

CAREERS & OCCUPATIONS TYPE AND LEADERSHIP COACHING IN TELECOMS

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Christine is a Career Coach and an MBTI® practitioner, and owner of Insights for Change. She uses type extensively in her work with individuals and couples. Christine's previous career included 20 years in IT, helping to make software easier to use, as well as being a Leadership Coach within the organisation. She is interested in helping people apply type understanding to life, self-image, relationships and spirituality.

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I once worked in a major telecoms company, perhaps more by accident than choice. Having started work in my 30s, I benefited from a company initiative to encourage women to get into IT (Information Technology) and engineering, and they sponsored me through an IT degree as a mature student.

The *User Centred Design* group of which I was a part is an anomaly in an organisation that primarily focuses on technology and business. Although the work is technical, the focus is to meet the needs of the users of the software and translate those needs into a language understood by business managers and software developers.

In 2004, the company ran an ICF-accredited certificate in Coaching for Leadership (CLC)¹. They sought to improve the quality of leaders within the company through an internal Executive Coaching programme.

They selected about 50 of us to do the intensive eight-month course. We all did an online version of the Type Dynamics Indicator (TDI), and I worked with several individuals in the group to find their best-fit type. I have types for 40 which is a small sample, so these thoughts are tentative.

This article is an exploration of some observations that I found intriguing, relating to type and the mix of individuals on the CLC course. For comparison, I have obtained a type table for the coaches within a Californian company (Leadersearch.com) that trains coaches and offers coaching to business, as an example of a more usual coaching profile.

Preferences in a technical industry

The Telecoms division I worked in is mostly men, in spite of frequent initiatives to encourage women in engineering. Denise McGuire, president of a major telecoms union, said in an address in 2007, "Today only 20% of the Information Technology (IT) workforce is female, and the current gender composition of technical graduates means that this position will worsen."² Then, from the Women's Engineering Society³:

- Only 5.3% of women in the UK are involved in SET compared with 33% of men
- In 2011, men were awarded 85% of engineering and technology degrees and 82% of computer science degrees
- In the same year, more than half of medical degrees and 79% of veterinary science degrees went to women

From the MBTI® manual⁴, _STJ and ENTJ types are drawn towards management, administration and leadership, which any business needs. Science and technology tends to attract _NTP types, and applied technology appeals more to _STP. Ashridge Management School⁵ has found that 2/3rds of their students report ENTJ, ESTJ, ISTJ or ENTP.

So Technology predominantly attracts Thinking preference individuals, and of these it primarily attracts male Thinking types. So it is unsurprising that around 95% of employees at the time were male.

It is interesting to note that the percentage overlap in the top 50 occupations for any pair of opposite types⁶ is low, normally below 5%. From this one might deduce that individuals preferring Feeling will be rare in the main work of a business which mainly appeals to Thinking preferences, whether male or female, although of course all types will be represented and may be (more or less) successful in finding a niche where they can thrive.

Preferences within the coaching community

Leadersearch.com (LS) have done a study of their Leadership Coaching students, and most (93.6%) prefer Intuition. Three quarters of those are NF, the remainder NT. NPs are attracted to that training course at nearly twice the rate of NJs. The top 3 types in the CLC group were INFP, ESFP, and ISTJ.

In contrast to Management types, more than two thirds of the Leadersearch coaches are made up of ENFP (28.3%) followed by INFP (19.0%), ENFJ

(13.2%) and ENTP (10.5%). (It is interesting to see that ENTP turn up in both lists, even though they are only 2.8% of the population!) In a coaching-for-Leadership context, ISTJ managers may be logically drawn towards it as a way of helping themselves to become better managers and to have more effective teams.

The coaching community developed an effective route for interested employees to find and sign up with a coach, as well as data collection to support the value of coaching for the individuals and for the company. The amount of clients an individual coach had varied enormously.

Preferences within the CLC course

We have already seen that the majority of the workforce to whom the training was offered are likely to have preferences around business and technology, and that types that tend to be naturally drawn towards coaching are likely to be very much in the minority.

