“Explorers (ENTP and ENFP)”** – These personalities search for links and associations among concepts, try to uncover possibilities and test new ideas.
3. **“Expeditors (ESTJ and ENTJ)”** – These efficient, responsible workers like to analyze and organize. They are goal-oriented and prefer to be in charge.
4. **“Contributors (ESFJ and ENFJ)”** – These empathetic people care about relationships and enjoy a harmonious, collaborative work environment.
5. **“Assimilators (ISTJ and ISFJ)”** – Before they act, these “specialize and stabilize” types like to take in all the facts and combine them with what they already know.
6. **“Visionaries (INTJ and INFJ)”** – These workers look at possibilities and envision the future. They are “big picture” people who embrace new ideas and technologies.
7. **“Analyzers (ISTP and INTP)”** – These flexible, careful thinkers delight in problem solving. They rely heavily on logic to make decisions.
8. **“Enhancers (ISFP and INFP)”** – As natural nurturers, enhancers focus on how a situation or problem affects people.

“Independent workers are appreciated and promoted in the workplace.”

Knowing your individual approach to work not only helps you set better goals, it also helps you apply these “career success strategies” more effectively. Focus on the strengths and weaknesses of your professional style as you adopt and customize each strategy to match your personality.

2. “Optimize Your Outlook”

A positive demeanor goes a long way in the work world. Optimists radiate helpfulness and confidence and willingly take on tough challenges. When you are upbeat, your bosses and colleagues enjoy your energy and can-do attitude. Make a good impression by speaking positively about people and situations and by handling unpleasant circumstances gracefully. Avoid criticizing people, gossiping and complaining. How you “dress, stand, walk and talk” communicate your attitude to others, so ensure that your appearance and behavior send the right message.

“If you do not pay attention to change, you may miss valuable opportunities to position yourself for success.”

Understand how your current experiences may be affecting your outlook. Many factors can bring you down, such as an illness, a negative environment, high stress or a difficult situation. A workplace plagued by incompetence, confusion, poor morale and conflict can taint the most positive person’s attitude. When faced with a tough situation at work, you essentially have three alternatives: ignore the worst of it, resolve the issue or leave. To keep your stress levels from skyrocketing, try to address conflicts, develop a support system, pursue your hobbies and passions, sleep well and exercise. Monitor your self-talk to make sure it is cheery and affirming.

3. “Put Yourself in Charge”

Assume accountability for your accomplishments as well as your mistakes. Take ownership of your success by working independently, persisting in the face of adversity and finishing what you start. Avoid placing blame, giving up or making excuses. Examine your professional choices and actions and determine how effective they are. If you are not getting the results you want, “adjust and improve.” Though you may seek guidance from time to time, your job performance is ultimately your responsibility. Employers value independent workers because they don’t require extra time, energy and attention to manage.

4. “Learn from Everyone”

To develop a “learning approach” to interacting with others, value other people’s experience and input and glean lessons from every conversation. Effective communication is a building block of learning, so hone your listening skills. People communicate for several reasons, such as conveying information, sharing an experience or emotion, arguing a point, giving or receiving feedback, or expressing support or interest. Identify the purpose of every conversation and tailor your response accordingly. When someone is speaking to you, avoid multitasking. Stow your cellphone and turn away from your computer. Look at the speaker and use open body language. Don’t be quick to rush in with your own comments, even positive ones. Labeling, criticizing, arguing, withdrawing, or being condescending or sarcastic are sure communication stoppers. Good listeners make innocuous comments that encourage the speaker to continue, such as, “What happened then?” Keep the lines of exchange open by empathizing with the other person’s feelings. When the speaker is finished, respond by summarizing what you think he or she said in your own words to confirm that you heard the message correctly.

5. “Relate to Anyone”

Expressing yourself well is as important as being a good listener. Being able to relate to others allows you to make connections and build a human network. Knowing what you want to say and how to say it really matters. To be an effective communicator, understand your listeners. Accommodate their personality types, learning styles, backgrounds and experiences. Convey a clear, concise, honest and direct message. When providing feedback, keep it constructive and balanced. Avoid judgmental or critical language and target specific behavior. Use a four-step process to resolve any communication conflicts that may arise: First, understand the needs of each member of the conflict. Second, make finding a “win-win” solution your goal. Third, discuss your alternatives and achieve a consensus. And fourth, follow through on your decision as a group. If necessary, put your agreement in writing.

6. “Cultivate Your Curiosity”

A curious mind is an active mind. Those who aren’t inquisitive rely on information they already have rather than gathering new data. As a result, their knowledge is often obsolete and incorrect. To succeed in the modern work world, you need to both seek information and synthesize it well. In fact, connecting and integrating ideas is an essential skill for a “lifelong learner.”

“People with highly successful careers constantly learn and develop their skills.”

Build your reputation as a savvy, up-to-date employee so your superiors will consider you for new projects and opportunities. Constantly update your knowledge using “the internet, libraries, association memberships, periodical publications, conferences and trade shows, courses” and other resources. When collecting data, consider the source and check its credibility. Look for possible biases and separate opinion from fact. Always try to apply what you learn to your everyday tasks.

7. “Disentangle Your Thoughts”

Focus, clarify and organize your thought processes, so you can deal with work issues efficiently and make sound decisions. Use this five-step strategy to solve problems:

1. **“Define the problem”** – Look beyond the symptoms to find the root cause.
2. **“Generate and research solutions”** – Can you find more than one way to reach a solution? Before making a decision, explore several options.
3. **“Choose a solution”** – Evaluate each option and choose the one that works best.
4. **“Implement the solution”** – Your well-researched solution will be worthless unless you act on it. Develop a time frame and action plan.
5. **“Evaluate the results”** – Did your plan solve the problem? Make the necessary changes.

“No matter how skilled and conscientious you are, you won’t achieve success until you promote yourself.”

Different problems require different approaches. Most people shift among five basic modes of thinking: “practical, creative, global, logical and humanistic.” Become aware of these different thinking styles, so you can adopt the best one to address the issue at hand.

8. “Exceed Expectations”

To advance in your career, you must not only meet expectations, but also surpass them. Begin by using good work practices, such as setting priorities, managing your time well and organizing your workload. Understand exactly what your managers expect from you so that you can reach every objective. However, establish standards for yourself that are higher than those set by your managers. Take on additional responsibilities at every opportunity and strive continually to improve, so people see you as “results oriented, productive, persistent, efficient and effective.”

9. “Thrive in Uncertainty”

The world is constantly in flux. If you fail to heed important changes, you can quickly fall behind. However, if you anticipate trends and remain open to change, you’ll be poised for success. To develop a forward-looking mind-set, view situations from several perspectives and consider various possible outcomes. Look for information from diverse sources, read relevant publications, and attend workshops and conferences. Focus on self-development by learning new skills and seeking fresh knowledge. To cope with uncertainty, ask: “What can I do to better understand this situation?” “How might this change improve my life?” and “How might this change enhance my personal growth?” Be ready to take risks or try something different in order to adapt.

10. “Promote Your Progress”

Don’t expect your hard work to speak for itself. In a tactful way, let your managers and colleagues know when you perform at a high level. This alerts them to your

strengths, skills and achievements and puts you first in their minds for opportunities and advancements. Also, talking to people about your accomplishments helps you build a network. Seek opportunities to share your successes, and inform co-workers who are in a position to help further your career goals. Business associations in many industries hold networking events that are an ideal forum for self-promotion.

About the Author

Psychologist **Donna Dunning** is the author of several career advancement titles, including *Introduction to Type and Communication*. She is also a trainer, coach and consultant.
