



## CAREERS & OCCUPATIONS

### SOME TYPE OBSERVATIONS IN CAREER COACHING

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There are many ways to work with clients who seek help with their careers. I see my role as a coach to give them a 'safe space' to discover and explore their options in order to determine which one is right for them. What makes them tick? What are their strengths and how are they energised? What do they value and which of these are central to their choices? Which direction feels true for them? Personality type gives us valuable insights for this search as for so many things.

Coaching seems, at its root, to be an Intuitive-Perceiving (or Extraverted Intuitive) kind of approach to finding direction, and the clients who come to me are seeking that sort of help. I use type as a lens to help understand how this approach impacts each of my clients. Many useful insights come from recognising the type dynamics for each client. For a reminder of the dynamic hierarchy for each type, see Table 1.

Here are some recent client stories to illustrate how this works for my coaching. (These are real clients but I have changed the names.)

##### Returning to work

Carole, who identified strongly with the ESFJ preferences and profile, had a successful marketing career in the past prior to having a family. She has subsequently thoroughly enjoyed her years out of the office to focus on her children and 'be there for them', with a little bit of free-lance work now and then. The Extraverted Feeling values of her dominant function came through very strongly.

She now, at 50-ish, feels she 'ought' to go back to earning money again as the children are older, but recognises that technology has dramatically changed the nature of the work she used to do. Whereas she was always out-and-about making connections (Extraverted Feeling) so much now is done remotely which, for her, is not so energising. But what else is there, other than what she's done before? The strong pull of familiarity (Introverted Sensing, her auxiliary) kept her attention, yet the awareness of wider possibilities (Extraverted Intuition) drew her to seek coaching.

As we worked through understanding Carole's type preferences, she found it interesting but her pull towards resolution (J) meant every week she wondered when we'll have 'the answer.' Her many gifts lent themselves to a wide range of options to work with people and make things happen, but as we brainstormed the wider possibilities she naturally looked at roles like she's done in the past. I gently helped her to see how her familiar gifts could be relevant in areas other than 'marketing' – different job 'labels' and yet utilising her core skills in a way that would be energising. Once this sank in, she was excited about the opportunities it opened up.

Individuals with SJ preferences who use Introverted Sensing as their primary source of Perception have a natural tendency to look towards their past experience, though at Carole's age (developing tertiary Intuition) she recognised a need to look beyond that. My role was to help Carole see new patterns, possibilities and connections which she was not used to noticing and help her analyse (Introverted Thinking) those options in the light of her gifts.

##### Looking for fulfilment

Working with Lori has been subtly different. She has ENFJ preferences, working part-time from home for a charity where she does any ad hoc tasks that get thrown her way (mainly admin), while looking after a young family. She shares with Carole the same urgent drive towards resolution, but has no idea where to head. She feels lacking in vision for her life (Introverted Intuition), which she very much needs as it is so central to her sense of identity. What is emerging is a need for travel and variety, which used to be part of her life.

Lori's vision is clouded by a strong sense of social pressure about what she 'ought' to do (Extraverted Feeling) from friends and family (engage in the practical, present Sensing tasks of raising young children), while at the same time feeling false and unfulfilled by what seem to her to be narrow horizons. So she is just focussing on keeping other people happy in her current situation, and sees her personal vision as unacceptable to others.

The lack of clarity about purpose has been particularly unsettling for Lori’s NJ preferences. Introverted Intuition is the primary source of perception for her type, and without that sense of direction and vision, all else seems hollow. And as an Idealist, she needs to have some meaning and purpose beyond the practical necessities. She readily recognises myriad possibilities, but is frozen by not knowing which direction is right for her.

So we are working through a series of exercises to build a conceptual framework through which to sieve the possibilities and recognise what works for her. The journey with Lori has been about who she is, and re-establishing her vision of where she wants to go with her life.

reference their values as core to who they are and so lack of clarity can be particularly distressing for them.

The other aspect that really matters is that what he does be *interesting* and *varied* – a common requirement for types preferring Intuition – while being true to his values. So his journey is more exploratory (Extraverted Intuition), less pressured by an urgency for resolution, while having a stronger need for it to ‘feel right’ for him (Introverted Feeling) than may be needed for another client.

