Learn personality strengths, weaknesses to thrive

What next? Organisations must realise what type of teams work in the entity. PHOTO | FOTOSEARCH

By SCOTT BELLOWS

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Ever received a performance appraisal at work that contains feedback such as “Shows too much emotion”, “Talks too much”, “Too quiet for a leader”, or “Overly sensitive”?

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Personalities reside in all of us. We start off as young children noticing that we react differently to various stimuli than our brothers, sisters, and neighbours.

Then as we grow, society tells us the desirable traits first in students and later in employees that we should we strive to reach.

The Kenyan education system fosters quiet respectful students.

The Western education system, on the other hand, breeds outgoing, engaging students. Then once we reach the workplace, employers expect us to balance our feelings, our emotions, and our passions for networking to meet the company’s needs.

However, most of our personalities become ingrained by the age of six. Try as it may, societal factors such as teacher and the boss input cannot change us. So, sit back, relax, and begin to appreciate who you have become and stop trying to change yourself. Learn the strengths and weaknesses ingrained in your personality and learn techniques to work around leadership issues that you commonly face based on your personality.

So, right now, take ten (10) minutes and complete an abbreviated Myers-Briggs personality test at: http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp

Once you complete the test, write down the four letters and the corresponding percentage for each letter. The percentage shows how strongly you fit each personality type.

Now here in Kenya, there exists a variety of personality types peddled by consultants and lower-end authors of mediocre global books.

However, the mainstay of personality tests worldwide for the past 50 years remains the Myers-Briggs personality test.

It consistently shows reliable data for your own personality and expectations for how such individuals likely behave and the careers where those individuals will likely succeed.
Regarding your four letter combination, there exist 16 personality combinations any human may possess. The most common personality: ISFJ, or “Protector”, garners 13.8 per cent of the global population with about twice as many women as ISFJs than men.

The least common personality: INFJ, or ‘Counsellor’, with only 1.46 per cent of the global population and nearly equally distributed between men and women.

Let us now delineate the sixteen (16) personality types that fit within four (4) main classifications. The four personality types that fall under the ‘Guardian’ category include: ESTJs as ‘Supervisors’, ISTJs as ‘Inspectors’, ESFJs as ‘Providers’, and again ISFJs as ‘Protectors’.

The next grouping consists of ‘Idealists’: ENFJs as ‘Teachers’, INFJs again as ‘Counselors’, ENFPs as ‘Champions’, and INFPs as ‘Healers’. ‘Artisans’ consist of: ESTPs as ‘Promoters’, ISTPs as ‘Crafters’, ESFPs as ‘Performers’, and ISFPs as ‘Composers’.

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Finally, the ‘Rational’ grouping includes: ENTJs as ‘Field Marshals’, INTJs as ‘Masterminds’, ENTPs as ‘Inventors’, and INTPs as ‘Architects’.

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As you notice from the above, the letter combinations range from two letter choices in each position. The first position distinguishes how you view your concept of your favourite world: do you prefer to focus on the outer world (Extraversion - E) or on your own inner world (Introversion - I)?

Source of energy

How do you process the information you receive every day: do you prefer to focus on the basic information you take in (Sensing – S) or do you prefer to interpret and add meaning (Intuition – N)?

The way you make decisions: when making decisions, do you prefer to first look at logic and consistency (Thinking – T) or first look at the people and special circumstances (Feeling – F)? How you prefer to structure your time and life: in dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided (Judging – J) or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options (Perceiving – P)?

Many people mistake extroverts for those who talk the most in group settings and introverts as people who cannot socially navigate interpersonal relationships. However, introverts may prove nearly as capable as extroverts in group settings.

Where does each type get his or her strength? Do you find your energy from interacting with other people? Such people may feel sad if they did not interact with anyone for two days. Alternatively, do you find strength in being alone and doing individual activities that give you the wellbeing to then go out and interact with the world?
Now think carefully. What type of leaders do most global companies strongly prefer: quiet and steady or dominant and powerful?

According to one Business Daily reader who wrote in to USIU and requested to remain anonymous led the Kenyan operations of a global organisation. He described himself as quiet and steady in the workplace with quite active employees.

Later, the entity sacked him citing his “personality deficiency” and replaced him with a dominant and powerful type of leader. Then, within a few short months, the Kenyan operations started to decrease in efficiency then slowly started losing money under the new leader.

Many global companies strongly prefer dominant and powerful leaders. Unfortunately, there exists a disconnect between what science knows and what business does.

An organisation must realise what type of teams work in the entity. It must assess its own teams and the personalities of those teams.

Research across multiple countries shows that dominant and powerful leaders often cause lower organisational performance. Why? Dominance and power leads to over-talking.

Conversely, introverts give more space to proactive employees, listen, and get involved when needed. Proactive employees under an introvert maintain more opportunity to express themselves, show their creativity, develop solutions, and feel that their tasks hold meaning.

Therefore, should we lose hope in extroverted leaders? No.

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First, create an open environment on your team where all team members may express views.

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Second, express the importance of each team member and the value of each contribution.

Third, make sure all team members express all views.

Fourth, practise active listening skills.

Share your own personalities stories through #KenyaPersonalities on Twitter.

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