

LETTERS

The Use of Personality Tests in the Workplace

Readers discuss one woman's bad experience with the Myers-Briggs test.

Sept. 1, 2019

To the Editor:

Re "Questioning Personality Assessments," by Quinisha Jackson-Wright (Smarter Living, Aug. 26):

I was very sorry to read Ms. Jackson-Wright's account of her experience with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. There are many ethical considerations for using the M.B.T.I., and the article highlights several ways in which her company did not use it appropriately.

Her company made completing the assessment mandatory. When used ethically, the M.B.T.I. is never mandatory. Employees must always be given the opportunity to decline participating. Similarly, while companies may encourage employees to share their types with their colleagues, they must not force them to do so.

At least her managers apparently told her there are no "wrong" personality types — they were correct about that. But it is obvious that they made her feel that her introversion was a negative aspect of her personality.

There are two fundamental misconceptions about the M.B.T.I.: that a type is predictive of behavior and that it can identify types or traits that will lead to success in any given profession.

Despite its many critics, there is a rich body of research that substantiates M.B.T.I.'s accuracy and validity when used appropriately; if it is not, it can do harm. When used appropriately, it can unlock the doors to a better understanding of oneself and others — in the workplace and everywhere people come together.

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The writer is president-elect of the Association for Psychological Type International, which promotes the ethical use of personality type.

To the Editor:

Quinisha Jackson-Wright describes how her I.N.T.J. (Introversion, Intuition, Thinking, Judgment) Myers-Briggs assessment put her in a "box" that may have hurt her career. I am an I.N.T.J. as well, and my experience was quite different.

The exercise helped me better understand my own characteristics and those of others on my team. I recognized that my boss needed much more data than I tended to provide with my intuitive approach. I recognized that my best role on a team was to synthesize and summarize the thoughts of the team. Good teams need all types of people, and I.N.T.J.s can be some of the most valuable.

It is wrong to blame the Myers-Briggs assessment for not being able to find an appropriate role on a given team. If the team doesn't see the value in what you bring, don't blame the team. Either find your role or move on.

Jim Stake
Edina, Minn.

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