

USING JUNGIAN THEORY TO IMPROVE LOGISTICS TRAINING

STEVEN MASON uses C.G. Jung's theory of psychological types and the personality inventory based on Jung's typology (i.e., the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® or MBTI®) to expose the principal flaws in logistics training, and to explain how educators and corporate trainers can rectify those flaws



In brief, Jung theorized three fundamental axes around which one could meaningfully characterise an individual's non-pathological personality preferences. Jung emphasized that, just as a right-handed person uses his left hand in life activities, so does a person with a given personality preference use and have a need to become comfortable with the contrary preference. Thus, Jung's preferences are complementary, not exclusional.

OVERVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES

Jung classified psychological types as follows:

- Extraversion (E) vs. Introversion (I): The individual energized by speaking and interacting with others and enervated by long periods of solitude is Jung's Extrovert. Conversely, the individual energized or recharged by introspection, contemplation, solitude, and interactions within a small circle of good friends and enervated by classically extroverted activities is Jung's Introvert. 70-75% of people are Extroverts.

Interestingly enough, the majority of educators are Introverts, and the majority of students are Extroverts.

- Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N). The individual who perceives the world in terms of facts, concretes, induction (principles from facts), and who tends toward reductionism is Jung's Sensor. The individual who perceives the world holistically, conceptually, deductively (facts from principles), and laterally is Jung's Intuitior. 70-75% of people are Sensors. This dichotomy is a significant focus of this article, as logistics planning and execution are inherently Sensing activities, while high-level logistics management is inherently an Intuitive activity. An important issues is that an overwhelming majority of educators and trainers are Intuitiors, and convey theoretical and holistic information about the proverbial forest to Sensing logistics practitioners who best understand and relate to facts, checklists, procedures, and trees.

- Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F). The individual who makes objective, impersonal judgments about those things he has perceived is Jung's Thinker. The individual who makes subjective, personal judgments based on those same precepts is Jung's Feeler. While 2/3 of males are Thinkers, 2/3 of females are Feelers, a fact which often creates adjustment difficulties for those 1/3 of males who are Feelers and 1/3 of females who are Thinkers. Unsurprisingly, logistics is dominated by Thinkers, whereas the helping professions, such as nursing, social work, and the like, are dominated by Feelers.

The inventors of the MBTI, Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katharine Briggs, added a fourth axis, one often incorrectly attributed to Jung:

- Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P). The individual who prefers convergence and order, who is sensitive to temporal deadlines, and who is inclined to make judgments about people or objects was termed a Judger. The individual who lives in a world of endless possibilities, brainstorming, divergent approaches, and a seemingly infinite supply of time was termed a Perceiver. Approximately 55% of people are Judgers. The J/P dichotomy also has pedagogical implications: most educators are Perceivers, while most students, and especially those attracted to logistics, are Judgers.

The MBTI instrument enables one to classify an individual's type according to these four criteria. Thus, an Extraverted, Intuitive, Feeling Judger is an ENFJ; an Introverted Sensing Feeling Perceiver is an ISFP; and, so on, accordingly.

TRAINING AND THE MBTI: SENSING VS. INTUITION

Unsurprisingly, certain professions attract certain types far more than others, and job satisfaction is itself related to the degree of positive correlation between the idealized 'type' of a job and the type of the person in that job. Of course, the professions of education and training, which are primarily didactic, are fundamentally very different than those in logistics, which involve planning and execution of very particular, time-critical processes that ultimately are measured in customer satisfaction.

It is on the basis of differing means of perception (Sensing vs. Intuition) that many profound pedagogical errors arise. Educators reflexively and unconsciously infer their students' learning styles, based not on the nature of those students, but on their own nature. It is thus common for the ISTJ or ESTJ to be learning (or attempting to learn) from an INTP or ENFP.

Three metaphors in fields separate from logistics illustrate the consequences of such frameworks. Imagine, in the American game of baseball, a left-handed pitching instructor's insisting that everyone (right-handers included) pitch with their left hands. In a second case, consider that neurologists and ophthalmologists

universally agree that an individual is either right- or left-eye dominant; this circumstance is congenital, as it were, and not able to be changed, even if such a change would be desirable. Third, recall that the genius named Einstein (the archetype of the Intuitor and of the INTP) failed his school mathematics, the result, inter alia, of a supremely conceptual and lateral thinker's being forced to solve problems linearly. In each of these three cases, the chasm between the desired reality of the trainers or experts (Intuition) and the actuality of the students' learning processes or means of perception (Sensing) was great enough so as to have rendered the learning or perceiving process both frustrating and futile.

As noted above, in the field of logistics, there is a natural gap between the learning styles of the practitioners and the teaching styles of the pedagogues. While a small set of logistics consultants conceptualises the processes involved in the planning and execution of global transportation systems, or of intra-enterprise goods or information, the overwhelming majority of logistics practitioners implements and incrementally adjusts these processes. A few experts construct the forest, whilst everyone else must plan and nourish the trees.

