Personality Development and Soft Skills

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1

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT: A MUST FOR LEADERSHIP AND CAREER GROWTH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Personality is concerned with the psychological pattern of an individual—the thoughts, emotions and feelings—that are unique to a person. In fact,
the totality of character, attributes and traits of a person are responsible for moulding his personality. These inherent personality traits and the different soft skills interact with each other and make a person what he or she is. It helps bring out a number of intrinsic qualities of a person, which are a must in any responsible position.

In simple words, personality is a set of qualities that make a person distinct from another. The word ‘personality’ originates from the Latin word ‘persona’, which means a mask. In the theatre of the ancient Latin-speaking world, the mask was just a conventional device to represent or typify a particular character. It is the sum of the characteristics that constitute the mental and physical being of a person including appearance, manners, habits, taste and even moral character. The personality of a person is how he presents himself to the world; it is how others see him. It has been aptly said:

> Reputation is what people think you are.
> **Personality is what you seem to be.**
> **Character is what you really are.**

When we do something again and again, we form a habit. Ultimately these habits form a particular behaviour. If they recur frequently, they become a part of our psyche. They are reflected in all our activities—what we say, what we do, how we behave in certain circumstances and even in how we think. They become the core of our personality.

**Personality analysis** is thus a methodology for categorizing the character and behaviour of a person. Personality is made up of some characteristic pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviour that make one person different from others.

Each of these individual attributes has its own individual characteristics, as indicated in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1** Personality attributes and their characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual personality attributes</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>Wisdom, sagacity, depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement-oriented</td>
<td>Performance- and goal-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>Sharp, intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Excessive feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>Active, agile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical attributes</td>
<td>Healthy, robust, strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material attributes</td>
<td>Spendthrift, possessive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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According to a theory expostulated by Carl Jung (1875–1961), a contemporary of Freud, all personal characteristics are a by-product of two fundamental attitude types: introversion and extroversion. Extroverts are optimistic, outgoing and confident, while introverts are averse to going out and facing the world outside.

Besides introversion and extroversion, different temperaments of individuals play an important role in determining their personality. Long ago, Greek physician Hippocrates put forward the theory that the temperament of a person is dependent on certain fluids (which he calls ‘humour’) present in the human body. Disproportionate mixtures and increase of any of the humours causes a change in the human temperament.

According to this categorization, human temperaments have been classified into four categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperament</th>
<th>Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanguine temperament</td>
<td>caused by excess of blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melancholic temperament</td>
<td>caused by excess of spleen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlegmatic temperament</td>
<td>caused by excess of phlegm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choleric temperament</td>
<td>caused by excess of bile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual attributes of these temperaments are given in Table 1.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Temperaments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanguine temperament</td>
<td>Optimistic, confident, hopeful, cheerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melancholic temperament</td>
<td>Sad, miserable, gloomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlegmatic temperament</td>
<td>Placid, indifferent, apathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choleric temperament</td>
<td>Angry, irritable, hot tempered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ancient theory of Hippocrates has undergone many modifications but the main principle still holds good. However, these individual attributes are not the only factors that mould the personality: heredity and environment also play a major part in influencing one’s personality.

Here are a few comprehensive case studies illustrating the points discussed.

Through the following three case studies, it will become clear that personality is a multi-dimensional issue with the following key characteristics:

- One’s personality sends out a signal that others read.
- Consciously different personalities can be powerful.
- There is no ‘one right personality’; it differs by role.
1.1.1 Case 1: One’s Personality Sends Out a Signal That Others Read

Nelson Mandela had a towering personality. The world respects him, and knows many aspects of his personality. Yet, as you read through the different anecdotes of this great leader, what strikes you as a refreshing revelation is that Mandela very effectively ‘worked on’ his personality. He was conscious that his personality reflected the confidence he exuded in others, and his demeanour was a signal to his people.

As stated in a TIME magazine article (2008), during a presidential election campaign, Nelson Mandela’s propeller plane developed a snag a few minutes before landing. Mandela, however, continued to be calm, reading a newspaper. The plane had an emergency landing and Mandela came out safe.

Later Mandela said, ‘Man, I was terrified up there!..Of course I was afraid!... But as a leader, you cannot let people know. You must put up a front.’