**Table 1: Sequence of Functions by Whole Types**

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
Dominant: S <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: T <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: F <sub>i</sub> Inferior: N <sub>E</sub>	Dominant: S <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: F <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: T <sub>i</sub> Inferior: N <sub>E</sub>	Dominant: N <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: F <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: T <sub>i</sub> Inferior: S <sub>E</sub>	Dominant: N <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: T <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: F <sub>i</sub> Inferior: S <sub>E</sub>
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
Dominant: T <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: S <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: N <sub>i</sub> Inferior: F <sub>E</sub>	Dominant: F <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: S <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: N <sub>i</sub> Inferior: T <sub>E</sub>	Dominant: F <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: N <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: S <sub>i</sub> Inferior: T <sub>E</sub>	Dominant: T <sub>i</sub> Auxiliary: N <sub>E</sub> Tertiary: S <sub>i</sub> Inferior: F <sub>E</sub>
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
Dominant: S <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: T <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: F <sub>E</sub> Inferior: N <sub>i</sub>	Dominant: S <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: F <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: T <sub>E</sub> Inferior: N <sub>i</sub>	Dominant: N <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: F <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: T <sub>E</sub> Inferior: S <sub>i</sub>	Dominant: N <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: T <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: F <sub>E</sub> Inferior: S <sub>i</sub>
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
Dominant: T <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: S <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: N <sub>E</sub> Inferior: F <sub>i</sub>	Dominant: F <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: S <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: N <sub>E</sub> Inferior: T <sub>i</sub>	Dominant: F <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: N <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: S <sub>E</sub> Inferior: T <sub>i</sub>	Dominant: T <sub>E</sub> Auxiliary: N <sub>i</sub> Tertiary: S <sub>E</sub> Inferior: F <sub>i</sub>

**Seeing how the pieces fit**

Steve, as an INTJ, especially valued getting a theoretical understanding of himself and how he works sub-consciously. He was pretty clear on the basic direction of his life (dominant Introverted Intuition), but sought coaching to develop a better theoretical grasp of how the pieces in his life (past experience and present values) hung together and moved him towards the future. He also was looking for some techniques to help him do that. This enabled him to sharpen his vision (Introverted Intuition) and clarify his plan (Extraverted Thinking).

**Is that all there is?**

Rob, as an INFP, is unsettled by different issues in his work as technical customer support in a high tech industry. He is less worried about clarity of direction, but is finding work is uninteresting and has no sense of value in what he does. Rob’s flexibility and adaptability almost makes it harder to see what he wants – he could do most anything! So we are looking at what matters most to him, his core values. All people have values (what matters most to them) but dominant Introverted Feeling types

**How do I fix it?**

Pat, an ESTJ client, owns a company and was experiencing stress-related problems. He recognised his situation wasn’t optimal, and the question was simply “how do I fix it?” If a practical solution isn’t quickly forthcoming, coaching may be abandoned under the pressures of a demanding life. Efficient results are the focus of effort, and the more task-focussed nature of Leadership coaching keeps the ESTJ client engaged.

**Today’s answer may not be everything**

Mark, an ISFP whom I worked with several years ago when he was in his early 30s, was so distracted by the present (Extraverted Sensing) that even though he found work stifling, he needed a few years for his journey to a new sense of direction (a little uncomfortable developing his tertiary Introverted Intuition). It took time to recognise what felt right (Introverted Feeling).

We began while he was a developer in an IT company and worked together for nearly two years, with long gaps as the practical needs of work took his attention. Mark seemed to live

his life mainly through his Extraverted Sensing (auxiliary) and his Extraverted Thinking (4<sup>th</sup> function) which crowded out both his sense of vision (Introverted intuition) and what really mattered (Introverted Feeling). Depending so heavily on his 4<sup>th</sup> function was also tiring, of course, and a tendency toward perfection exacerbated the time problem. He really came alive outside work as an accomplished musician, but getting to gigs



was sometimes hard because of his workload.

Even when he finally embarked on the 'next step' as an events manager at a concert hall, a demanding job which asked much more than the part-time pay justified, Mark quickly discovered he wasn't 'there' yet. But he now had the tools of understanding that helped him to recognise when his journey needed to take a different turn.

Circumstances can play a larger role than coaches sometimes like to admit. I recently caught up with Mark, and he has finally found a complete sense of rightness about his life – he finds being parent to a toddler and a role as 'house husband' totally satisfying while his more energetically-driven wife focusses on a career outside the home. He feels completely in the right

place, and very fulfilled. As the role requires a working partner and having a child, circumstances play a large part in realising this possibility! On the other hand, Mark's developing self-awareness helped him to recognise chance when it came.

**Helping find the right balance**

Recognising whether someone prefers Judging or Perceiving (and by implication their hierarchy of functions) can be a big help in tailoring a coaching relationship to the client's needs, because it ties in to understanding their key drivers, and helps the coach to recognise where the client needs help to find balance. Perceiving types often need ample space to wander while periodically re-focussing on the direction they want to go, while Judging types typically need help with taking a bit more time to take in information and explore options.

What are the core drivers of the client's personality, for their type? How does that relate to where they feel out of balance? Discovering to what extent these drivers are disrupted, missing or unfulfilled may help indicate direction of coaching. Understanding the type dynamics of the client can be a huge help in effectively supporting them on their journey.

**Reference:**

Table taken from *Introduction to Type and the Eight Jungian Functions* (p4), by Margaret T Hartzler and Robert W McAlpine, © 2005 by CPP Inc, Mountain View CA.


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