YOU: BEING MORE EFFECTIVE IN YOUR MBTI® TYPE covers the 16 personality types measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) instrument and the 20 facets that underlie these types. For each type, YOU suggests strengths you likely have, some ways you may get into trouble, and what you can do about it.

What makes YOU unique?

• **Research relating MBTI type to work performance.** For the first time, MBTI type is related to effectiveness patterns using data from a variety of sources, including the Center for Creative Leadership.

• **YOU** explains why some skills come more naturally to us and why others are tough to learn or even ignored.

• **YOU** answers the “So what?” question. Being type wise can lead to better performance at work and better relationships while you’re at it!

Be more effective working with others…
Improve your communication skills…
Manage conflict successfully…

YOU is for you!
# The Sixteen Types

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CHAPTER 1

ISTJ
Introverted Sensing with Extraverted Thinking

11.6% of Population
17% of Managers

Typical Strengths
Orderly
Persevering
Responsible
Task Oriented
Honest, Fair-Minded, and Loyal
Business Oriented, Interested in Trends

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The focus on details and reliance on logical analysis has never led me wrong.

– An ISTJ Manager

Basic Habits of Mind

As an Introverted Sensing type, ISTJs seek precision and clarity in information—spoken or written. These two qualities promote a thorough and practical concentration on the task at hand. As Extraverted Thinkers, ISTJs are likely to appear as focused, orderly, critical, and decisive people who trust facts and structure.

Their Extraverted Feeling and Extraverted Intuiting often show in the sense of mission and intensity they display when tackling problems. Unfortunately, these qualities are sometimes misinterpreted as demanding, rigid, and stubborn.

Typical Communication Patterns

- Carefully share tested and verifiable data.
- Decisive, predictable, and realistic in expression of information.
- Logical, matter-of-fact, and detailed presentation.
- When overplayed, ISTJs may appear to be too mechanical and not take people’s needs into account.

General Learning Strategy

- ISTJs usually learn best with clearly stated objectives and procedures; prefer to analyze, examine, and think it through before telling others.
- Their preferred learning strategies are likely to be analyzing, identifying the facts first, labeling, then categorizing information.
- Their learning is helped by clear directions, prework with “doing” activities included such as answering questions and engaging in some competitive challenge.
Interpersonal Qualities Related to Motivation

- They generally attempt to motivate others with precise, accurate, and timely information.
- ISTJs are concise and analytical, figuring that logic and order will engage others.

Blind Spots

- Others may see their deliberate analytical behavior as manipulating, demanding, and impatient.
- They can often be seen as pressuring and blunt.
- Their commitment to careful precision is interpreted by some as guarded dogmatism.

Stress Related Behavior

- As an initial response to stress, ISTJs usually increase their efforts at thorough methodical strategies. This can look exaggerated, that they insist on control and heavy conformance to expectations.
- Under enough stress, their natural attention to precision can lead to anticipation of failure and seeing the incompetence of people and processes around them, for which they may find abundant evidence!

Potential Barriers to Effectiveness

- Typical needs for ISTJs are to create a more developmental climate and express more compassion for those who work with them. Both of these can cause career stumbles.
- Having a low tolerance for ambiguity, they may find it difficult to advance in organizations where teamwork orientation and strategic agility are essential.
A Dealing With Ambiguity

ISTJs often prefer straightforward, methodical processes that they don’t care to change. Dealing with change is a challenge.

1. **Incrementalism.** The essence of dealing comfortably with uncertainty is the tolerance of errors and mistakes, and absorbing the possible heat and criticism that follow. Acting on an ill-defined problem with no precedents to follow means shooting in the dark with as informed a decision as you can make at the time. People who are good at this are incrementalists. They make a series of smaller decisions, get instant feedback, correct the course, get a little more data, move forward a little more, until the bigger problem is under control. They don’t try to get it right the first time. Many problem-solving studies show that the second or third try is when we really understand the underlying dynamics of problems. They also know that the more uncertain the situation is, the more likely it is they will make mistakes in the beginning. So, you need to work on two practices: Start small so you can recover more quickly. Do little somethings as soon as you can and get used to heat.

2. **Perfectionist?** Need or prefer or want to be 100% sure? Lots might prefer that. Perfectionism is tough to let go of because most people see it as a positive trait for themselves. Recognize your perfectionism for what it might be—collecting more information than others to improve your confidence in making a fault-free decision and thereby avoiding risk and criticism. Try to decrease your need for data and your need to be right all the time slightly every week until you reach a more reasonable balance between thinking it through and taking action. Try making some small decisions on little or no data. Anyone with a brain and 100% of the data can make good decisions. The real test is who can act the soonest with a reasonable amount, but not all, of the
data. Some studies suggest successful general managers are about 65% correct. Trust your intuition. Let your brain do the calculations.

3. **Locate the essence of the problem.** What are the key factors or elements in this problem? Experts usually solve problems by figuring out what the deep, underlying principles are and working forward from there; the less adept focus on desired outcomes/solutions and either work backward or concentrate on the surface facts. What are the deep principles of what you’re working on? Once you’ve done this, search the past for parallels—your past, the business past, the historical past. One common mistake here is to search in parallel organizations because “only they would know.” Backing up and asking a broader question will aid in the search for solutions. When Motorola wanted to find out how to process orders more quickly, they went not to other electronics firms, but to Domino’s Pizza and Federal Express.