Richard Stengel wrote in this TIME magazine article about Mandela as he reflected on this episode: ‘And that’s precisely what he learned to do: pretend and, through the act of appearing fearless, inspire others. It was a pantomime Mandela perfected on Robben island, where there was much to fear. Prisoners who were with him said watching Mandela walk across the courtyard, upright and proud, was enough to keep them going for days. He knew that he was a model for others, and that gave him the strength to triumph over his own fear.’

Similarly, while Mandela was always bitter about his long imprisonment, he always put up a positive demeanour about it.

India’s cricket captain, Mahendra Singh Dhoni too sends a cool and composed signal to his team at all times. Even in the most stressful situations, he appears completely in control and unruffled. Yet, internally he churns his thoughts at all times, with a deft combination of planning his moves and being outright street-smart. He is aware that his unflustered exterior is a signal that keeps his team composed and focused, without losing their nerve in crunch situations.

Personality, unlike what many people believe, is not in-born and static. It can be consciously developed and changed. With conscious effort, one can project the desired personality.

For example, in preparation for an interview session, or in one’s professional career, a person may have to work on his personality. Every role comes with certain personality expectations. By consciously working on the desired traits over time and projecting the desired ones, one can make a very tangible change to his original self to meet the expectations.
One's personality is a signal that others read at all times. This includes every gesture and every articulation of the person. This signal is read by the interviewer or by superiors in a professional world. In turn, opinion gets formed and selection choices are made based on such impressions.

In one’s career, it is therefore important to recognize at all times that there is a direct correlation between the personality signal one sends out and one’s career growth. Those who do not align these expectations may get stunted in their careers.

1.1.2 Case 2: Same Person: Consciously Different Personalities can be Powerful

Mandela’s powerful personality always reached his people. Waving hands with a smiling face and wearing bright coloured print shirts showed him as a fulfilled patriarch of modern Africa. His tight fists during his run for the Presidency showed his determined resolve. Wearing fatigues and sporting a beard while he was the leader of the African National Congress’s (ANC’s) underground wing showed his aggression (TIME 2008).

Thus, it is possible, and even desirable, to not have the same personality under all conditions. Consciously working on, and demonstrating different personalities under different conditions can be very powerful.

In a corporate setting, appearance and body language matter. One’s attire, demeanour and style reflect one’s personality. Hence, it is important to consciously work on one’s appearance so that it creates the desired impression during an interview or subsequently in one’s career.

1.1.3 Case 3: There isn’t One Right Personality; It Differs by Role

In an interview for a global team leader position, an experienced candidate, Seema, was pitted against a well-qualified and outspoken John. Seema had worked in several companies, and led small teams. John, on the other hand, was a brilliant researcher and had primarily worked in individual contributor roles.

During the interview for the team leader position, the interviewer presented a case where the work to be done is split across two teams—one in India, the other in the US. The team in India looked at their counterpart in the US as a threat, and vice versa. Each team wanted to get a bigger share of the pie and own more of the quality work than the other.

When John was asked how he would handle the leadership of the India team, he said he would out-maneuvre the US team by demonstrating clear innovation excellence and superiority of his team over its counterpart. He confidently articulated the many methods he would use to showcase to
his management how the work he did will clearly be of higher value and impact. This would ensure increased ownership of the work by the India team, and hence a larger share of the pie.

Seema, however took a completely different view. She said she would first call for a joint face-to-face interaction session between the US and the India teams. The intent would be to break any mental barriers and misgivings between the teams and the respective leaders. She said it is critical that the teams on both sides of the globe think of themselves as one team—since they both represented the same company, working to win against the competition. Subsequent to that session, the teams will work cohesively, supporting each other at all times, to win more customer business. This way, she explained, the total work pie can be grown, benefiting both the teams. It would give both the India team and the US team more responsibilities.

The interview team liked John’s aggression and confidence, but felt that these personality traits, while valuable in many cases, were not appropriate for this role. The current role required a strong ethic of teamwork and global collaboration. John’s focus would lead to more internal strife and competition. He would dissipate more energy on winning internal battles. Seema’s strategy was to build a strong global team and to focus her energy externally to win against competitors.

1.2 LEARNINGS ABOUT PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT FROM THE THREE CASES

The three case studies clearly bring out an important learning:

Personality is our identity, as perceived by others. A particular personality can be groomed.

