



Introduction

Welcome to practitioners around the world who find the Myers-Briggs® instruments and psychological type useful in their work. We've been using these tools for 30 years and continue to find additional value—both for our clients and for ourselves. Type brings understanding when we have misunderstood others and when we have been misunderstood. It depersonalizes conflicts to allow for discussion and negotiation of differences. And type provides a framework for our own development as well as for helping others be more effective.

We all run into unexpected situations when using the MBTI® assessment and personality type, and type can present some special challenges for practitioners working in organizations. Do these sound familiar?

- You delivered an introductory type workshop where the activities “didn't work.”
- You are struggling to find new ways to illustrate type.
- Your clients are using type to limit themselves and others, or to stereotype.
- Participants see type as measuring skills, rejecting the idea of innate tendencies.
- Clients seem unable to apply type knowledge in areas where you can clearly see the potential value.
- Groups are not willing to give enough time to training so that you can do it “right.”

We've been there and survived—as well as developed some strategies. We want to share our strategies and activities with others who share our interests and commitment to using the MBTI instrument to help clients and colleagues develop self-understanding, use differences more constructively, and be more effective in their work and personal lives.

Katharine Myers has referred to type applications activities—customized to apply directly to client needs—as the “missing link.” These activities bring type to life and make it useful. Presented effectively, type supports Isabel Myers' goal for the MBTI instrument of leading to the “constructive use of differences.”

Using This Field Guide

This guide is intended to stimulate and support experienced type practitioners as well as to assist those just beginning their use of the MBTI instruments. In it we focus on

- Strategies for developing presentations and activities to continue to provide value within current challenging training realities—less time, fewer resources, and more demand for results
- Ways to present and apply type in the most frequently requested organizational applications
- Tips for successfully negotiating some of the common stumbling blocks in type training

The guide starts with strategies and activities for introducing and interpreting type and applying the information from the four dichotomies (E–I, S–N, T–F, J–P). It then moves to deeper levels of use: preference combinations (e.g., function pairs) and whole type (ISTJ, etc.), including activities for explaining and applying type dynamics and development. The guide closes with strategies for using type to facilitate group and one-on-one sessions and suggestions for dealing with some tricky type challenges.

This resource crystallizes our decades of experience using type with organizational clients. Every activity presented here is tried and true. If you follow the guidelines and processes, the activities work to illustrate the theory and application of type and to help clients use the information to improve their effectiveness.

Overview of the Contents

The field guide is divided into six parts, each with a different focus. A brief summary of each part is provided below. We suggest that you initially read through the guide sequentially, as parts 2, 3, and 4 build on and refer to information, resources, and activities in preceding parts.

Part 1: Following the Process and Trusting Type

Following the recommended steps for explaining type is essential to useful and meaningful applications. Part 1 outlines and illustrates the required steps, recommends activities, and offers tips for dealing with challenging situations. When you have followed the process outlined in this section, including helping participants

decide on a best-fit type, you can trust that type-alike activities will produce useful results for your group—in other words, you can “trust the process.”

Note: Experienced type practitioners may be tempted to skip this part to get to new ideas. Part 1 provides an opportunity to step back and reflect on the processes you’ve been using—and to see how some standard practices have changed or developed.

Part 2: Making the Most of Type Interpretation Sessions

Part 2 describes strategies and activities for effectively interpreting the MBTI instrument for clients within a 2½- to 4-hour time frame. It includes activities for applying the preferences to some of the most common organizational needs, such as improving communication, enhancing decision making, and dealing with organizational change.

Part 3: Moving to the Next Level of Type

Part 3 begins with an activity to explain the type table and lead a group in analyzing their type distribution. It then focuses on activities using two-letter type combinations—for example, the function pairs—which are especially effective in assisting groups in persuading others, dealing with conflict, and developing leadership skills.

Part 4: Applying Type Dynamics for Deeper Understanding

The biggest payoff from using type comes from pulling the pieces together to use whole type. This approach is challenging, and too often it is not used because it can seem too complicated. Part 4 gives some straightforward, nontheoretical ways to use these deeper levels to expand and deepen your ability to apply type. This is also the required base for focusing on type and stress interactions and for exploring type development.

Part 5: Using Type to Facilitate Group Interactions

There are many situations in which type information and perspectives can be helpful but a formal presentation or exercise is not appropriate. Part 5 includes strategies and approaches for using type perspectives to tackle problems in the moment—when a team gets “stuck” while trying to make a decision, when an unexpected personal conflict develops, or when decisions are having unintended consequences.

Part 6: Dealing with Tricky Issues

Correcting misinterpretations of results, explaining the meaning of scores, dealing with type biases and stereotyping—these are all challenges that, if not addressed adequately, can derail effective use of type. Part 6 presents practical ways of dealing with these common issues.

Resources

This section lists the books, booklets, and other resources referred to in this field guide.