Of the 50 who were on the course, 39 made their type preferences available to the group. About half of them have clarified their best-fit type, which I have used where available. Given the nature of the environment, some influence of work and culture on the reported types of a few individuals is to be expected.

Tables 1 – 3 give a flavour of the makeup of the group, based on 39 of the 50 students. The UK statistics in all tables are from the MBTI Manual Supplement⁷ and the LS column is from the coach training organisation Leadersearch.com.

Table 1: Distribution of preference pairs in the group and gender balance

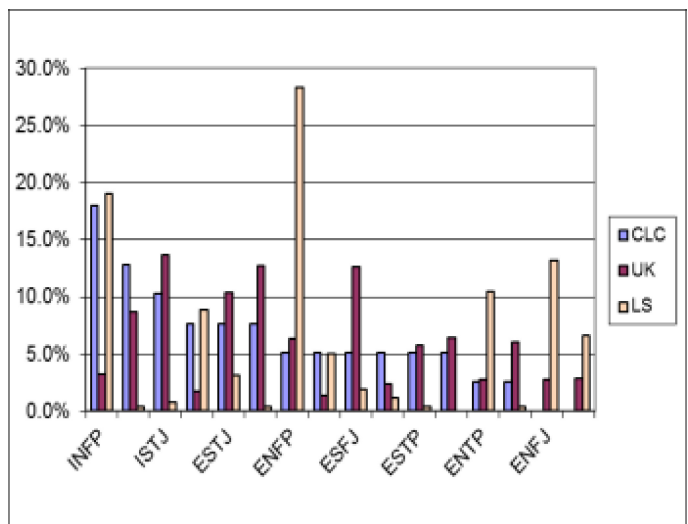
	<i>n</i>	CLC	UK	LS	Gender	<i>n</i>	CLC
E	15	38.5%	52.6%	64.4%	male	21	53.8%
I	24	61.5%	47.4%	35.6%	female	18	46.2%
S	22	56.4%	76.5%	7.4%			
N	17	43.6%	23.5%	92.6%			
T	16	41.0%	45.9%	27.6%			
F	23	59.0%	54.1%	72.4%			
J	17	43.6%	58.3%	39.9%			
P	22	56.4%	41.7%	60.1%			

Table 2: Distribution of function pairs and temperaments compared

Functions	<i>n</i>	CLC	UK	LS
NF	12	30.8%	14.0%	69.4%
NT	5	12.8%	9.5%	23.3%
SF	11	28.2%	40.1%	3.1%
ST	11	28.2%	36.4%	4.3%
Temperaments	<i>n</i>	CLC	UK	LS
NF	12	30.8%	14.0%	69.4%
NT	5	12.8%	9.5%	23.3%
SJ	12	30.8%	49.1%	6.2%
SP	10	25.6%	27.1%	1.2%

Table 3: Distribution of coach types compared to UK population and Leadersearch.com

type	<i>n</i>	CLC	UK	LS
INFP	7	17.9%	3.2%	19.0%
ESFP	5	12.8%	8.7%	0.4%
ISTJ	4	10.3%	13.7%	0.8%
INFJ	3	7.7%	1.7%	8.9%
ESTJ	3	7.7%	10.4%	3.1%
ISFJ	3	7.7%	12.7%	0.4%
ENFP	2	5.1%	6.3%	28.3%
INTJ	2	5.1%	1.4%	5.0%
ESFJ	2	5.1%	12.6%	1.9%
INTP	2	5.1%	2.4%	1.2%
ESTP	2	5.1%	5.8%	0.4%
ISTP	2	5.1%	6.4%	0.0%
ENTP	1	2.6%	2.8%	10.5%
ISFP	1	2.6%	6.1%	0.4%
ENFJ	0	0.0%	2.8%	13.2%
ENTJ	0	0.0%	2.9%	6.6%



Observations

Looking at Table 3, INFP is the most dramatically over-represented within the CLC group in relation to the population as a whole – and one surmises even more so in relation to an IT business – but is in line with Leadersearch data. The occurrence of the top 4 management types (ESTJ, ENTJ, ISTJ and ENTP) is similar in both groups – 20.5% in CLC and 21.0% in Leadersearch.

