



Working from Home – How your Personality is affecting your Performance

ema Executive Director, Pauline Drissell's last article about how the MBTI type preferences Extroversion and Introversion applied in lockdown generated considerable interest. In this article Pauline delves further into aspects of personality which impact our ability to be productive as individuals and teams, not only in lockdown but beyond.

Part 2 – How your Personality is affecting your Performance Working from Home

This article is based on the Judging and Perceiving MBTI preferences, that is, the last letter of your MBTI type.

By way of quick recap, some people adapt to new situations, like working from home, more quickly than others, simply because of differences in personality. The Myers Briggs Indicator (MBTI), a personality questionnaire I've worked with for over 20 years provides us with some helpful insights. The MBTI sifts and sorts people into 16 personality types based on 4 sets of preferences: how they derive their energy, how they take in information, how they come to decisions and finally how they like to implement things or interact with the outer world. The result is a set of 4 letters which best describe you as an individual and the characteristics you share with other people of the same type.

In this article I'm concentrating on the last pair of MBTI preferences, namely Judging (J) and Perceiving (P). I'm going to consider this pairing because the J-P preferences shed light on how colleagues will typically deliver.

I'll describe some of the characteristics of Judgers and Perceivers and provide some pointers about managing yourself and working with team members. There are also some tips for managers who undoubtedly will have both types in their teams. At ema consultancy we have both types in our team.

You could be forgiven for thinking that Judging is about being judgemental and Perceiving is about being perceptive. Try and disregard the names of the preferences as they don't mean what the words look like. Without going into technical stuff, these terms relate to how each preference approaches the outside world or put another way how they prefer to implement things. When taken with extroversion and introversion they establish the personality dynamics of each person's personality type.

You can make an educated guess about your own or other people's preferences, even if you're not familiar with the MBTI, just by observing how you or they "operate". Put simply, those with a **Judging preference will be rigorous in their pursuit of goals and completing tasks** whilst those with a **Perceiving preference don't want to be structured or constrained by routine.**

Judging (J)

If you have a judging preference you would appear to need some time to adapt to home working more quickly than your perceiving colleagues. This is because you tend to be a creature of routine; you like planning and things to be settled, a bit like the Old Normal. This sudden change may have caused you some at least initial stress as you seek to establish order and a new routine in unfamiliar circumstances. Overlay the changes in operating methods that businesses are having to adopt and it's all becoming quite stressful for the Judging type. You like to take on a task and complete it and tend to work in a very structured way, so you have the satisfaction of ticking an item off your To Do list before getting on with something else. You probably make an early start on a project and work systematically to bring it to a conclusion in a timely fashion. You create your best work steady state and love a process. So, when wholesale change comes along everything is turned on its head creating chaos, and this is a major stressor for you. This is all a most unwelcome distraction from pursuing your goals and your natural tendency is to try and restore order as soon as possible.

Many judging types have a blind spot. In their determination to pursue their goals and finish tasks, they can become blinkered and decide too quickly, failing to factor in important new information or changing circumstances. If you were a footballer you'd be going all out for goal regardless of what was happening around you!

Consider these pointers to be more effective:

- Create a dedicated workspace as quickly as possible where you can concentrate. Try and create an environment where you can separate work from homelife so you can relax after work.
- Try to resist the temptation to close down the situation and decide too soon. Keep options open a little longer to take account of new information which might have a bearing on the situation.
- Recognise that changing circumstances mean things take longer to accomplish, monitor your frustration with others if things aren't happening as quickly as you might like them to.
- Curb your desire for action; sit on your hands. Practice being a bit more flexible about the means of delivery.
- Ask a P for their take on the situation before deciding. You may be surprised at their response. Remember the best decisions take account of all preferences.
- If you're managing a judging type you can rely on them to get things done. However, you might need to intervene to save them from themselves and avoid fatigue and even burn-out.
- If you're an extrovert and a judging type who is managing others, you're likely to be well organised and task-oriented but bear in mind you can come across as quite forceful and even bossy or controlling. Reflect if this is how you really want to come over.

Perceiving (P)

If you have a perceiving preference you may be feeling fairly relaxed, and dare I say, even energised by the New Normal. Whereas judging types have a To Do list with deadlines, perceiving types tend to have a To Do list to complete "someday". At best perceiving types tend to be agile (a desirable quality in a rapidly evolving situation) and tend to be good in a crisis. You can think clearly and adapt well, changing direction quickly as the circumstances demand, so prove to be good trouble-shooters.

You'll tend to write the script as you go along and find processes confining. "Wait and see" might be your mantra. This is because you like to see where the journey takes you before deciding. After all, something more interesting or new facts might come along which suggest a different course of action. Why make a decision before it's needed? Your main stressors are dull, uninspired routine which may leave you dispirited and lacking motivation. Capture your interest and you will go all out to deliver. Your blind-spot might be a tendency to procrastinate if something doesn't capture your imagination or accord with your values. If you were a footballer, unlike your judging team mates you'd be keeping the ball in play longer, until the best time to strike arose or until the final whistle was blown!

Consider these pointers to be more effective:

- Accept, that what for you, may be mundane activities and issues are the nuts and bolts which keep operations running so take them seriously.
- Avoid procrastination - establish the key things you need to achieve and focus on completing them promptly. Put some loose structures in place to help you.
- Be vocal in alerting your colleagues to information they may not have considered or in advising them to defer a decision.
- Understand that some types may mis-read your style and see you as inappropriately light-hearted, laid-back and even at times bored or disengaged.
- Monitor your frustration with judging types, try and see their perspective too.
- If you're a manager, harness your perceiving type's energy to provide the stimulus for the early stages of a project.
- Resist micro-managing them: give them room to manoeuvre. In this way you will get the best out of them, particularly in the early stages of a project when their energy levels are high.
- Equally give them a gentle prod to jog them for the information you want.

J-P Under Stress:

Bear in mind that stress can make people, whatever their personality type, act out of character. Under stress both types can become caricatures of themselves; judging types by becoming doggedly determined and then when under great pressure not able to achieve anything of value. Perceiving types under pressure may become very unfocussed ultimately becoming rigid and inflexible under great stress.

In this climate of uncertainty and generalised anxiety, managers and leaders need to strike the right balance between the well-being of the individuals in their team and the task. For managers, help your team to recognise the potential for conflict in opposite types and emphasise their value and complementarity. Remember that whatever your MBTI type, it is not an excuse for not doing something. Work is important and adopting some of the tips here will help you remain motivated and productive and maintain good relationships within your team.

Did you enjoy this article but missed the last feature on extroversion and introversion?

Here's the link: <https://emaconsultancy.org.uk/our-news/working-from-home-how-your-personality-is-affecting-your-performance/>

If you're new to the MBTI and these articles have captured your interest contact Pauline Drissell at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/pauline-drissell/>