

CHAPTER 2

Understanding “Who Am I?": A Manager’s Journey through Personality Types

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the foundational question “Who am I?” as the starting point of a manager’s journey toward self-understanding and effective leadership. Drawing on three widely used frameworks the Big Five personality dimensions, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and the Type A, B, C, and D personality classification it examines how personality shapes a manager’s communication, decision-making, and working relationships. The article argues that self-knowledge is a professional necessity rather than an act of vanity: managers who understand their own traits are better able to regulate their reactions, appreciate individual differences within their teams, and adapt their style to the demands of different situations. Understanding personality types therefore serves as a practical route to self-awareness, personal growth, and more humane, effective management.

Keywords: Personality types; Big five; Myers-Briggs type indicator; Self-awareness; Managerial behaviour.

1.0 Introduction

Becoming a manager involves far more than making decisions and running a business; it requires an understanding of people and of how they actually function. To understand others deeply, however, one must first examine and understand oneself. Every manager reaches a stage of self-development at which he or she confronts the fundamental question that almost everyone asks at least once in a professional life. Examining established frameworks such as the Big Five personality traits, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Type A, B, C and D classification makes it far easier to see how a manager’s natural tendencies and temperament influence the team he or she leads.

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2.0 The Big Five Personality Model

Most managers begin with the “what” of business: spreadsheets, emails and meetings. In this execution phase the emphasis falls on getting things done at any cost. As they take on greater responsibility, however, they often discover that their most difficult problems are not technical at all; the real difficulty lies in inspiring the team, resolving disputes and communicating clearly. They begin to ask themselves questions such as “Why do I get so upset when plans change or when things do not work out as I intended?” or “Why do I find it hard to connect with people?” At this point in the journey, the question “Who am I?” ceases to be a philosophical indulgence and becomes a practical managerial concern.

Personality may be compared to a pair of spectacles: it is worn every day, it shapes what the wearer sees, and it allows others to see who the wearer is. It determines how managers perceive their team, how they respond to problems and how they celebrate success. Managers who are unaware of their own spectacles may see a blurred picture of the workplace. They may conclude that their employees are unresponsive when, in fact, the message has simply not been framed in terms that appeal to those employees. Self-knowledge of this kind helps managers understand their strengths, weaknesses and biases, and shows them what they might change in order to build a successful team.

The Big Five personality model rests on the view that personality is a combination of five broad characteristics present, to some degree, in every person. It is the most widely used framework for describing individual personality and identifies five main dimensions: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. A great deal can be learned from these dimensions about how people think, act and get along with one another at work. Rather like the settings on a mobile phone, each of the five factors may be understood as a dial that is set differently in every individual.

2.1 Openness to experience

Openness measures the extent to which a person is receptive to new ideas, change, creativity and learning. Consider, for example, a manager who scores highly on this dimension. Such a manager encourages employees to pursue new ideas by being creative himself or herself.

Such a manager also allows employees to think creatively, recognising that change is an inevitable part of any situation. Managers with low openness, by contrast, prefer routines, methods and processes that are structured and clearly specified, and they seldom enjoy a working environment that demands sudden shifts in direction. Both orientations have their advantages: high openness tends to produce an innovative manager, while low openness tends to produce a disciplined one.

Employees who work under a manager low in openness may, however, themselves become constrained and resistant to change. Conscientiousness is the managerial quality that comprises consistency, responsibility and discipline. Managers high in conscientiousness are time-conscious, goal-directed, attentive to detail and highly organised. They plan carefully, follow rules and procedures, keep to schedule and work steadily towards agreed goals. A manager low in conscientiousness, by contrast, is often easy-going, flexible and quick to adapt to changing circumstances, but may be less effective at executing plans, meeting deadlines and maintaining consistency.

This can be a disadvantage in some settings, yet an advantage where flexibility is essential. Extraversion points to the source of a manager’s energy. Highly extraverted managers are talkative and outgoing; they draw energy from interaction and enjoy relating to people through conversation. Introverted managers, by contrast, prefer a quiet working atmosphere and are content to work on their own; in group settings they may speak little but listen closely. Extraverted managers sometimes assume that their quieter employees are disengaged, while introverted managers may find it difficult to sustain constant interaction.

Used well, however, an extravert’s sociability can help a manager read the attitudes and behaviour of employees. Agreeableness reflects a manager’s courtesy, cooperativeness and empathy. Managers who score high on this dimension value harmony, collaboration and friendly relationships, and work to maintain a comfortable environment; they may, however, find it difficult to deliver criticism during performance appraisals. Managers who score low tend to be direct and task-centred. They have little difficulty in taking hard decisions, but others may at times find them harsh or blunt. Understanding this dimension helps managers strike a balance: firm without being rude, and kind without being ineffective. Neuroticism refers to the way a manager handles stress, pressure and emotion. Managers high in neuroticism worry a great deal about outcomes and may transmit that pressure to subordinates, with a negative effect on team morale.