This is well-stated in a video on personality development by Economic Times (2009), which states:

‘Personality development is a continuous process and the evolution of an individual’s personality is linked to his personal and professional growth. It is often multi-faceted, and individuals display different personalities at different places and in different phases of their life.’

‘The need to develop your personality in line with people, place, time etc., underlines the importance of personality development. The process of personality development requires a set of skills that need to be learned and at times unlearned.’

The three case studies bring out the following:
There is no one right or wrong personality. It varies by the role and situation at hand. An aggressive personality that is critical to achieve success in some situations may be counterproductive in another situation. Similarly, an introverted personality may be better-suited for some roles than an extroverted personality. It is also important to be conscious that one's personality constantly emits a signal for others to read.

Thus, it is important for one to have a deep realization of the role one intends to pursue and its expectations—and work on grooming the desired personality traits.

1.3 PERSONALITY ANALYSIS

Personality is determined by a number of factors. Of these, genetics and/or heredity as well as environment play an important role. Personality is shaped not only by heredity but also by environment. One may inherit intelligence and quite a few personal qualities, but his personality is moulded by the type of environment he faces. The genetic composition of a person brings with it certain personality traits. As a result, one may inherit many mental and quite a few physical traits.

Environment also has a profound influence on the personality of a person. One’s personality can be shaped with proper care and attention right from the early stages of one’s life. The way one is raised, for example, has a lot to do with the way one speaks, makes choices and practically everything one does.

1.4 FREUDIAN ANALYSIS OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

According to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), personality consists of three structures (Fig. 1.1):

- **Id**
- **Ego**
- **Superego**

Of these three, the id is absolutely unconscious; it has nothing to do with reality. It acts per the *pleasure principle* that demands immediate gratification irrespective of the environment.

However, such instant satisfaction of the needs is not always realistic or socially acceptable. Examples of id would be the instinct to grab a beautiful piece of artistry from a museum to satisfy our own craving. Another example could be to want to hit a person in public as a reaction to an abuse.
Next is the ego, which is actively concerned with the reality principle. It intends to realistically meet the demands of the id in accordance with the outside word. Freud considered the ego to be very sensitive and prompt to react to anything it considers unsavoury in the outside world that it confronts. However, having a strong ego has the positive advantage of reacting positively to criticisms and problems. It urges one to proceed forward with determination to achieve the desired goal.

For example, the ego would make the person realize that there is armed security in the museum and there is no way to grab the piece of artistry from the museum. The ego, in the other example, would also tell the person that there is no way to smack the other person who is much stronger physically than him.

Finally, the superego, according to Freud, is the moral branch of personality, which goes beyond being the realistic. It reflects the values and judgement, including the ones developed during one’s childhood upbringing that forces the demands of the id to be met not only realistically but morally. Freud believed that one’s personality is based on the dynamic interactions amongst these three components.

The super ego would reflect, and realize that the consequence of grabbing the piece of artistry from the museum or smacking a person in public would not only be construed as a criminal offence, but will be morally improper. The person may instead choose to look at other options to procure at low cost a replica of the same piece of art. Similarly, instead of hitting, stating a counter-point that communicates strong displeasure may be more appropriate.

It is interesting to note that all-round development of the personality is also the main theme of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

1.5 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA’S CONCEPT OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

According to the Vedantic concept advocated by Swami Vivekananda, all-round harmonious development of personality is possible if proper attention is given to the five dimensions that are involved in forming and developing the human personality.
These five dimensions, which are an integral part of the human personality, are as follows:

1. Physical self
2. Energy self
3. Intellectual self
4. Mental self
5. Blissful self

Only a full and harmonious development of these five personality dimensions can make possible the creation of an all-round human personality.

1.5.1 Physical Self

As the name implies, it is the proper nourishment and growth of the physical body. A healthy mind in a healthy body is the principle of the physical self. Body building and proper exercise boosts not only one’s physical strength but also the moral strength. Swami Vivekananda’s statement, ‘It would be better to play football than to read the Gita’ indicates how strongly he felt about one’s physical self.

1.5.2 Energy Self

Along with the physical self, the energy self is the one without which nothing can sustain for long. The simple act of breathing manifests this type of energy. Well regulated systematic breathing brings solace to the mind, and boosts energy. Feelings of intolerance, impatience, anger and anxiety can be effectively controlled by the energy self.

