

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE IN TAX ADMINISTRATION BY MANAGING HUMAN BEHAVIOR / BY SHERETTA H. JONES, DIRECTOR, TAX ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY SERVICES, INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am very pleased to be with you today to share ideas and perspectives on the important topic of “Improving Performance in Tax Administration by Managing Human Behavior.”

I believe we would all agree that each tax administration is only as good as the people who support it, and the confidence taxpayers have in it. The manner in which employees relate to customers and colleagues at a professional and personal level is greatly influenced by the behaviors they demonstrate in the workplace. The quality of their interactions directly affects their attitudes toward each other and the organization as a whole.

In a Harvard Business Review article by Daniel Goleman entitled “Leadership that Gets Results,” he noted the following:

Organizations around the globe continue to search for those attributes critical to ensuring business success in today’s working world. Studies show that leaders ultimately create the climate for success...Findings also indicate that a manager’s style or approach can account for approximately 70% of the variance in organizational climate, and in turn, organizational climate accounts for 28% of the variance in productivity and financial results.

As can be seen, it is management’s responsibility to establish and maintain a positive, productive organizational climate, and each manager’s behavior is a key influencing factor.

Each of us has our own unique patterns of thinking and behaving. These individual preferences are inborn and are then developed by our life experiences. By understanding “personality styles,” i.e., why individuals demonstrate certain types of behaviors, managers are in a stronger position to reinforce positive behaviors and change negative behaviors.

There have been numerous models and techniques developed to assist organizational leaders and managers in better understanding personality styles—their own and those of others. However, for purposes of our discussion today, I will be focusing on an approach developed by R. Craig Hogan, PhD, and David W. Champagne, PhD, entitled “Personal Style Inventory (PSI).

PERSONAL STYLE INVENTORY—WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Often, self-knowledge can free us to try new ways of being and doing—it allows us to better accept ourselves and others more fully. Our communication with others can become more honest and effective as we gain a better understanding of ourselves and others.

The Personal Style Inventory (PSI) was developed to provide individuals with useful insights into their preferences for using their minds. It is a measurement tool to assist individuals in assessing their patterns of thinking and behaving, then evaluating how these patterns may be influencing others—positively or negatively.

The PSI measures your relative preferences in four pairs of traits** that relate to *perceiving* (the types of information to which you pay attention), and *judging* (how you make decisions). Differences in the way people prefer to perceive and make judgments about their perceptions lead to differences in behavior or personal style.

Perceiving refers to the way in which people become aware of things, people, occurrences, and ideas. There are two ways of perceiving: **Sensing** and **Intuition**.

Judging refers to the way in which people come to conclusions about what they have perceived. There are two ways of judging: **Thinking** and **Feeling**.

Additionally, people have preferences about where they choose to exercise their perception and judgment. Some people are outer-world oriented. They are referred to as **Extraverts**. Others are inner-world oriented. They are called **Introverts**.

Finally, people prefer one mental process to the other. Some people favor the **Perceiving** process; others favor the **Judging** process.

**Note: These four pairs of traits were first described by Carl Jung in 1921, in Psychological Types, Volume Six of his Collected Works. Jung developed these categories from decades of observations of his clients in his clinical practice as a psychoanalyst. He also found evidence of these preferences in history, politics, literature, music art, and the world around him, in every culture he studies.

Each of us possesses all of these personality traits and engages in all of these behaviors. However, the stronger your preference for a particular style, the more frequently you will exhibit the behaviors associated with this preferred style. If these behavioral tendencies are understood and managed effectively, positive results can be realized.

I would now like to focus your attention on the characteristics of these pairs, and in particular, how each of you might fit into them. I will be providing a brief description and list of behaviors that best represent each trait, and would ask that you see which ones might describe behaviors you have frequently exhibited.

The Sensing-Intuition Pair (S/N) – How you perceive the world

Sensors (S) pay most attention to specific, factual, concrete details. They are interested in evidence they see, hear, feel, touch, and smell in their internal and external worlds. Because their awareness is usually in the “here and now,” they are generally thought of as having their “feet on the ground.” They can be trusted to record events accurately and are able to recall and use them with great skill. For issues requiring careful consideration of details, Sensing types are effective problem solvers.

Intuitors (N) are constantly looking for meanings and relationships beyond the reach of the typical five senses. They are interested in theory, ideas, and meaning; they may ignore facts and details. Instead, they are capable of making spontaneous leaps of imagination that enable them to solve certain kinds of difficult problems easily. “Why?” is the general mode of the Intuitor.