4. **Patterns.** Look for patterns in personal, organization, or the world, in general successes and failures. What was common to each success or what was present in each failure but never present in a success? Focus on the successes; failures are easier to analyze but don’t in themselves tell you what would work. Comparing successes, while less exciting, yields more information about underlying principles. The bottom line is to reduce your insights to principles or rules of thumb you think might be repeatable. When faced with the next new problem, those general underlying principles will apply again.

5. **Finishing.** Do you prefer to finish what you have started? Do you have a high need to complete tasks? Wrap them up in nice clean packages? Working well with ambiguity and under uncertainty means moving from incomplete task to incomplete task. Some may be abandoned, some may never be finished. They’ll probably only ever get 80% done, and you’ll constantly have to edit your actions and decisions. Change your internal reward process toward feeling good about fixing mistakes and moving things forward incrementally, more than finishing any given project.
ISTJ

B Showing Compassion and Caring

ISTJs often care but have trouble expressing it and are uncomfortable with strong displays of emotion.

1. **Compassion is understanding.** A primary reason for problems with compassion is that you don’t know how to deal with strong feelings and may appear distant or uninterested. You’re uncomfortable with strong displays of emotion and calls for personal help. Simply imagine how you would feel in this situation and respond with that. Tell the person how sorry you are this has happened or has to be dealt with. Offer whatever help is reasonable. A day off. A loan. A resource. If you can, offer hope of a better day. This is what the person can use most.

2. **Compassion is sometimes just listening.** Sometimes people just need to talk it out. Compassion is quiet listening. Nod and maintain eye contact to indicate listening. When he/she pauses, respond with how he/she must feel, and suggest something you could do to help (e.g., if he/she needs to be gone for awhile, you’ll see that his/her work is covered).

3. **Compassion is not always advice.** Don’t offer advice unless asked. Indicate support through listening and a helpful gesture. There will be time for advice when the situation isn’t so emotionally charged. Many times managers are too quick with advice before they really understand the problem.

4. **Compassion is not therapy or counseling.** Another reason people have trouble with compassion is thinking that a counselor role isn’t appropriate at work. You can be brief and compassionate by following three rules:
   - Let people say what’s on their mind without saying anything other than you know they’re upset. Don’t judge. Don’t advise.
   - Summarize when they start repeating. This signals that you heard them, but keeps them from consuming so much time that you begin to feel like a counselor.
   - If someone overdoes it, invite him/her to talk with you outside of work hours or refer him/her to another resource like employee assistance. This shows others that you cared, you listened and are willing to help if possible, while not putting you in the counselor role that is making you uncomfortable.

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5. **Compassion isn’t judgment or agreement.** Be candid with yourself. Is there a group or groups you don’t like or are uncomfortable with? Do you judge individual members of that group without really knowing if your stereotype is true? Most of us do. Do you show compassion for one group’s problems but not another’s? To deal with this:

- Put yourself in their case. Why would you act that way? What do you think they’re trying to achieve? Assume that however they act is rational to them; it must have paid off or they wouldn’t be doing it. Don’t use your internal standards.

- Avoid putting groups in buckets. Many of us bucket groups as friendly or unfriendly, good or bad, like me or not like me. Once we do, we generally don’t show as much compassion toward them and may question their motives. Apply the logic of why people belong to the group in the first place. See if you can predict accurately what the group will say or do across situations to test your understanding of the group. Don’t use your agreement program.

- Listen. Even though this tip may seem obvious, many of us tune out when dealing with difficult or not-well-understood groups, or reject what they’re saying before they say it. Just listen. Mentally summarize their views, and see if you can figure out what they want from what they say and mean. The true test is whether you can clearly figure it out, even though you don’t think that way.

6. **Many people who need your compassion most aren’t the most pleasant people.**

- For the cynical—delegate responsibility to them for what they are most cynical about.

- For the helpless and dependent—ask yourself what would make them feel the most powerful?

- For the truly resentful or hostile—don’t encourage them to air all of their gripes in detail. This merely reinforces their views. Instead, find out what is bothering them the most at work, and give them something new to do where they have the authority to make a difference.
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C Developing Others

ISTJs are quite responsible and often overload themselves with work. Since they think it’s easier to do it themselves, they tend not to delegate or develop others well.

1. **You have to invest some time.** For most managers, time is what they have the least of to give. For the purposes of developing others beyond today’s job, you need to allocate about eight hours per year per direct report. If you have a normal span of seven direct reports, that’s 7 of 220 working days or 3% of your annual time. Two of the eight hours are for an annual in-depth appraisal of the person in terms of current strengths and weaknesses and of the competencies he/she needs to develop to move on to the next step. Two of the eight hours are for an in-depth career discussion with each person. What does he/she want? What will he/she sacrifice to get there? What is his/her own appraisal of his/her skills? Two of the eight hours are for creating a three- to five-year development plan and sharing it with the person. The last two hours are to present your findings and recommendations to the organization, usually in a succession planning process, and arranging for developmental events for each person. Start thinking of yourself as a coach or mentor. It’s your job to help your people grow.