While no single course of training or pedagogical method is best for everyone, Jungian type theory provides an effective basis for matching employees and students with those instructors from whom they are likely to learn most. Type theory has additional utility as a guide to corporations endeavouring to choose between academically-oriented and vocationally-oriented training programs

DICHOTOMIES IN TYPE BETWEEN PROFESSORS AND BUSINESS STUDENTS

Writing in the Fall, 1995 issue of the Journal of Technology Education, University of Georgia professors Robert Wicklein and Jay Rojewski of the Department of Occupational Studies note:

'Research has demonstrated that career choice, as well as success and satisfaction with one's chosen career, is often consistent with one's personality characteristics (Plessman, 1985; Vogt & Holder, 1988). Psychological type has been shown to affect how students learn, how teachers teach, how leaders lead, and how everyone works and communicates (Elias & Stewart, 1991; Foster & Horner, 1988).'

'Lawrence (1982) asserted that teachers with distinct personality types were predictably attracted to different levels of teaching and to different subject matter.'

'Felder and Silverman (1988) [found] that the learning styles of most engineering students and teaching styles of most engineering professors were incompatible on several dimensions. Whereas most engineering students were visual, sensing, inductive, and active, most engineering education centers around auditory, abstract, deductive, passive, and sequential instruction. These researchers summarized that the disparity of instructional and learning preference they observed had created a negative impact on the field of engineering.'

Consider further that Rhodes Scholars and Phi Beta Kappa

students are likely to become professors and that business students are a source of logistics professionals and teachers. In that light, Harvey Brightman of Georgia State University reported:

'Interestingly, over 83% of college student leaders were extraverts, while over 65% of Phi Beta Kappas were introverts. Our own data base indicates that over 65% of business students are extraverts. [] Our own data base for business faculty indicates that over 60% are introverts.'

Might domain-specific trainers who have been logistics professionals therefore be better-suited instructors of those same professionals than academic professors? Brightman's data suggest so:

'Interestingly, almost 83% of national merit scholarship finalists and 92% of Rhodes Scholars were intuitive students. [Yet,] the majority of undergraduates are sensing students. Our own data base indicates that over 65% of business majors are sensing students. [Conversely,] the majority of university faculty are intuitive. [The Center for the Application of Psychological Type] reported that almost 64% of 2,282 faculty are intuitive. We obtained the same percentage from our business data base.'

COMMON DILEMMAS IN LOGISTICS TRAINING & THEIR RESOLUTION

Let us examine certain problematic situations and consider how type theory can point the way toward a resolution of pedagogical dilemmas:

- *Maximizing the Value of Continuing Education.* It would behoove corporate training and human resources departments to align the perceptive preferences of their employees and their trainers. Matching the perceptive type (i.e., S/N) of the student with that of the trainer will produce better, faster results, and result in a more fulfilled employee who will be reenergized about returning to his logistics position. For those Intuitive employees in logistics, short-term goals militate strongly in favour of their being able to learn from an Intuitior. While it may appear paradoxical, it is far easier for an Intuitior to learn about Sensing processes from an Intuitior than from a Sensor. The reason is that an experienced and type-aware educator can explain Sensor-based activities using a deductive pedagogical method. Having accomplished this, the employee can then induce the original principle from the facts deduced. Unfortunately, it is not the case that a Sensor is best equipped to teach a Sensor about using his Intuitive perception. The reason is that, while one can move from first principles to facts, and then induce those principles again, it is quite a different matter to move from facts to first principles and then deductively back to facts. The chief difficulty in getting an Intuitior to understand Sensing is avoiding boredom. The issue is less 'how can I understand?' than 'why should I care?' The chief difficulty in getting a Sensor to understand Intuition is grasping the relevance of the 'big picture.' The issues are both 'how can I holistically understand' than 'why should I care?'
- *Issues Related to Career Path.* For those logistics professionals seeking to advance to the upper rungs of

management, a better appreciation of their own Intuitive abilities, especially for those who are Sensors, is invaluable. Top managers need not only to see the forest, but also to know the difference between the forest and the trees, and the difference between their being dilatory and their knowing which details will require their attention and time. Sensors who emulate the proverbial ostrich are unlikely to move beyond planning and execution into strategic logistics management. Intuitors starting their logistics careers are unlikely to stay employed for long in logistics unless they are first prepared to dive into the sandstorms of day-to-day logistics. For those who recognize a fundamental mismatch in type between their own personality and the profile associated with that of their job, there arises the opportunity to reassess one's intended or prescribed path and to search for one that will be more self-actualizing.

- *The Professor vs. the Trainer.* Often a corporation must decide whether to use the resources of universities or to use in-house training from domain experts. When the goal is the furtherance of specific logistical knowledge, the latter course of action is most wise. The likelihood of their employees' deriving benefits from a trainer who probably shares their type is much greater than their gaining from a brilliant professor with a very different type. For enhancing the probability of achieving short-term goals, it is almost certainly the case that the trainer will produce a greater return on investment. For those who will be tasked with reengineering your logistics operations from the ground up, the university courses would remain most sound.

CONCLUSION

While no single course of training or pedagogical method is best for everyone, Jungian type theory provides an effective basis for matching employees and students with those instructors from whom they are likely to learn most. Type theory has additional utility as a guide to corporations endeavouring to choose between academically-oriented and vocationally-oriented training programs.

For employees, type theory enables them to understand the nature of their perceptive preferences, and how these affect their on-the-job performance in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

By its nature, logistics is a field of endeavour that requires adherence to facts, schedules, and deadlines. Customers care only about the delivered product, not about the whys, wherefores, and travails in delivering it. More than any other MBTI criterion, the S/N indicator can be effectively and easily used to improve simultaneously corporate training, employee performance, and customer satisfaction. **LS**

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