



Vitality

An EFAP Article for Human Resource and Occupational Health Professionals, Program Administrators, Supervisors, and Key Personnel



Diversity in the Workplace: The Importance of Personality Diversity

In the 1920s, Carl Jung developed a concept that focused on how people gain energy related to their environments. Introverts found power in being alone. Extroverts drew their power from their surroundings and relationships. Yet there was also a third group, which could quickly adapt based on the situations they found themselves in: ambiverts were balanced, having both introverted and extroverted traits, which meant that they had the potential to draw power from both internal and external sources.

In this article, we'll explore personality diversity in greater detail and look at how organizations can leverage it as an asset to help them realize their potential. These distinctions help us understand how people interact with and navigate the world around them.

What is Personality Diversity, and why is it Essential in the Workplace?

Having a diverse workplace is more than being socially responsible or checking the box of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)

program. It's much broader than focusing on gender, ethnicity, and cultural diversity. Personality is one focused aspect of diversity that recognizes that we tend to feel more comfortable engaging as introverts, extroverts, or ambiverts. When organizations raise awareness of personality diversity, they can gain insight into their current workforce composition, communicate better, and adjust recruitment strategies because a mix of personalities is essential for:

- Problem-solving
- Decision making
- Innovation
- Growth
- Productivity
- Engagement and motivation
- Agility and responsiveness
- Efficiency and effectiveness

A lot of homogeneity “increase[s] the likelihood of groupthink,” which can have the undesirable effect of stagnating an organization.¹ Having knowledge of and practices in place to recognize and appreciate personal diversity goes a long way to building a stronger and more competitive organization and brand.

How to Understand Different Personality Types?

There are many behaviour assessment tools that can help you collect and understand the personality types of employees within your organization. Some of the most popular ones in practice are DiSC, Facet5, and MBTI.

DiSC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Conscientiousness)

DiSC personality typing looks at how people behave and communicate in the context of four primary traits: dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness. The assessments will provide insights into how people interact, make decisions, and approach tasks. This information can help organizations improve communication and collaboration and manage conflict resolution better by allowing people to tailor their interactions to suit different personalities.

Facet5

The Facet5 personality assessments examine five broad factors: will, energy, affection, control, and emotionality. It shows people's behavioural preferences and strengths in various workplace situations. Organizations can use the information to manage talent, build teams, and develop leadership and personnel.

MBTI

MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) is a tool that categorizes people into one of 16 different personality types/combinations based on where they fall with a range of four scales:

1. Introversion/Extroversion
2. Intuition/Sensing
3. Feeling/Thinking
4. Judging/Perceiving

It helps people understand what they most want to do in different workplace situations, especially when it involves team dynamics. People can use insights from these assessments to foster growth and development within organizations.

An Introvert Renaissance

Society often favours sociable and outgoing extraverted traits and overlooks introverts but introverts are also powerful. They can deeply reflect and focus on situations, allowing them to offer unique insights into problems. While they may be quieter and less conspicuous than extroverts, their connections are innovative and meaningful.

Re-Evaluate Recruiting

Recruitment can evaluate how job postings are created and published. Making them more distinct and eliminating buzzwords and corporate speak, can go a long way to demonstrating that your organization values personality diversity. Subtle changes that attract “what personality types are missing from your organization” can help you stand apart from competitors in attracting talent.²

It is also important to coach hiring managers to develop greater awareness of and avoid their biases. Preferred candidates may be too much like other team members, which can run the risk of being too stabilizing and creating stagnation. The person who stands out would introduce much-needed personality diversity to the workplace.

When you're ready to bring new hires on board, demonstrate flexibility to show that you value personality diversity. It can make all the difference in someone's experience and comfort at settling in and their motivation and engagement in a productive way.

What are the Strengths, Traits/Characteristics, and Collaboration Styles of Different Personality Types?

While individual personality traits can vary quite a bit, it can be helpful to compare some aspects, such as social interaction preferences, energy levels and communication styles, to begin understanding the strengths, features and collaboration styles of these different personality types.

Introverts

- Prefer quiet, low-stimulation environments and individual interactions over group discussions.
- Extended periods of social interaction can be draining and mentally exhausting. Having alone time allows them to recharge.
- Excel in one-on-one conversations over group discussions so they can think about their messages before expressing themselves. They may prefer written communication.