There is a greater proportion of men than women on the CLC course, and yet a higher proportion of Feeling preference than that ratio (or the industry) would normally suggest.

There are more Thinking-preferring coaches in CLC than in Leadersearch, and more Judging than Perceiving. But the BIG contrast is in the number of CLC coaches preferring Sensing –

over 56%, compared to only 7.4% of Leadersearch coaches.

The 'group type' in CLC is ISFP (though only 1 person chose ISFP preferences), and in Leadersearch is ENFP.

On the one hand, the managers in the group were clearly taking advantage of an excellent opportunity to learn how to support their teams and be better leaders. But, on the other hand, it also seemed like many people preferring Feeling have found this as an oasis within an otherwise logical, technical environment.

The course content had NF tones of openness, subjectivity and connecting, as one might expect for coaching. Given the high proportion of Thinking types in the group, and a preponderance of Introverts, I observed a reticence during some of the group activities that was not surprising in the context, although as we got to know each other over the months many became more relaxed.

I found that several individuals among my coaching clients and my colleagues (all preferring Feeling) are restless and looking for something 'more meaningful' at work, even though they are doing fine in their technical roles.

Many of these individuals have found an understanding of their type to be valuable in helping them to think through the issues and to recognise opportunities in (or beyond) the company that support their natural preferences.

But 4 years after the first version of this article was written, of the 10 coaches who had by then left the company, 7 out of 10 are iNtuitive-Perceivers, and 7 out of 10 have a preference for Feeling. (Many more have since left, but I don't yet have data on those.)

By contrast, the issues my Thinking clients tend to bring to coaching are around being more effective at their role, particularly around communication and relationships. And they tend to be more inclined to working on their options within the company.

Postscript

In 2008 (shortly after I left) the company suspended its internal coaching programme as part of a broad range of financial cut-backs. Only six of my coaching colleagues are known to still be in the company (of the 20 email responses I had to my question), some of whom still coach informally. At least seven of those who have left have coaching businesses (various Feeling types). I'll need to do a more thorough look at what happened next.

References:

1. Training through the Co-Creative Alliance, <http://www.cocreativealliance.com/>
2. Denise McGuire, president of *Connect*, at an address to the TUC Congress, 2005. Quoted in *Connected*, the Connect members magazine, October 2005.
3. Women's Engineering Society, 2014, <http://www.wes.org.uk/statistics>
4. From *Introduction to Type and Careers* (pp 16–31), by A. L Hammer, ©1993, Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press. ©1993 by CCP. (ref Table 12.9 in MBTI manual)
5. Ashridge Management School MBTI Research into distribution of type, by Melissa Carr, Judy Curd, Fiona Dent, Ashridge Business School UK, 2004.
6. From *Career Report Manual* (p 37), by A.L Hammer and G.P Macdaid, 1992, Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press. ©1992 by CCP. (ref Table 12.10 in MBTI manual)
7. From *MBTI Manual Supplement Table 4.1*, 'UK population type table', © 1998 by Consulting Psychologists Press.

NEW INTEREST AREA CO-ORDINATOR FOR CAREERS & OCCUPATIONS WANTED!

Chris Rigden has decided that she cannot any longer carry on fulfilling this role in addition to her duties as BAPT's Webmaster. She has fulfilled the role for a considerable number of years for which I am very grateful.

So, I am looking for someone to take over from her and write, or commission, articles in this application area for the Spring and Autumn issues of *TypeFace* each year. It is vitally important to have people within the *TypeFace* team to cover the different applications which are of interest to many of our members and I don't want Careers & Occupations to go unrepresented.

If anyone is interested, or knows someone who might be, please do get in touch with me to talk about the possibility without commitment. My email address is: gill.clack@kcl.ac.uk or, if you would prefer, my telephone number is 020-7274-3809. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Editor