2. **Help people focus on the right things.** In their study of successful vs. average careers, Citrin and Smith found that the most successful people force themselves into experiences they need for growth. They do not play it safe. While they demonstrate early competence in a specific area, they also don’t overdo working on basic job requirements. They do enough work on the basics while searching for mission-critical job elements and trying to overdeliver on them. They add unexpected value. They call this the 20/80 principle of performance—focusing on the 20% that makes 80% of the difference. In doing so, the successful rack up career freedom points by tackling these tough assignments.

3. **Do you help your people learn by looking for repeating patterns?** Help them look for patterns in the situations and problems they deal with. What succeeded and what failed? Ask them what they have learned to increase their skills and understanding, making them better managers or professionals. Ask them what they can do now that they couldn’t do a year ago. Reinforce this and encourage more of it. Developing is learning in as many ways as possible.
4. **More what and why, less how.** The best delegators are crystal clear on what and when, and more open on how. People are more motivated when they can determine the how for themselves. Inexperienced delegators include the hows, which turn the people into task automatons instead of an empowered and energized staff. Tell them what and when and for how long, and let them figure out how on their own. Give them leeway. Encourage them to try things. Besides being more motivating, it’s also more developmental for them. Add the larger context. Although it is not necessary to get the task done, people are more motivated when they know where this task fits in the bigger picture. Take three extra minutes and tell them why this task needs to be done, where it fits in the grander scheme, and its importance to the goals and objectives of the unit.

5. **How to delegate?** Communicate, set time frames and goals, and get out of the way. People need to know what it is you expect. What does the outcome look like? When do you need it by? What’s the budget? What resources do they get? What decisions can they make? Do you want checkpoints along the way? How will we both know and measure how well the task is done? One of the most common problems with delegation is incomplete or cryptic up-front communication leading to frustration, a job not well done the first time, rework, and a reluctance to delegate next time. Poor communicators always have to take more time managing because of rework. Analyze recent projects that went well and didn’t go well. How did you delegate? Too much? Not enough? Unwanted pieces? Major chunks of responsibility? Workload distributed properly? Did you set measures? Overmanage or abdicate? Find out what your best practices are. Set up a series of delegation practices that can be used as if you’re not there. What do you have to be informed of? What feedback loops can people use for midcourse correction? What questions should be answered as the work proceeds? What steps should be followed? What are the criteria to be followed? When will you be available to help?

6. **Feedback.** People need continuous feedback from you and others to grow. Some tips about feedback:

- Arrange for them to get feedback from multiple people, including yourself, on what matters for success in their future jobs; arrange for your direct reports to get 360° feedback about every two years.
- Give them progressively stretching tasks that are first-time and different for them so that they can give themselves feedback as they go.

- If they have direct reports and peers, another technique to recommend is to ask their associates for comments on what they should stop doing, start doing, and keep doing to be more successful.

- You have to be willing to be straight with your people and give them accurate but balanced feedback. Give as much real-time feedback as you have time for. Most people are motivated by process feedback against agreed-upon goals for three reasons. First, it helps them adjust what they are doing along the way in time to better achieve the goal; they can make midcourse corrections. Second, it shows them what they are doing is important and that you’re there to help. Third, it’s not the “gotcha” game of negative and critical feedback after the fact. If there are negatives, they need to know as soon as possible.

- Set up a buddy system so people can get continuing feedback.

- If your organization has a mentoring program, find out how it works. Best practices begin with those to be mentored writing down goals, objectives, and development needs. They are then carefully matched with mentors and the relationship is outlined. How often will the people meet? On what topics is the mentor to be helpful? What are the responsibilities of the person to be mentored? If your organization doesn’t have such a program, look at setting one up within your unit or function.

7. **Development planning.** You need to put together a development plan that, if followed, actually would work. At least 70% of reported skill development comes from having challenging, uncomfortable tasks/assignments. Development means that you do the new skill or fail at something important to you. Tasks that develop anything are those in which not doing it is not a viable option. Another 20% comes from studying and working with others to see useful behavior and get feedback. This can take the form of studying a role model, working with a developmental partner, keeping a written summary of what’s working and not working, or preferably a formal assessment like a 360° process. Without this continuous feedback, even the best developmental plans fail. About 10% of development comes from thinking differently or having new ways to think about things.
Typically these come from coursework, books, or mentors; the lion’s share is learning from tough tasks and the learning from other people that comes from feedback. A good plan would have 70% job and task content; 20% people to study, listen to, and work with; and 10% courses and readings.

D Innovation and Strategy

ISTJs’ commitment and loyalty to their organization often keeps their focus on the tried-and-true. They may think they are focusing on innovation and strategy, but tend to actually focus on little things and can get blindsided by emerging trends. They often focus on tweaks, not breakthroughs.

1. **Innovation involves three skills.** The first is a total understanding of the marketplace for your products and services. That’s knowing what sells and why. What more do your customers want? What features would be most attractive to them? And what do your non-customers want that they don’t find in your products? The second is being able to select from among many possible creative ideas for new products and services, those which would have the highest likelihood of success in the marketplace. The third skill is taking the raw idea and managing its transition into a successful product in the marketplace.