1.5.3 Intellectual Self

Man has been endowed with the gift of intellect. This gift should be properly cultivated and nurtured. Reading good books and literature that stands the test of time invigorates the mind. The intellectual self is stimulated by the reading of books on philosophy, moral science, and biographies. As Swami Vivekananda says, ‘Fill the mind with high thoughts, highest ideals, place them day and night before you, and out of that will come great work.’

1.5.4 Mental Self

A strong mental self is required for the grooming up of the personality. The mind by nature is restless. It wanders here and there and makes us deviate from our objective. Full control over the mind is a must for everybody. For this, calmness of mind and concentration are necessary, and should be cultivated.
1.5.5 Blissful Self

The blissful self, often called Anandamoy Kosh, is the ultimate goal of mankind. To be a man of personality one has to reach this stage where only bliss or ananda prevails. He who has reached this stage can face the world with a smile. Neither joys nor sorrow of any kind stand in his way. Failure or success, bouquets or brickbats do not distract him from carrying on his work. This leads to his ultimate success, when he gets endowed with higher vision. According to the Swamiji, whenever we attain a higher vision, the lower vision disappears of itself.

This higher vision as enunciated by Swami Vivekananda is reflected in the behavioural traits of highly successful people. Some of these traits like leadership skill, interpersonal skill, resolving conflict or troubleshooting or the attribute of taking bold decisions are of vital importance to a person aspiring to go to the top.

1.6 PERSONALITY BEGETS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Good leadership qualities are the outcome of one’s personality traits.

Who is a leader? It is said that a ‘leader is one who knows the road, who can keep ahead and who has the ability to pull others with him.’ A good leader is dynamic; he wants to get and remain ahead. He possesses mental toughness; nothing can make him deviate from his chosen path. A leader is a man of vision who can influence others to agree to his views, win their confidence and make them traverse the chosen path.

A strong personality is the most important feature of a leader. Such a personality enables him to lead and influence others. Key leadership traits that originate from one’s personality are:

1. Communication skills
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Optimistic, yet balanced outlook
4. Self-confidence, self-assurance
5. Bold thinking and mental strength
6. Ability to strategize
7. Detail orientation
8. Planning (including risk assessment and contingency planning)
9. Clarity of thinking and reasoning
1.7 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Interpersonal skills are an important aspect of one’s personality. In simple
words, it means a congenial and a pleasant interaction of people with others.
The various psychological factors that exist within every human being,
and which consequently influence our behaviour while interacting with
others, are referred to as interpersonal skills. Those possessing effective
interpersonal skills are capable of appropriately communicating with
different people who possess a variety of personality traits. Since this skill is
constantly evaluated by everyone concerned—co-workers to superiors—it
has an important role in one’s career growth.

Though these interpersonal skills are to some extent inherent in oneself,
they can be nurtured and developed with effort. To cultivate interpersonal
skills, the necessary personality and behavioural traits are explained in
Sections 1.7.1–1.7.7.

1.7.1 Resolving Conflict

Often there are chances of interpersonal conflict if a number of people work
together on a project. One can make a mark in such cases by being an effective
mediator, who takes a neutral position. The main concern, in such instances,
should be to look at the overall interest of the organization without creating
any bitterness in the people or team that hold opposing views. One also has
to convince the people about the rationale behind the right decision that
benefits the organization. One who possesses such interpersonal skills to
resolve conflicts gets noticed, since he makes the organization realize that
he can take an objective view considering only the organization’s benefit.

1.7.2 A Smiling Face

A smiling face is always preferable to a gloomy coffee-pot face (Fig. 1.2).
When dealing with team mates, one can get great results just with the help

Fig. 1.2 A smiling face and a grumpy face

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of a cool demeanor and a smiling face. It costs nothing but pays much to keep a cheerful attitude. It can create an infectious aura within the team leading to a positive, energizing and productive ambience.

1.7.3 Appreciative Attitude

If one wants to get the best out of team mates and co-workers, one should appreciate the work the team members have been doing. A small pat in the back or a simple remark such as, ‘well done, ‘way to go’, ‘carry on the good work’, etc., can go a long way to increase their enthusiasm and prompt them to work more efficiently.

