

Discover how MBTI insights helped HEC approach diversity

In a business school where diversity and multiculturalism thrive, understanding differences in personality is very much encouraged – to help students get to know each other better, and to prepare them for future careers

The HEC Paris MBA program is home to a wide range of students from different origins, cultures and professional backgrounds. Diversity and multiculturalism are, therefore, an integral part of its DNA.

Only 15% of the MBA students are French. The other 85% come from more than 40 different countries. Diversity is at the heart of the HEC campus, among the students inside the faculty and among the staff. Such diversity demands a particular approach if people are to work effectively together, reflecting the multicultural context.

The HEC MBA Career Management Center (CMC) coaches provide the students with a tool that allows them to get to know each other better and to better appreciate each other's viewpoint. Focusing on differences first, students can then look for a complementary approach. The aim is also to help everyone define their leadership and management strengths and weaknesses in their future professional environment.

Solution

The MBTI® instrument was chosen to help students to acquire a better understanding of themselves.

Business Challenges

- Identification and development of future managers
- Embracing diversity
- Team development
- Working in a multicultural environment
- Career advice

Company Profile

Founded in 1881 by the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, HEC Paris specializes in training talented minds with strong potential and making them capable of tackling tomorrow's greatest social, political and economic issues in a multicultural environment. HEC Paris is one of the highest-ranking business schools in Europe and its MBA program welcomes 200 young professionals every year.

“Because the MBTI is about innate preferences, it appeared to us that this questionnaire was going beyond cultural differences and was instead focusing on the very essence of the individual,” Emily Nousbaum, a CMC Career Coach, explains. “Plus, we also needed a flexible tool that could be adapted to the multicultural context. Since it is available in several languages, the MBTI seemed like an obvious choice for both the online questionnaire handover and the personal report. It is also an opportunity for the students who do not know about the MBTI to familiarize themselves with an instrument widely used in the corporate world.”

The MBTI assessment is offered by the MBA CMC, a structure with a strong multicultural component. The CMC guides each student in mapping out their future professional life. To do so, the program sets out some relevant actions. Among these, a strong focus is put on the notion of self-understanding, especially via the MBTI questionnaire and other professional evaluation tests.

The MBTI questionnaire is administered online shortly after the students’ arrival on campus. Two professional coaches with MBTI certification then lead collective workshops to give the students an overview of the instrument, in French and in English, before handing them the reports.

According to the coaches, “It is interesting to see that beforehand, only a few of the students were familiar with the MBTI or any other self-appraisal instrument. So, this is an opportunity for them to get to know themselves better and to relevantly input what they have learnt into their lives.”

The MBTI profile discovery workshops are also an occasion for people who did not know each other previously to interact. They form the prelude for cohesive integration. These workshops are an introduction to individual sessions of career coaching available to everyone. Any questions raised during these sessions will then lead to an analysis of the relevant aspect of the MBTI profile.

Solution

- Integrate MBTI tool into leadership development programs

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Emily Nousbaum,
Career Coach, HEC MBA Career Management Center, HEC Paris

For example, the students are encouraged to question different points: how to identify their strengths and weaknesses, how to communicate better inside their working group on campus, and how to distinguish the communication preferences of others.

Results

The benefit experienced by the students can be measured via assessments of the discovery workshops, with scores usually varying between 4.5 and 4.8 out of 5. Comments made by students highlight the perceived advantages:

“I have a better understanding of each person’s natural dispositions and I also understand better how to work with different personalities.”

“Very useful. I recognize myself in these results and it allowed me to understand where my strengths lie. You helped me to conceptualize the four types of the indicators without falling into the common stereotypes trap.”

With the MBTI assessment, the Career Management Centre offers an efficient and concrete instrument of self-understanding. Furthermore, the MBTI is part of the services approach, specific to HEC Paris.

The CMC concludes that: “Changes, if they occur, happen on an individual and interactional level, with everyone having access to their internal way of working as well as to their communication mode that can be applied to their whole environment, both professional and personal. Our students’ feedback reassures us in our choice to use this instrument.”

Results

- Easier group cohesion
- Heightened self-understanding
- Chance to exchange views and reflect on strengths and weaknesses



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