2. **Managing the creative process.** You need raw creative ideas to be able to manage innovation. While you may not be and don’t need to be the source for the creative ideas, you need to understand the process. Creative thought processes do not follow the formal rules of logic where one uses cause and effect to prove or solve something. The rules of creative thought lie not in using existing concepts but in changing them—moving from one concept or way of looking at things to another. It involves challenging the status quo and generating ideas without judging them initially. Jumping from one idea to another without justifying the jump. Looking for the least likely and the odd. The creative process requires freedom and openness and a non-judgmental environment. The creative process can’t be timed. Setting a goal and a time schedule to be creative will most likely chill creativity.

3. **Getting creativity out of a group.** Many times the creative idea comes from a group, not single individuals. When working on a new idea for a product or service, have them come up with as many questions about it as you can. Often we think too quickly of solutions. In studies
of problem-solving sessions, solutions outweigh questions 8 to 1. Asking more questions helps people rethink the problem and come to more and different solutions. Have the group take a current product you are dissatisfied with and represent it visually—a flowchart or a series of pictures. Cut it up into its component pieces and shuffle them. Examine the pieces to see if a different order would help, or how you could combine three pieces into one. Try many experiments or trials to find something that will work. Have the group think beyond current boundaries. What are some of the most sacred rules or practices in your organization? Unit? Think about smashing them—what would your unit be doing if you broke the rules? Talk to the most irreverent person you know about this. Buffer the group. It’s difficult to work on something new if they are besieged with all the distractions you have to deal with, particularly if people are looking over your shoulder asking why isn’t anything happening.

4. **Narrow perspective?** Some are sharply focused on what they do and do it very well. They have prepared themselves for a narrow but satisfying career. Then someone tells them their job has changed, and they now have to be strategic. Being strategic requires a broad perspective. In addition to knowing one thing well, it requires that you know about a lot of things somewhat. You need to understand business. You need to understand markets. You need to understand how the world operates. You need to put all that together and figure out what all that means to your organization.

5. **Too busy?** Strategy is always last on the list. Solving today’s problems, of which there are many, is job one. You have to make time for strategy. A good strategy releases future time because it makes choices clear and leads to less wasted effort, but it takes time to do. Delegation is usually the main key. Give away as much tactical day-to-day stuff as you can. Ask your people what they think they could do to give you more time for strategic reflection. Another key is better time management. Put an hour a week on your calendar for strategic reading and reflection throughout the year. Don’t wait until one week before the strategic plan is due. Keep a log of ideas you get from others, magazines, etc. Focus on how these impact your organization or function.

6. **Can’t think strategically?** Strategy is linking several variables together to come up with the most likely scenario. Think of it as the search for and application of relevant parallels. It involves making projections of several variables at once to see how they come together. These projections are in the context of shifting markets, international affairs,
monetary movements, and government interventions. It involves a lot of uncertainty, making risk assumptions, and understanding how things work together. How many reasons would account for sales going down? Up? How are advertising and sales linked? If the dollar is cheaper in Asia, what does that mean for our product in Japan? If the world population is aging and they have more money, how will that change buying patterns? Not everyone enjoys this kind of pie-in-the-sky thinking and not everyone is skilled at doing it.

7. **Don’t know how to be strategic?** The simplest problem is someone who wants to be strategic and wants to learn. Strategy is a reasonably well-known field. Read the gurus (Michael Porter, Ram Charan, C.K. Prahalad, Gary Hamel, Fred Wiersema, and Vijay Govindarajan). Scan the *Harvard Business Review* and *Sloan Review* regularly. Read the three to five strategic case studies in *BusinessWeek* every issue. Go to a three-day strategy course taught by one of the gurus. Get someone from the organization’s strategic group to tutor you in strategy. Watch CEOs talk about their businesses on cable. Volunteer to serve on a task force on a strategic issue. Join the Strategic Leadership Forum for a year, read their publication, *Strategy and Leadership*, and attend one national convention. Attend The Conference Board’s Annual Conference on Strategy, where CEOs talk about their companies. Read 10 annual reports a year outside your industry and study their strategies.

8. **Become a strategic activist.** Pick one distinctive competence or driving force. That’s what the mediocre companies who became successful over time did in James Collins’ latest research. Create a strategic plan for your unit around one distinctive competence—including breakthrough process and product improvements, justify your conclusions by pointing to hard data that points toward your conclusions. Have the plan reviewed by people you trust. Form a consortium with three other individuals or companies; each of you will present a strategic issue and a plan backed up with data and rationale. Agree to review your thinking every three months with this group and write down lessons learned. Analyze three business/organizational success stories in your area and the same number of failures. What did each have in common? How would these principles apply in your situation? What was common to the failures that was never present in the successes?
ISTJs are usually individual achievers who are not attracted to the messiness of teams.

1. **Don’t believe in teams.** If you don’t believe in teams, you are probably a strong individual achiever who doesn’t like the mess and sometimes the slowness of due-process relationships and team processes. You are very results oriented and truly believe the best way to do that is to manage one person at a time. To balance this thinking, observe and talk with three excellent team builders and ask them why they manage that way. What do they consider rewarding about building teams? What advantages do they get from using the team format? Read *The Wisdom of Teams* by Katzenbach and Smith. If you can’t see the value in teams, none of the following tips will help much.