Some common behaviors associated with Sensors and Intuitors are:

Senser	Intuitior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes clear, specific expectations with well-defined rules • Picks up details in situations • Stays in the “here-and-now” • Stays grounded in factual, present realities • Enjoys monitoring and checking • Enjoys using skills already learned • Works steadily • Prefers standardized systems and procedures • Practical and “down-to-earth” • Amasses data within defined situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes novel situations in which procedures must be developed • Looks for relationships • Thinks about the future and its implications • Searches for and follows hunches • Enjoys planning • Enjoys learning a new skill • Works in bursts of energy, powered by enthusiasm • Likes solving novel problems • Imagines • Jumps to solutions with gaps in data

How these difference may impact the organizational climate. There are advantages and “blind spots” in each way of perceiving. We all use both processes, but through inclination and practice we develop one perceiving function more than the other. As we become better at the function; we may often forget that the other function exists. Sometimes we may get impatient with those around us who use the opposite function for perceiving.

The Thinking – Feeling Pair (T/F) – How you make decisions

Thinkers (T) make decisions using logic and analysis. They weight evidence and draw conclusions based on the strength of the evidence. Thinkers prefer situations in which systems and procedures have been carefully constructed and communicated. Consequently, much of the Thinker’s energy may go into creating logical systems for deciding.

Feelers (F) make decisions on the basis of empathy, personal values, and strong “gut-level” convictions. Underlying the Feeler’s decision process is a set of values about how the world should be—what is right and wrong. Consequently, Feelers often commit their energy to shaping the world into their image of the way it ought to be.

Common behaviors associated with Thinkers and Feelers are:

Thinker	Feeler
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical • Objective • Weighs, measures, quantifies • Relies on logic • Reasons by starting with real world evidence • Convinces others through reason • Stands firm • Impersonal • Uses systems of thought • Figures things out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has strong values and beliefs based on feelings • Believes things are right or wrong based on “gut instincts” • Knows the best way in his or her heart • Relies on feelings • Reasons by starting with the values conclusion • Persuades, arouses, appeals to emotion • Sympathetic • Understands others’ needs and values • Compares what is to what should be

How these differences may impact the organizational climate. Thinking and Feeling are two different ways you make judgments based on your perceptions. Neither way is better than the other; they simply are different and more or less

effective, depending on the situation. However, dominant Thinkers may see Feelers as too emotional and not focused on the business at hand. Dominant Feelers may see thinkers as uncaring and distant.

The Judging-Perceiving Pair (S/N) – Your attitude toward life

Almost all of us have developed a general mental process that we use in our daily lives. Although we all must make decisions every day, some of us are more interested in the data-collection process – *perceiving*; and some of us are more interested in the outcomes – *judging*.

Judgers (J) are firm, decisive and sure of themselves. They prefer to examine a few facets they consider relevant to the problem, and then come to definite conclusions. Once the decision has been made, Judgers rarely reconsider it because they are less open to new perceptions or data. Having made a decision, they move on.

Perceivers (P) are more interested in data than the outcome. They prefer the gathering of information from any sources and remaining flexible, non-judgmental, and adaptable to new or conflicting data. Even after Perceivers make a decision, they are willing to reconsider it and continue to be open to the possibility of change.

Common behaviors associated with Judgers and Perceivers are:

Judger	Perceiver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes decisions quickly • Makes decisions based on limited data • Usually sets and meets deadlines • Gets right to tasks with little difficulty • Upset if someone tries to change the rules • Likes to get down to the essentials • Likes to get things settled and wrapped up • Satisfied once a decision has been reached • Having established a procedure, rarely questions it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at all sides of an issue before deciding • Makes decisions after seeking input • Resists setting deadlines; usually meets them with last-minute efforts, under pressure • Has trouble getting tasks started, often restarts • Uncomfortable following a uniform set of rules • Open to conflicting data • Continues to be curious and welcomes a new light on a situation • May undo a decision after it has been made • Open to restructuring work, even at the last minute

How these differences may impact the organizational climate. One can guess that these two attitudes toward data and decision-making might cause conflicts between people with opposite preferences. Judgers may think of Perceivers as “wishy-washy” people with little sense of time about getting things done. Perceivers might see Judgers as rushing headlong into things, somewhat like a “bull in a china shop.”

The Extraversion-Introversion Pair (E/I) – How you orient yourself to the world

In our perceptions of the world and our judging about the world, we selectively attend to specific data, and we value certain kinds of decisions as being more important than others. The basis for this selection process comes from our extraverted or introverted orientation—our attitude toward the world.

Extraverts (E) attend to the outer world—the people, events, rules and expectations of others and society—more than the inner world. They are sensitive to the outer-world ways of being and try to fit in and become what is accepted and valued by that world. Dominant Extraverts must interact with and observe the outer world to find out what its expectations are for them so they can move comfortably toward those expectations.

Introverts (I) may know what the outer world expects, but they attend more to their inner beliefs, expectations, desires, values and logic. Introverts seek to behave in ways that have meaning to them as individuals. They use their own inner processes as their barometer of the behaviors that seem appropriate to them. Dominant Introverts must step back from the world so they can decide what it means to them and how they will choose to respond to it.

