



Personality Tests Can Help Make Workplace Stronger

By Sarah Long
Chicago Daily Herald Columnist

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[Excerpt]

In 1942, Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, devised a personality inventory called the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[® assessment]. Based on Carl Jung's theory of types, the purpose was to create an instrument that would help civilians choose wartime jobs well suited to their personality preferences. Today the test is widely used in the fields of education, business and psychology.

MBTI[® assessment] is now owned by Consulting Psychologists [Press], Inc. [CPP] (www.cpp.com). The company estimates that it tests more than two million people per year worldwide. Access to the test is tightly controlled. For valid outcomes, one should only take the test from an individual who is certified by Consulting Psychologists [Press], Inc. [CPP] to administer it.

In the library world, MBTI [assessment] is often used with library staffs not only to help individuals realize their strengths, but also to help everyone in the organization to realize the strengths (and weaknesses) of everyone else. Taking the test results in a four-digit profile. There are 16 such profiles possible. If a friend was opposite you on the profile it would probably drive you crazy because he or she would operate completely differently from you.

For example, my profile reveals that I am a big picture person who can see and explain in broad strokes where we are going. But don't ask me the details of exactly when or how we're going to get there. The person opposite me is the detail person. I need this detail person, and she needs me, if we are going to be successful.

One of the best reasons for a group of people who work together to take the MBTI [assessment] is to realize that together all strengths are covered. Really effective organizations employ and empower people in all 16 categories. Using the MBTI [assessment] in a work setting also cultivates tolerance.

I have gradually come to appreciate the detail people, who find my typos and remind me that I have left out details. They keep me out of trouble and I prize their ability to be able to do this. In years past, I might have found it annoying.

Sarah Long is a columnist for the Chicago Daily Herald.