2. **Don’t have the time; teaming takes longer.** That’s true and not true. While building a team takes longer than managing one person at a time, having a well-functioning team increases results, builds in a sustaining capability to perform, maximizes collective strengths and covers individual weaknesses, and actually releases more time for the manager because the team members help each other. Many managers get caught in the trap of thinking it takes up too much time to build a team and end up taking more time managing one-on-one.

3. **Would like to build a team but don’t know how.** High performance teams have four common characteristics: (1) They have a shared mind-set. They have a common vision. Everyone knows the goals and measures. (2) They trust one another. They know “you will cover me if I get in trouble.” They know you will pitch in and help even though it may be difficult for you. They know you will be honest with them. They know you will bring problems to them directly and won’t go behind their backs. (3) They have the talent collectively to do the job. While not any one member may have it all, collectively they have every task covered. (4) They know how to operate efficiently and effectively. They have good team skills. They run effective meetings. They have efficient ways to communicate. They have ways to deal with internal conflict.

4. **Cement relationships.** Even though some—maybe including you—will resist it, parties, roasts, gag awards, picnics, and outings help build group cohesion. Allow roles to evolve naturally rather than being specified by job descriptions. Some research indicates that
people gravitate naturally to eight roles, and that successful teams are not those where everyone does the same thing. Successful teams specialize, cover for each other, and only sometimes demand that everyone participate in identical activities.

5. **Not good at motivating people beyond being results oriented?** Play the motivation odds. According to research by Rewick and Lawler, the top motivators at work are: (1) Job challenge; (2) Accomplishing something worthwhile; (3) Learning new things; (4) Personal development; and (5) Autonomy. Pay (12th), Friendliness (14th), Praise (15th), or Chance of Promotion (17th) are not insignificant but are superficial compared with the five top motivators. Provide challenges, paint pictures of why this is worthwhile, set up chances to learn and grow, and provide autonomy, and you’ll hit the vast majority of people’s hot buttons.

6. **Follow the basic rules of inspiring others** as outlined in classic books like *People Skills* by Robert Bolton or *Thriving on Chaos* by Tom Peters. Communicate to people that what they do is important. Say thanks. Offer help and ask for it. Provide autonomy in how people do their work. Provide a variety of tasks. “Surprise” people with enriching, challenging assignments. Show an interest in their careers. Adopt a learning attitude toward mistakes. Celebrate successes, have visible accepted measures of achievement, and so on. Too often people behave correctly but there are no consequences. Although it’s easy to get too busy to acknowledge, celebrate, and occasionally criticize, don’t forget to reinforce what you want. As a rule of thumb, 4 to 1 positive to negative is best.

7. **To better figure out what drives people, look to:** What do they do first? What do they emphasize in their speech? What do they display emotion around? What values play out for them?

   - **First things.** Does this person go to others first, hole up and study, complain, discuss feelings, or take action? These are the basic orientations of people that reveal what’s important to them. Use these to motivate.

   - **Speech content.** People might focus on details, concepts, feelings, or other people in their speech. This can tell you again how to appeal to them by mirroring their speech emphasis. Although most of us naturally adjust—we talk details with detail-oriented people—chances are good that in problem relationships you’re
not finding the common ground. She talks “detail” and you talk “people,” for example.

■ Emotion. You need to know what people’s hot buttons are because one mistake can get you labeled as insensitive with some people. The only cure here is to see what turns up the volume for them—either literally or what they’re concerned about.

■ Values. Apply the same thinking to the values of others. Do they talk about money, recognition, integrity, efficiency in their normal work conversation? Figuring out what their drivers are tells you another easy way to appeal to anyone.

8. **Establish a common cause and a shared mind-set.** A common thrust is what energizes dream teams. As in light lasers, alignment adds focus, power, and efficiency. It’s best to get each team member involved in setting the common vision. Establish goals and measures. Most people like to be measured. People like to have checkpoints along the way to chart their progress. Most people perform better with goals that are stretching. Again, letting the team participate in setting the goals is a plus.

9. **Learn to be a cultural anthropologist.** In assessing groups, ask yourself: What makes their blood boil? What do they believe? What are they trying to accomplish together? What do they smile at? What norms and customs do they have? What practices and behaviors do they share? Do they not like it if you stand too close? If you get right down to business? Do they like first names or are they more formal? If a Japanese manager presents his card, do you know what to do? Why do they have their cards printed in two languages and executives from the U.S. don’t? Do you know what jokes are okay to tell? What do they believe about you and your group or groups? Positive? Neutral? Negative? What’s been the history of their group and yours? Is this a first contact or a long history? Don’t blunder in; nothing will kill you quicker with a group than showing utter disregard—read disrespect—for it and its norms, or having no idea of how they view your group. Ask people for insights who deal with this group often. If it’s an important group to you and your business, read about it.
Overusing ISTJ Tendencies

If you sometimes overdo your preferred behaviors, you may need to work on:

A  Becoming More Approachable
B  Curbing Arrogance
C  Better Listening and Patience
D  Not Leaving a Trail of Bodies

A  Becoming More Approachable

ISTJs can be quiet and reserved.