Common behaviors associated with Extravers and Introverts are:

Extravert	Introvert
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like group tasks and team efforts • Adapts quickly to new environments • Acts quickly (sense of urgency) • Interested in the results of the job • Avoids complicated procedures • Takes cues about behavior from others • Determines life and career interests based on social acceptability and significant others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works best alone or on individual activities • Slow to get involved in new situations • Thinks carefully before taking action • Interested in the reasons for doing the job • Decides how he or she wants to behave independent of others • Decides life and career interests based on personal convictions, often with little outside consultation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates openly with others • Likes variety in tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not mind working on a project for a long period of time without interruption
---	---

How these differences may impact the organizational climate. There is nothing inherently negative or positive about either orientation. However, dominant Extraverts may see Introverts as being unsociable and remote. Dominant Introverts may view extraverts as overbearing and inconvenient. This is another area in which our differences clearly serve as a basis for conflict and misunderstanding.

WHY PSI PAIRS NEED EACH OTHER

To fully appreciate the value of the differences Personality Style brings to an organization, it is necessary to consider the usefulness of these opposing strengths.

Sensors need Intuitors to...	Intuitors need Sensors to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them see the possibilities in situations • Help them consider relationships among the data they have accumulated • Help them create patterns where data are missing • Awaken them to considering the implications of their data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide accurate recollection of the facts and details of situations • Keep them from jumping to conclusions on the basis of insufficient data • Help them become patient with and value the importance of data collection • Force them to consider the present reality of situations

Thinkers need Feelers to...	Feelers need Thinkers to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them consider the value issues in their decisions • Help them understand and deal with others • Help them promote their ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them plan more logical, convincing arguments • Help them analyze the situation • Help them be consistent and firm

Judgers need Perceivers to...	Perceivers need Judgers to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help slow down their decision making so they consider as much relevant data as possible • Help them see the value of waiting on decisions so others can find a sense of involvement and commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them set and keep deadlines so they will complete tasks • Help them see the value of taking action; that acting without all the data is OK

Extraverts need Introverts to...	Introverts need Extraverts to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them discover how their own values can be important in meeting their own needs • Help them see that their values may be in conflict with those their group is advocating • Supply deeper thinking on concepts and theories that might have relevance to their problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them consider how the larger world may interpret and value issues they are considering only from their own point of view. • With whom to share their judgments to ensure that they are trusted and understood by others • Give voice to their ideas, which might otherwise remain unarticulated.

ACTIONS THAT DEMONSTRATE APPRECIATION OF THE DIFFERENCES, THEREBY ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Once there is an awareness and understanding of Personality Style differences, then actions can be encouraged that would confirm their value to the organization, and promote effective behaviors. Some positive approaches are as follows:

With Sensors	With Intuitives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State topic clearly • Prepare facts and examples • Present information step-by-step • Stress practical application • Finish sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about big picture • Talk about possibilities • Use analogies/metaphors • Engage their imaginations • Don't overwhelm them with details

With Thinkers	With Feelers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be organized and logical • Consider cause and effect; focus on consequences • Appeal to a sense of fairness • Don't ask "how they feel about it" • Don't repeat yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First mention points of agreement • Appreciate efforts and contributions • Recognize the legitimacy of feelings • Deal with "people" concerns • Maintain eye contact

With Judgers	With Perceivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time and prepared • Come to conclusion—don't leave things unresolved • Be decisive and definite • Be organized and don't waste their time • Solicit their opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect many questions • Don't force decisions • Provide opportunity to discuss options • Allow time to process • Give them choices

With Extraverts	With Introverts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let them talk • Include a variety of topics • Communicate verbally • Expect high energy level • Ask them to listen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask...Then listen • Talk about one thing at a time • Give them time to reflect and prepare • Provide material to read

HOW A KNOWLEDGE OF PSI COULD BE USED IN THE WORKPLACE

A strong organization needs all of these styles in order to be successful. Once we are aware of our own behavioral traits and styles, we are then in a better position to manage our preferences to achieve balance, and recognize these behaviors in others. As managers, this empowers us to appreciate differences, influence the positive demonstration of these tendencies, build stronger teams, and increase the quality of communication and performance in the workplace.

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service has recognized the importance of understanding personality styles and the benefits to be gained from developing management skills in human behavior disciplines. Personality Style education and discussion is included in our Leadership Curriculum for all levels of management. Specific attention is given to how style affects communication, decision-making, team building, and workplace environment, and techniques for better recognizing and utilizing these differences.

CONCLUSION

There is insufficient time during this presentation to fully cover all the nuances and ramifications of Personality Style. Therefore, I would caution that before attempting to apply these concepts to your own organization, additional training on the assessment tools and techniques and their use should be considered. However, as I have mentioned previously, the effective use of these concepts can result in improved performance in key areas of tax administration--business results, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. As leaders and managers, we must be constantly aware of our surroundings, situations and the various styles we have within us. Developing the ability to adjust our style to different situations produces the best results possible. Thank you for your attention.