1.7.4 Assertive Nature

Even when appreciating others, one should be assertive (Fig. 1.3). One should be very specific—clearly stating the expectation and the reasons behind it, or else it may come across as hollow and superficial. The views should be asserted firmly without being rude.

1.7.5 Communication Skills

This is one of the most important skills. Communicating without ambiguity is the cornerstone of strong performers and leaders. It is possible to avoid many conflicts and be an effective leader by communicating crisply (Fig. 1.4).

1.7.6 Listening Skills

While communicating with anyone, proper attention should be paid to what others have to say. Listening
is a vital skill (Fig. 1.5). It plays an important role in improving relationships and teaming in a corporate setting.

1.7.7 Developing Empathy

The word ‘empathy’ simply means to understand and appreciate another person’s position. In other words, it implies putting oneself in somebody else’s shoes and trying to understand how one would have felt if he were in the same position as the recipient of the situation.

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1.8 THE PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTE OF TAKING BOLD DECISIONS

One of the hardest amongst all the personality attributes is the ability to take bold decisions. Such decisions are not easy to take—because these are almost always unpopular. These decisions do not get immediate or easy consensus. On the contrary, these are often resisted by the majority. These have many potential downsides, such as employee demotivation, attrition, etc. These require leaders to swim against the tide or take actions that are likely to rock the boat.

A vast majority of people tend to play safe. It is easy to maintain the status-quo. It is far simpler to go with the majority or the popular view. The major downside to such weak leadership that it does not confront the difficult issues that stare at the organization and the call for tough change. It leads to steady business decline over a period of time. Leaders who practise such safe approaches are often the ones who are stuck after getting their first break.

However, strong leaders do not shy away from taking bold calls. They possess the mental toughness, and are not concerned about bouquets or brickbats that come their way. However, they do not take the tough calls blindly. Instead, they think through the possible impact and risks of such tough decisions and always have the right contingency actions in place. The creativity trait in their personality often brings up new perspectives that are fresh, innovative and out-of-the-box. They also re-double their communication frequency when taking such bold decisions, so that the organization appreciates the rationale and the benefits from such bold actions. Their commanding grip over the situation and their position get other people to listen to them and win their confidence. Very often this leads to the organization finally rallying behind such leaders with much hope, pride and expectation for better career growth.

Inability to take bold decisions promptly at the proper time may cause immense harm to any organization. In contrast, the ability to take bold decisions is considered to be the most important quality, the possession of which is a great help to anybody eager to progress to the higher rungs in his professional career.

1.9 PERSONALITY TYPES AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Good leadership qualities are the outcome of different types of personality traits.
Psychologists have categorized personality types as follows, based on the Enneagram (Hudson and Riso 1996), which dates back at least two thousand five hundred years.

1. Perfectionists 6. Questioners
2. Helpers 7. Enthusiasts or adventurers
3. Achievers 8. Bosses or asserters
4. Romantics 9. Mediators or peacemakers
5. Observers

It is critical to note that an individual’s personality should not be made to force-fit into one of these categories. Inherent in individuals is a mix of personalities, which shows itself in different circumstances and contrasting environments. In one’s career too, one needs to demonstrate a combination of these personalities that best suits the situation.

Each of these personality attributes also bring out different classes of leadership. Working with leaders that exhibit these characteristics at different stages of one’s career can be a great learning opportunity for professionals.

1.9.1 Mapping the Different Personality Types

The different personality types can be described as follows.

1.9.1.1 Perfectionists

Leaders who are perfectionists set a very high bar of expectation for themselves. They are principled leaders with the following personality traits:

Strive for excellence in everything they do—however large or small
Perfection in content and look-and-feel are both important to them. These leaders are very dedicated, and have an extremely intense work ethic. As a natural consequence, such leaders often expect the same from their people. Their motto for their team is to do every aspect of the job in a way that cannot be improved upon.

Foundation built on a strong focus of quality To such leaders, a flaw in execution is an absolute no-no. Hence, to ensure flawless execution, they develop and pursue systematic processes with intense rigour. These processes include multiple checks-and-balances at each step to ensure that errors surface in the early stages and get rectified.
**Lofty standards** Another characteristic of such leaders is setting lofty standards. They benchmark themselves with the highest global standards, and strive for themselves and their teams to achieve the same. They have internal metrics to constantly compare themselves and their teams against the benchmark. Their high standards make them respected by their people for the quality of what they produce.