Managers low in neuroticism, by contrast, are stable and composed. They handle stressful situations well and, in doing so, are able to motivate their teams even when conditions are difficult.

3.0 Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

In today’s changing, people-centred business world, managerial effectiveness depends on far more than the exercise of authority or technical skill. The ability to recognise one’s own preferences, decisions, strengths and characteristic ways of interacting forms the foundation of effective management. The most important step towards self-discovery, therefore, is to ask, “Who am I as a manager?” Among the many psychological frameworks concerned with personality, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is

perhaps the most widely used in answering that question. The MBTI is an assessment designed to identify the personality preferences that people hold. It was developed by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers, and is built on the theory of psychological types proposed by Carl Jung. According to the framework, individuals may be described in terms of sixteen personality types, which are derived from four pairs of opposing preferences.

3.1 The Four MBTI Dimensions

3.1.1. Extraversion (E) – Introversion (I)

A manager with an extraverted preference is energised by being around people. Such managers take pleasure in open communication and in a collaborative working style, and they share and express their views readily. Introverted managers, by contrast, draw their energy from their own thought processes and prefer to think before they act. This preference works in their favour, since it supports careful reasoning and one-to-one management, although they may appear reserved and less expressive. As managers develop, an awareness of this dimension helps them communicate effectively without over-taxing either themselves or the people they manage.

3.1.2 Sensing (S) – Intuition (N)

Managers who have a sensing preference rely on facts, details, and real-life situations. They like to have clear methods, guidelines, and procedures when doing a task. Managers who are intuitive types, on the other hand, tend to be more focused on possibilities, patterns, and the future outcome. They are drawn to innovation, strategy and new ideas. An awareness of this dimension helps managers develop both capacities: precision and practicality for day-to-day activities, and vision and creativity for longer-term planning.

3.1.3 Thinking (T) – Feeling (F)

Managers with a thinking preference are logical, objective and fair; their chief concerns when deciding are efficiency, rules and results. Managers with a feeling preference place greater emphasis on people and on the consequences their decisions carry for others, giving priority to harmony, relationships and employee satisfaction. Sound managerial practice requires a combination of both logic and empathy, particularly when the issue at hand involves people or conflict.

3.1.4 Judging (J) – Perceiving (P)

Managers with a judging preference favour structure, planning and schedules; they want work to be organised and settled in advance. Managers with a perceiving preference

are more flexible and prefer to keep their options open as tasks and situations develop. As responsibilities grow, managers learn to strike a balance between structure and flexibility in order to handle the varied demands of the business.

4.0 Type A, B, C, and D Personality Theory

Personality plays a crucial role in a manager’s professional development. While skills, education and experience describe what a manager can do, personality largely determines how he or she does it. Personality affects the manner in which managers cope with stress, handle people, make decisions, and face problems. One of the most useful frameworks for understanding managerial conduct is the Type A, B, C and D personality theory, which explains different patterns of behaviour in the workplace.

4.1 Type A Personality

Type A managers are highly goal-oriented, competitive and driven. Because of this focus, they often perform exceptionally well in the early stages of their careers, concentrating on objectives and completing tasks within demanding deadlines, and they thrive in competitive environments. In later stages of their careers, however, they may struggle with excessive stress, impatience, poor coping strategies and a reluctance to delegate.

4.2 Type B Personality

Type B managers approach work in a composed, calm and patient manner. They do not operate under continuous strain and remain emotionally stable even in difficult circumstances. They value good relationships and a congenial atmosphere at work, and subordinates generally find their friendliness appealing. They are sometimes thought to lack urgency, which can leave them at a disadvantage in highly demanding workplaces. Their development lies in becoming more assertive without losing their natural composure.

4.3 Type C Personality

Type C managers are analytical, detail-oriented, disciplined and logical, and they take satisfaction in precision. They approach their own development, like their work, in a systematic and methodical way. They may find it difficult to express emotion and to cope with uncertainty, and their growth therefore depends on developing greater self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

4.4 Type D Personality

Type D managers experience emotional distress and tend to suppress their feelings. Anxiety, self-doubt and a lack of confidence may affect their relationships within the

organisation, and building confidence is their principal challenge. Type D characteristics are not fixed, however; with self-awareness and deliberate development they can become a strength, since such managers are by nature caring and considerate.

5.0 Conclusion

Coming to know one's own personality is a continuous process rather than a task that can be completed once and for all. Frameworks such as the Big Five, the MBTI and the Type A, B, C and D classification are not intended to classify and label managers, but to help them understand themselves better. A manager who is aware of his or her own personality is better able to understand others, interact with them effectively, handle tension appropriately, take balanced decisions and foster a healthy working environment. By striking a judicious balance between competitiveness and empathy, structure and flexibility, logic and emotion, managers move from technical competence towards authentic leadership. The result is a more compassionate and, ultimately, a more effective approach to management. Awareness of who we are is the first step towards becoming not only a better manager but also a better person.

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