

Government Executive

October 2011

Getting Personal

By Caitlin Fairchild

Can an intuitive introvert collaborate with a decisive extrovert? The Environmental Protection Agency thinks so. The agency puts a premium on unique work styles, earning it a spot in the Partnership for Public Service's rankings for best places to work in the federal government.

The Partnership's 2010 employee satisfaction survey weighs factors such as training and development, leadership and teamwork, all of which EPA has cultivated in recent years. Brian Twillman, a training officer and organization development specialist in the Office of the Administrator, has been leading the charge, using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to help employees identify their personality traits.

"We recognize that not everyone's the same," Twillman says. "Some organizations tend to learn that the hard way."

EPA developed a database of resources to help employees take advantage of their strengths and launched an onboarding initiative using the Myers-Briggs assessment to develop their talents. "If they can learn about themselves and how they can better contribute to us, then they'll feel more connected and we can make better use of them," Twillman says.

Also in the pipeline is a collaborative mentoring program. Two hundred employees already participate in the initiative, and EPA plans to open it to the entire workforce within the next two years.