1. **Watch your non-verbals.** Approachable people appear and sound open and relaxed. They smile. They are calm. They keep eye contact. They nod while the other person is talking. They have an open body posture. They speak in a paced and pleasant tone. Eliminate any disruptive habits, such as speaking too rapidly or forcefully, using strongly worded or loaded language, or going into too much detail. Watch out for signaling disinterest with actions like glancing at your watch, fiddling with paperwork, or giving your impatient “I’m busy” look.

2. **The magic of questions.** Many people don’t ask enough curiosity questions when in their work mode. There are too many informational statements, conclusions, suggestions, and solutions and not enough “what if,” “what are you thinking,” “how do you see that.” In studies, statements outweighed questions 8 to 1. Ask more questions than others. Make fewer solution statements early in a discussion. Keep probing until you understand what they are trying to tell you.

3. **The first three minutes.** Managing the first three minutes is essential. The tone is set. First impressions are formed. Work on being open and approachable, and take in information during the beginning of a transaction. This means putting others at ease so that they feel okay about disclosing. It means initiating rapport, listening, sharing, understanding, and comforting. Approachable people get more information, know things earlier, and can get others to do more things. The more you can get them to initiate and say early in the transaction,
the more you’ll know about where they are coming from, and the better you can tailor your approach.

4. **Have more fun.** Properly used and delivered, humor can be a constructive influence on those around you. It can increase a feeling of well-being and belonging, it can take the bite out of tension, and it can balance a negative situation for someone or the whole team. There are topics that can be near universally humorous. There are universal traits. Misers, bad drivers, absent-minded people, anything that is understood worldwide as the human condition. There are things that are funny about your life. Have funny kids, pets, hobbies? What’s a ridiculous situation you’ve been caught in lately? There are funny things in the workplace. The jargon of it, memos, ironic rules. Stories from the picnic or the off-site. There is providing relief from our problems. The weather, taxes, any of life’s little indignities and embarrassments. And there is always the news. Most programs have at least one humorous tale, and sometimes the news is funny enough as it is. There are cartoons that most find humorous in the work setting (*The Far Side* and *Dilbert* currently). There are funny jokes that most find funny. Humor that unites people rather than puts down people or groups is always safe. Begin to look for and remember the humor around you. Begin to pass on your observation to a few safe people to test your humor judgment.

5. **Self-humor.** Self-humor is usually safe, seen as positive by others, and most of the time leads to increased respect. Funny and embarrassing things that happened to you (when the airline lost your luggage and you had to wash your underwear in an airport restroom and dry it under the hand dryer). Your flaws and foibles (when you were so stressed over your taxes that you locked the keys in your car with the motor running). Mistakes you’ve made. Blunders you’ve committed. Besides adding humor to the situation, it humanizes you and endears people to you. Anything can of course be overdone, so balance it with seriousness.

6. **Informing.** Do you hold back information unless it’s part of a task or directive? Do you parcel out information on your schedule? Do people around you know what you’re doing and why? Are you aware of things others would benefit from, but you don’t take the time to communicate? In most organizations, these things and things like it will get you in trouble. Organizations function on the flow of information. Being on your own and preferring peace and privacy are okay as long as you communicate things to bosses, peers, and
teammates that they need to know and would feel better if they knew. Don’t be the source of surprises.

**B Curbing Arrogance**

Because ISTJs are orderly, factual, and dedicated, they can come across as know-it-alls.

1. **Arrogant?** Arrogant people are seen as distant and impersonal loners who prefer their own ideas to anyone else’s. They purposefully, or not, devalue others and their contributions. This usually results in people feeling diminished, rejected, and angry. Why? Answers. Solutions. Conclusions. Statements. Dictates. That’s the staple of arrogant people. Not listening. Instant output. Sharp reactions. Don’t want to be that way? Read your audience. Do you know what people look like when they are uncomfortable with you? Do they back up? Stumble over words? Cringe? Stand at the door hoping not to get invited in? You should work doubly hard at observing others. Especially during the first three minutes of an important transaction, work to make the person or group comfortable with you before the real agenda starts. Ask a question unrelated to the topic. Offer them a drink. Share something personal.

2. **Does your style chill the transaction?** Arrogant? Insensitive? Distant? Too busy to pay attention? Too quick to get into the agenda? Always select your interpersonal approach from the other person in, not from you out. Your best choice of approach will always be determined by the other person or group, not you. Think about each transaction as if the other person were a customer you wanted. How would you craft an approach?

3. **Arrogance is a major blockage to building self-knowledge.** Research says that successful people know themselves better. Many people who have a towering strength or lots of success get less feedback and roll along thinking they are perfect until their careers get in trouble. If you are viewed as arrogant, your best chance of understanding it is to get facilitated 360° feedback where the respondents can remain anonymous. It is unlikely you could get useful data from people directly since they don’t think you listen, and it has been painful in the past to try to influence you. Arrogant people typically overrate themselves. Their ratings from others may be lower than they should be because people believe they need to make it look worse than it is to
get through your defiance shield. If you are seen as devaluing others, they will return the favor.