However, perfectionist leaders could potentially get slowed down by the weight of their own expectations. It is not uncommon to see programmes led by such leaders getting delayed over and over again. This happens due to the perfectionists’ constant desire to improve, without making a judgement call on the right time to stop, and move on to the next programme.

Individuals wanting to pursue a career in a design can learn from perfectionists. Companies which look at design as their core competency value the skills of perfectionists.

**1.9.1.2 Helpers**

These leaders seek out opportunities to assist others. They are often good coaches and sounding boards for their people. Their personality is built on sincere skills to listen to, and to understand the needs of others. These leaders thrive on building and nurturing relationships.

Three key attributes of these leaders that are based on strong interpersonal skills are:

1. **Smiling demeanor** They have a pleasant personality, are optimistic, and have a cheerful attitude not only about work, but also about life.

2. **Generously appreciative** To get the best out of their teams and peers, they are always generously appreciative of the work they do. They do not lose an opportunity to encourage their people and give a pat on their back to increase their team’s enthusiasm to encourage further contributions. They show that they care.

3. **Empathy** This implies understanding the position of someone from one’s own position. In other words, these leaders put themselves in the other’s shoes and try to understand how they would feel if they were in the same position.

Helpers, however, often get trapped in their over-zealousness to please and support many people. Their weakness is their inability to say ‘no’. They cannot turn down requests from others. Thus, they bring unto themselves huge mental stress as more and more people get to depend on them.
Strong leaders who exhibit this personality trait find a way to overcome this handicap, by coming up with a scalable model with others sharing the load of supporting the people who are dependent on them.

Individuals looking for roles in human Resources or coaches/mentors in organizations can build the ‘helper’ personality.

1.9.1.3 Achievers

These are leaders who excel in a single-minded pursuit of their goals. What characterizes these leaders is their focus and relentless pursuit of moving ahead while removing obstacles that come their way.

These leaders have the following personality traits:

1. **Goal setting**  These leaders set aggressive, but realistic goals. They begin with a clear vision of what they set out to do for their work groups and for themselves. They break it up into near-term milestones for the teams—and ensure that the team remains focused on them at all times.

2. **Execution**  Achievers are highly execution-oriented and this is their biggest strength. They overcome barriers that come their way. They plan well, monitor risks at all times, and provide for contingencies. They are also known for building a culture of efficiency in their organization. Lack of efficiency and competence in their teams that slows execution frustrates them. Speed means a lot to achievers—and they do everything to inculcate these traits amongst their team members.

Learning from achievers can give a jump-start to a young professional’s career. By observing such leaders, one can understand the art and science of goal-setting and instill in themselves the spirit of maniacal execution.

People with highly ambitious career goals develop the personality traits of achievers and learn from those who practice it effectively.

1.9.1.4 Romantics

Romantics are idealistic leaders. They crave for utopia—in terms of where they want to see themselves, and their groups and organization. They set goals that may not be realistic—but ones that ‘looks and feels glamorous’. They are expressive and often excel in artistic pursuits as part of, or in addition to their chosen profession.

Some personality traits of romantics are:

1. **Set lofty vision that may not be grounded in reality**  These leaders lack realism. They dream and set goals that are impossible to meet—but create a (short-lived) feel-good ambience.
2. Lack focus and are poor in taking decisions  Romantics are unable to focus on a goal and take hard decisions that are needed to move forward in pursuit of the vision.

3. Kind and people-friendly  They are kind-hearted, humorous, love to interact with people, can spend long hours discussing how things should be (and are not today).

1.9.1.5 Observers

These leaders have a strong sixth sense. They are highly intuitive in gauging situations.

1. Intuitive  Observers are highly perceptive. They have a keen power to process the events around them, do a causal analysis, and come to their own conclusion. They are more curious than others, and often get deeply entangled in analyzing seemingly minor events around them for a long time.

2. Critical  The observations made by these leaders lead to critical and sharp conclusions, sometimes bordering on pessimism.

3. Loner  Observers are loners. In fact, they appreciate being left alone and be given the time to analyse situations in depth.

    Observers like to be respected for their well thought through views and in-depth analysis. They do not take to criticism very lightly and tend to get argumentative if doubted.

    In one’s career, having some aspect of the traits of the observer can help an individual be perceptive of the situation around them, and take the right career decisions.

