

## Introvert versus Introvert



In an article entitled “Introvert versus Extrovert Careers” (<https://www.workitdaily.com/introvert-extrovert-careers/>), I explored the importance of understanding one’s personality, style, or “type” beyond the simple misrepresentations of a single word or a set of letters. I included in that article an example where a more detailed interpretation of a colleague’s score led to a deeper understanding of the individual’s preferences. I argued that this more detailed interpretation is critical when assessments are used as part of career counseling and career decision-making. It would be easy to make the same argument for any set of relationships, for example, team-building.

Within just a few months, I was presented with another example – and additional learnings about the need for professional interpretation of results. It happened when I received the results of an assessment – and instantly realized this client shared the same four-letter “type” with me.

### “INTP” Does Not Equal “INTP”

Kevin and I are professional colleagues, separated by decades. However, according to our “personality types,” we share a similar view of the world. We are both “INTP’s.” Individually we agree with this assessment of our personalities. We agree with an introductory description that says: *“INTPs are known for appearing detached, skeptical, flexible, and observant. They prize competence, logic, and innovative solutions, and they use these qualities to develop logical systems to solve complex and/or unusual problems. INTPs have a great appreciation for gaining knowledge and analyzing possibilities. They may spend a great deal of time identifying problems and possible fixes. This is most easily accomplished in areas where problems are new, challenging, and interesting to them, rather than mundane.”*

For many individuals who receive nothing more than this superficial interpretation of their personality, there are three concerns. First, an individual receiving just their four-letter MBTI “type” is receiving only partial information. While the broad statement may be accurate – and received as accurate by the recipient – it’s a very superficial “headline” for an individual’s personality. Second, and this is particularly important when comparing results, e.g., as members of a team, this simplistic determination

can lead people to conclude that “we’re the same, we have the same “type.” Finally, when the assessment is based on a “quick” online assessment without the professionalism of the MBTI itself, without the professional interpretation of a qualified assessment professional, it can easily lead to the misinterpretation and frequent criticisms of this type of assessment.

Back to the MBTI scores for Kevin and me, here’s a “word cloud” based on the “Clarity of Preference” scores. A “word cloud” is generated by plotting the frequencies for each part of the “type” factors.

Kevin	Jim
<p data-bbox="298 594 513 646">Intuition</p> <p data-bbox="370 646 456 674">Thinking</p> <p data-bbox="305 684 773 762">Introversion</p> <p data-bbox="233 772 565 848">Perceiving</p>	<p data-bbox="867 600 1276 688">Perceiving</p> <p data-bbox="1154 684 1256 711">Thinking</p> <p data-bbox="1000 726 1382 814">Intuition</p> <p data-bbox="1062 825 1214 852">Introversion</p>

As the “word cloud” indicates, the only trait that is fully shared in these two profiles is the “Thinking” factor. Kevin and I are significantly – dramatically different on Introversion, Intuition, and Perceiving. While we both prefer to “attend to and trust interrelationships, theories, and possibilities” (Intuition) over “noticing and trusting facts, details, and present realities” (Sensing), my preference and reliance on this mode of thinking is much, much stronger than Kevin’s. Similarly, Kevin’s “Introversion” preference is “very clear,” while mine is “slight.”

What’s also important is understanding that these preferences do not mean individuals are incapable of using the alternative view or performing successfully in situations that might be considered outside their preferred area. Kevin is very likely seen by many people who meet him regularly in one of his current jobs as a very friendly, “extroverted” salesman. Understanding one’s preferences is actually beneficial in helping someone function more effectively overall by encouraging them to “flex” their style.

It only takes seconds to find a plethora of information about “types” on the internet. Some of it is interesting, even fun insights for understanding the “general” nature of a particular type. But much of it overgeneralizes important facets of an individual’s personality, suggesting that all INTP’s for example, behave exactly the same way in relationships or in their approach to problems. The information takes the interpretation of “type” to a 20,000-foot level instead of going deeper to provide useful insights.

### Advanced, Professional Analysis

Approved MBTI professionals have an ethical obligation to carefully understand a client and the insights a report provides. In addition, the professional has access to an advanced “Step II” version of the assessment, requiring additional questions and providing significantly more detailed interpretation and

analysis. A recent experience with a client demonstrates the value of careful interpretation and the advanced analysis.

A few years ago, a client completed the basic MBTI. The assessment identified his “type” as an “ENFP.” It was initially accepted as indicative of his true type although there was a lot of discussion. I knew this client fairly well, having spent time both personally and professionally with him. He had a very outgoing “public” or “on-stage” personality, but a very quiet, private “off-stage” presence. A careful look at his original results revealed the importance of understanding the “Clarity of Preference” scores of the MBTI. His “Extroversion” score was “1,” making him a “borderline extrovert.” This fine line became a regular point of discussion of time that eventually extended to a couple of years.

At that point, the client asked about “taking the assessment again.” We discussed how “type” frequently doesn’t change – but that different factors can be important. I recommended that the client take the Step II – Advanced MBTI.

When the results came back, there was a shift in the clients “type;” he was now an “INFP.” There were very slight changes in his “NFP” scores on the “Clarity of Preferences.” But his “1” on “Extroversion” had shifted to a “10” on “Introversion.” While still only a “moderate” preference, it represented a significant shift. And this was the very reason I wanted him to complete the Step II version. This client’s advanced information yielded multiple insights where “out of preference” details clarified his scores. The most important one came from one “facet” of his “Introversion” preferences. He had a high score on “Expressive - Demonstrative, easier to know, self-revealing.” This important factor provided excellent feedback on the value of the updated “INFP” profile.

## **Conclusion**

Awareness of personality or “type” can be a fun, engaging exercise as part of a training program. At the same time, it is a serious insight that has the potential to significantly aid people in understanding themselves and their interactions with others.

## **About the Author**

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