Extroverts

- Thrive in highly stimulating social settings where they can interact with many people and participate in group activities.
- When alone for too long, they can become restless or bored, instinctively craving social interaction to invigorate and re-energize themselves.
- Inclined to engage in spontaneous group discussions and conversations that allow them to share their thoughts and ideas openly. Their preference may be for verbal communication.

Ambiverts

- Adapt to various situations, finding comfort in solitary and social settings and will strive to find a balance.
- Energy levels can fluctuate depending on the circumstances and context of the situation. They can enjoy and value both socializing and solitude.
- Comfortable in deep, reflective discussions and extroverted and animated conversations.

Conflict Resolution Among Different Personalities

Different preferences between personality types can sometimes result in conflict and misunderstandings. Certain strategies can resolve disputes and foster better understanding:

- Recognize that the potential for conflict and escalation exists. Help reframe perspectives and reinforce practices where people are encouraged to reflect on other people's needs first. It can help everyone to be more proactive, thinking about what they can do for someone, instead of reactive, where the focus is on what someone can do for them.
- Promote and practice de-escalation strategies to keep people connected and collaborating. Being able to name threats helps calm emotions so people remain in cognitive control. Focusing on the situation rather than the person helps address the root cause of an issue and preserve productivity.
- Communication practices are critical to ensure organizational effectiveness. Using common language helps promote safe, respectful discussion and conversation and keeps people connected and aligned with organizational goals.

What Can Leaders do to Manage and Support Diverse Personalities?

Leaders can recognize the importance of being adaptable, intuitive, and aware. They need to develop a strong understanding of personality traits and where they fall on that spectrum to recognize that they need a more than one-size-fits-all approach to help them succeed. Being open to accommodating different work preferences means that there is potential for enhanced team performance and innovation.

Treating people how they want to be treated is one of the best mindsets leaders can develop to support personality diversity within their work groups.³ As a leader it demands a shift in perspective from being focused on individualism and a move towards collectivism so that everyone can benefit from each other's strengths and differences rather than attempting to create homogeneity. It results in an adaptive leadership style that considers personality traits and characteristics and views them as any organization's untapped potential while recognizing all work environments.

It means that leaders need to be conscious of many things concurrently:

- **Flexible work environments** that adapt well to suit introverts and extroverts.
- **Effective communication** that recognizes and encourages diverse communication styles.
- **Individualized feedback** that offers coaching aligned to each person's personality type.
- **Meeting management** structures that are supportive of introverts need to be contemplative and prepared while at the same time enabling extroverts to create spontaneous and dynamic discussions.
- **Recognition and rewards** that demonstrate value and acknowledge contributions from all personality types, including knowledge of effective means of private and public recognition, deployed at the correct times.
- **Empowerment and autonomy** that matches people's personality types with work assignments and activities that help them grow and feel fulfilled.
- **Training and development** support that enhances communication and interpersonal skills for all personality types.
- **Regular check-ins** that ensure team members feel heard and validate that leaders understand individual employee's needs, challenges, and preferences to provide personalized support and develop a sense of belonging. Asking questions can help reinforce these so leaders get to know their employees better:

- In your ideal workday, how many meetings would you attend?
- How do you like to get your work done?
- What do you do when you need to recharge?
- How do you prefer to share feedback?


Overall, leaders need to acknowledge their personality preferences and when there may be misalignment with others that could result in challenges or conflict. For example, introverted leaders could struggle to engage extroverts in group discussions, while extroverted leaders might unintentionally overwhelm introverts. It can also extend to productivity and perceptions of employees' engagement as one personality type's contributions might be undervalued by the other and vice-versa. It could result in stagnated talent. Personality type mismatches can create stress and fatigue where people feel drained by interactions or even feel restricted with reduced autonomy.

Embracing and encouraging personality diversity is essential. Organizations can benefit from personality diversity because it can bring different perspectives, skills, and approaches to problem-solving. When collaborating, there is a broader range of creative ideas and solutions. Personality diversity fosters innovation, improves decision making and enhances adaptability, promoting a more inclusive work environment that leverages unique talents to create strength. Ultimately, workplaces that embrace and work with personality diversity are more well-rounded and resilient because they are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the business world.

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