4. **Watch your non-verbals.** Arrogant people look, talk, and act arrogantly. As you try to become less arrogant, you need to find out what your non-verbals are. All arrogant people do a series of things that can be viewed by a neutral party and judged to give off the signals of arrogance. Washboard brow. Facial expressions. Body shifting, especially turning away. Impatient finger or pencil tapping. False smile. Tight lips. Looking away. Find out from a trusted friend what you do, and try to eliminate those behaviors.

**C Better Listening and Patience**

**ISTJs have high standards and a strongly developed sense of right and wrong. They can come across as harsh on those who don’t work as diligently, run slow processes, lack follow-through, or just generally waste their time.**

1. **Blame and vengeance?** Do you feel a need to punish the people and groups that set you off? Do you become hostile, angry, sarcastic, or vengeful? While all that may be temporarily satisfying to you, they will all backfire and you will lose in the long term. When someone attacks you, rephrase it as an attack on a problem. Reverse the argument—ask what they would do if they were in your shoes. When the other side takes a rigid position, don’t reject it. Ask why: What are the principles behind the offer? How do we know it’s fair? What’s the theory of the case? Play out what would happen if their position was accepted. Let the other side vent frustration or blow off steam, but don’t react.

2. **Listening.** Interpersonally skilled people are very good at listening. They listen to understand and take in information to select their response. They listen without interrupting. They ask clarifying questions. They don’t instantly judge. Judgment might come later. They restate what the other person has said to signal understanding. They nod. They might jot down notes. Listeners get more data.

3. **Try to listen without judging initially.** Turn off your “I agree; I don’t agree” filter. You don’t have to agree with it; just listen to understand. Assume when people tell you something they are looking for understanding; indicate that by being able to summarize what they said. Don’t offer advice or solutions unless it’s obvious the person wants to know what you would do. While offering instant solutions is
a good thing to do in many circumstances, it’s chilling where the goal is to get people to talk to you more freely.

4. **Impatience triggers.** Some people probably bring out your impatience more than others. Who are they? What is it about them that makes you more impatient? Pace? Language? Thought process? Accent? These people may include people you don’t like, who ramble, who whine and complain, or who are repetitive advocates for things you have already rejected. Mentally rehearse some calming tactics before meeting with people who trigger your impatience. Work on understanding their positions without judging them—you can always judge later. In all cases, focus them on the issues or problems to be discussed, return them to the point, interrupt to summarize, and state your position. Try to gently train them to be more efficient with you next time without damaging them in the process.

5. **Rein in your horse.** Impatient people provide answers, conclusions, and solutions too early in the process. Others haven’t even understood the problem yet. Providing solutions too quickly will make your people dependent and irritated. If you don’t teach them how you think and how you can come up with solutions so fast, they will never learn. Take the time to really define the problem—not impatiently throw out a solution. Brainstorm what questions need to be answered in order to resolve it. Give your people the task to think about for a day and come back with some solutions. Be a teacher instead of a dictator of solutions. Study yourself. Keep a journal of what triggered your behavior and what the observed consequences were. Learn to detect and control your triggers before they get you in trouble.

6. **Let others be humorous.** Sometimes people who aren’t very humorous (or are very serious) chill and suppress humor in others. Even if you’re not going to work on being more humorous or funny, at least let others be. That will actually help you be seen as at least more tolerant of humor than you were in the past. Eventually, you may even be tempted to join in.

7. **Build a sense of fun for those around you.** Parties, roasts, gag awards, and outings build cohesion. Start celebrating wins, honor those who have gone the extra mile, but don’t honor anyone twice before everyone has been honored once. Working with the whole person tends to build teams.
D  Not Leaving a Trail of Bodies

ISTJs can appear quite judgmental and blaming with low performers and those they disagree with. They can be too quick to act, don’t put enough effort into development, and expect miracle turnarounds.

1. **Cooperative relations.** The opposite of conflict is cooperation. Developing cooperative relationships involves demonstrating real and perceived equity, the other side feeling understood and respected, and taking a problem-oriented point of view. To do this more: Increase the realities and perceptions of fairness—don’t try to win every battle and take all the spoils; focus on the common-ground issues and interests of both sides—find wins on both sides, give in on little points; avoid starting with entrenched positions—show respect for them and their positions; and reduce any remaining conflicts to the smallest size possible.

2. **Causing unnecessary conflict.** Language, words, and timing set the tone and can cause unnecessary conflict that has to be managed before you can get anything done. Do you use insensitive language? Do you raise your voice often? Do you use terms and phrases that challenge others? Do you use demeaning terms? Do you use negative humor? Do you offer conclusions, solutions, statements, dictates, or answers early in the transaction? Give reasons first, solutions last. When you give solutions first, people often directly challenge the solutions instead of defining the problem. Pick words that are other-person neutral. Pick words that don’t challenge or sound one-sided. Pick tentative and probabilistic words that give others a chance to maneuver and save face. Pick words that are about the problem and not the person. Avoid direct blaming remarks; describe the problem and its impact.