1.9.1.6 Questioners

These are leaders who keep an organization honest and move in the right direction without getting into complacency. Key attributes of questioners are:

1. Analytical skills  Questioners possess the gifted ability to think on their feet. They have a sharp analytical bent of mind which helps them in finding flaws in arguments and in the rationale.

2. Lateral thinking  These leaders possess the skills for lateral thinking. When most others in a team are naturally drifting towards a conclusion, questioners bring in fresh perspective and lateral thinking.
3. Articulate  These leaders communicate crisply and forcefully. They are usually respected for their views.

      Having questioners in a team can be an asset to ensure an organization does not drift in the wrong direction. They may come across sometimes as negative or ones who slow down the standard process, but they may be ignored at the organization’s peril.

      These leaders allow one to think through the non-obvious and thereby avoid risky pitfalls. They also ensure that teams do not get into the trap of group-think in the wrong direction.

1.9.1.7 Enthusiasts or Adventurers

Enthusiasts lend an air of optimism around them. They have the following attributes:

1. Variety  They thrive on variety. Enthusiasts tend to move from one role to another, and even change professions completely over the course of their career.

2. Story teller  Enthusiasts love to dream a future, and tend to get their teams excited about it. These dreams may not be grounded in reality, but that does not bother the enthusiasts. They tell stories to their teams about how the world will be in their desired future state.

3. Spontaneous  They are spontaneous, have high energy and eternally optimistic. Often they have an infectious personality that rallies people around them.

      Enthusiasts or adventurers, however, fail to sometimes carry through on their commitments. Their execution and attention to detail are sloppy, and need strong people to balance them.

      People interested in following a career in public speaking need to have some traits of Adventurers, as they go from one situation to the other, telling stories of successes and new models for growth.

1.9.1.8 Bosses or Asserters

People with the ‘Boss’ personality are those with high determination and are possessed with a sense of direction. They have a clear idea of the direction to be taken, and are dismissive of other’s views.

      Some of the traits bosses or asserters exhibit are:

1. Courageous  Asserters have strong conviction of thought. They have an independent mindset, and are confident of their approach. They are not afraid to take unpopular decisions.
2. Power orientation  They love to have the power and even demonstrate the power to their subordinates and peers. They come across as dominating in meetings and sometimes are poor listeners.

3. Supportive of team  Strange as it may seem to some, asserters fight for their people and protect them in discussions where their worth is challenged.

Asserters are strong personalities who may be dismissive of good suggestions from their team members, if these are contrary to their opinion. Extremely assertive leaders sometimes lead to a high-stress situation in organizations, and often cause burn-out.

One who needs to turnaround an organization from a crisis by taking hard decisions can learn from the skills of asserters.

1.9.1.9 Mediators or Peacemakers

An organization cannot do without peacemakers. Conflicts are common in any organization, and peacemakers ensure these do not go out of hand. While peacemakers play an important, sometimes invisible role in an organization, they sometimes feel frustrated at the lack of due recognition for the thankless role they play.

Peacemakers are characterized by the following:

1. Good at arbitration and trustworthy  These leaders observe situations and carefully listen to positions of all concerned. They then deftly look for possible middle-ground. They are trusted by all, because they do not play games and are genuinely interested in a solution. This helps them to be effective in volatile situations.

2. Hate conflict  Peacemakers try to take the steam out of confrontational situations. They tell the warring parties why ‘winning’ is inconsequential and take both sides to a compromise. They thrive in harmony.

3. Like to be respected  They have an inherent desire to be respected for the critical role they play in an organization to keep the harmony.

But whatever might be the types of personality of a leader, leadership in general means the ability to influence others and convert them to their own opinion. A leader is capable of changing the scenario from you versus me, to you and me. It has been said that a leader is a person who knows the road, who can keep ahead and who pulls others with him. A leader gains the confidence of others because he has confidence in himself whatever might
be the adversities he faces. He knows that even if he can’t direct the winds, he can at least adjust the sails. He understands how to win the heart of others and win his objective.

Leadership qualities can be ascertained with the help of different kinds of personality tests.

1.10 PERSONALITY TESTS

Personality tests are today an important aspect of all pre-interview screening. It provides the employer with valuable insights of an employee before they are hired. It is also a predictor of how they would react in different situations.