3. **Delivering firm messages.** Be succinct. You have limited attention span in tough feedback situations. Don’t waste time with a long preamble, particularly if the feedback is negative. If the feedback is negative and the recipient is likely to know it, go ahead and say it directly. They won’t hear anything positive you have to say anyway. Don’t overwhelm the person/group, even if you have a lot to say. Go from specific to general points. Keep it to the facts. Don’t embellish to make your point. No passion or inflammatory language. Don’t do it to harm or out of vengeance. Don’t do it in anger. If feelings are involved for you, wait until you can describe them, not show them. Managerial courage comes in search of a better outcome, not destroying others.
Stay calm and cool. If others are not composed, don’t respond. Just return to the message.

4. **Are your problem performers confused?** Do they know what’s expected of them? You may not set clear enough performance standards, goals, and objectives. You may be a seat-of-the-pants manager, and some people are struggling because they don’t know what is expected or it changes. You may be a cryptic communicator. You may be too busy to communicate. You may communicate to some and not to others. You may have given up on some and stopped communicating. Or you may think they would know what to do if they’re any good, but that’s not really true because you have not properly communicated what you want. The first task is to outline the 5 to 10 key results areas and what indicators of success would be. Involve your problem direct reports on both ends—the standards and the indicators. Provide them with a fair way to measure their own progress. Employees with goals and standards are usually harder on themselves than you’ll ever be. Often they set higher standards than you would. Sometimes the problem is behavioral, as in someone who can’t control outbursts, and only affects performance on the back end in lost cooperation or sabotage. Then the best approach is to note the gap between behavior and expectations, and point out what some of the observed consequences are. If the person agrees, then coaching may suffice. If the person balks, then a 360º feedback process with follow-up may be needed to illuminate the depth of the problem before any help can be given.

5. **Bring a solution if you can.** Nobody likes a critic. Everybody appreciates a problem solver. Give people ways to improve; don’t just dump and leave. Tell others what you think would be better—paint a different outcome. Help others see the consequences—you can ask them what they think, and you can tell them what the consequences are from your side if you are personally involved (“I’d be reluctant to work with you on X again”).
The results that are gained from my work tend to reinforce what I consider effective, but I tend to bruise people. I have rarely considered other approaches, which I need to do.

– An ISTJ Manager

APPLICATION
Your personal preferences play out in day-to-day problems and situations you face. Below is a case about your type dealing with such a situation. Use this to think through how you will integrate the tips you’ve considered and coach yourself to be more effective in your type.

ISTJ Application Situation (Part 1)
You’re the Chairman of the Board of Directors of an organization in the transportation industry, and before retirement you were CEO of an innovative and successful start-up that developed air navigation systems. The organization you now chair is undergoing profound change, as is your industry, based on a number of interrelated factors, including environmental pressures, more demanding customers, and investor anxiety. This has resulted in a good deal of internal turmoil between upper and middle management, and between front-line management and line employees.

Your CEO, John, has been with the company for 20 years, having risen from his first job as a front-line supervisor, up through the ranks by virtue of being a careful, conscientious, serious-minded and detail-oriented achiever. He also has a steel-trap memory, and in some quarters he’s referred to (not without some sarcasm) as “the history professor.”

Those characteristics served John well in all his previous roles, but now he’s facing new challenges and seems to be staggering. You’ve decided to work more closely with him on a one-to-one basis because you think he can continue to be an asset, but only if he makes some changes.
Thinking It Through: Strategy

- In preparation for your meeting with John, what kind of data do you want to get, and where do you think you should get it?
- What’s your approach going to be in talking with him?

Planning It Out: Tactics

- What barriers to John’s effectiveness (i.e., actions, behaviors) do you anticipate you’d find if you were to interview his peers and direct reports?
- What particular areas would present developmental challenges to John, and what competencies would you want to see him put into play in order to help him meet the new demands of the job?
- Which of the tactics described in the Being More Effective section are applicable in this situation?
- Which Overused Tendencies are most likely to come into play here?

ISTJ Application Situation (Part 2)

- You interviewed other members of the executive team and you gathered the multi-rater assessment data. You also had John complete the MBTI, and his type was identified as ISTJ.

Here’s some of what you learned:

- John’s self-assessed strength as a detail-oriented, thorough, and cautious decision maker is actually viewed by others as an overused strength that is inhibiting innovation and change.
- What John considers to be thoughtfulness and judiciousness, other members of the Board and of the executive team consider to be lack of impact and excess reserve.

Reflection

- Where are you going to begin in coaching John? What should he work on?
- What in his profile can John continue to rely on, what must he minimize, and do you think he has a good chance of making it?
ISTJ READINGS

SUGGESTED READINGS

Being a More Effective ISTJ

Dealing With Ambiguity


Showing Compassion and Caring


Developing Others


Innovation and Strategy


Futurist Magazine. [http://www.wfs.org](http://www.wfs.org)


**Team Building**


### Overusing ISTJ Tendencies

#### Becoming More Approachable


#### Curbing Arrogance


#### Better Listening and Patience


ISTJ READINGS


**Not Leaving a Trail of Bodies**


What makes YOU unique?

• **Research relating MBTI type to work performance.** For the first time, MBTI type is related to effectiveness patterns using data from a variety of sources, including the Center for Creative Leadership.

• **YOU** explains why some skills come more naturally to us and why others are tough to learn or even ignored.

• **YOU** answers the “So what?” question. Being type wise can lead to better performance at work and better relationships while you’re at it!