While each company has its own personality tests, many of them are variations of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). An example questionnaire from a personality test is listed in this chapter.

MBTI serves as an indicator of the personality of individuals, their likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. It also gives a peek into their decision-making process.

While there is no right or wrong answer in a personality test, employers looking for a specific personality to suit a role, often seek out people with certain traits. For example, when looking for a sales position, they would look for a person with a distinctive extraversion trait. A sample Personality Test that is commonly used by companies today is given in the following section.

1.10.1 Example of a Personality Test: Jung Typology Test

The MBTI assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. These preferences were extrapolated from the typological theories proposed by Carl Gustav Jung and first published in his 1921 book *Psychological Types* (English edition, 1923).

The questionnaire, consisting of 72 questions has two options for each question—YES or NO, as depicted in the excerpt shown below. One should pick the option that they feel applies to them the most. Even if one is unsure, one should go with one’s instinct. Responding to all the questions will fetch the most reliable result.

To take the test you may go to the following URL:

http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp
1. You are almost never late for your appointments
   ○ YES  ○ NO
2. You like to be engaged in an active and fast-paced job
   ○ YES  ○ NO
3. You enjoy having a wide circle of acquaintances
   ○ YES  ○ NO
4. You feel involved when watching TV soaps
   ○ YES  ○ NO
5. You are usually the first to react to a sudden event: the telephone ringing or unexpected question
   ○ YES  ○ NO

1.10.2 Personality Assessment

Based on the MBTI assessment, the personalities of candidates are assessed. Each person is classified by a combination of four dichotomies, from 16 possible combinations. Each of these types is denoted by the first letter (except in case of iNtuition) of the personality trait. Knowing these dichotomies helps the person to be more aware of his personality. These characteristics are also used by employers to assess, develop or group employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The four dichotomies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Introversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensing</td>
<td>iNtuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judging</td>
<td>Perceiving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, two persons assessed as ESTJ and INFP have the following personality traits:

**ESTJ**—Extraversion, Sensing, Thinking, Judging

**INFP**—Introversion, Intuition, Feeling, Perceiving

**CONCLUSION**

Personality is a continuum. Every individual possesses a mix of contrasting personalities. However, it is important to reflect upon one’s career aspiration, and build the personality profile over time that is suited to the need. Working with leaders that possess the desired attributes is a great way to imbibe some of the characteristics over time.
EXERCISES

A. Questions
B. Self-description
C. Analyse your traits

A. Questions
1. Analyse the evolving personalities of Mahatma Gandhi at any three stages of his life.
2. What personality traits are most effective for a leader who has inherited a loss-making company and needs to achieve a turnaround?
3. Illustrate how the same person’s personality may change as a leader, a team player, a husband, a parent and a son.
4. How does personality change under (a) stress and (b) anger? How should one deal with these traits?
5. What should be the objective of negotiations? Which personality traits make one a successful negotiator?
6. Analyse your strengths and weaknesses in your current job. Now do the same for your previous role and comment on the differences.
7. Whose personality is likely to lead to faster career growth—one who glorifies his real successes (much more than the disappointments) or one who presents both in a balanced manner? Why?
8. Through real-life anecdotes, state some of the bold actions taken by leaders who you admire the most.

It is also important to note that personality varies by role. The same person, at an early stage of his career can be more introverted. As his role changes later in his career, he can develop the extraversion trait. Likewise another person may be very sensitive and have a personality that is more touchy-feely when interacting with children, while he may be very analytical and of the thinking-type in the setting where he is driving a project.

Whatever be the personality one chooses, the most important thing to bear in mind is that one’s personality radiates itself as a signal in all directions. It is observed in its minutest detail by others, more than one realizes. Making this reality work to one’s advantage can be a key lever to one’s career success.
B. Self Description

On a sheet of paper note down adjectives that best describe you. For each adjective, provide an illustration from your life to substantiate your claim. Now make a list of the personality traits you would like to have and why. Try to determine ways in which you can achieve these.

C. Analyse your Traits

Grade yourself on the following personality traits.

- Adaptability
- Compassion
- Conscientiousness
- Drive
- Leadership
- Optimism
- Poise
- Self-esteem
- Attitude
- Confidence
- Creativity
- Energy
- Maturity
- Organization
- Responsibility
- Sense of humour

References


