

Five Lenses of Coaching

by Linda V. Berens

What does it take to use type well as a coaching tool? Coaching ranges from supporting the client and asking powerful questions to giving information, suggestions, and assignments. No matter what your coaching approach, you will be more effective if you use more than one lens and you have a solid knowledge of each of the 16 types as a whole.

I use five lenses when working with clients Whole Type, Keirseyan Temperaments, Interaction Styles, Cognitive Dynamics, and Systemic Influences. In coaching, getting people to find the best-fit type is crucial. One of my Qualifying Program graduates had a coaching client who had been through a leadership program where the MBTI® was used. When he questioned his instrument results (INTP), he was told that's what he was. Then he made career choices based on those results and started a home-based research business. As my client worked with him, she quickly recognized that INTP did not seem to fit. Through self-discovery using these five lenses, the client decided that INFJ was the best-fit type. This process was very valuable. The client had very valuable information from each lens to help him make decisions that were right for him and the coach had a better idea of how to communicate with her client more effectively.

Whole Type

To recognize a type by the whole pattern is very useful in helping people clarify their types as the coach can quickly see what is fitting and suggest a description to read for a better fit. And you will find the other lenses of type work even better because you will be more accurate. Using whole type is not just about the characteristics of the preferences or type dynamics. Notice aspects of the INFJ theme developed by Dario Nardi that you can't quite attribute to a preference in the following excerpt:

Foreseer Developer— *Personal growth. Sustain the vision. Honoring the gifts of others. Taking a creative approach to life. Talent for foreseeing. Exploring issues. Bridge differences and connect people. Practical problem solving. Live with a sense of purpose. Living an idealistic life often presents them with a great deal of stress and a need to withdraw.* (page 8)

This lens is essential for self-knowledge as clients read and learn more about themselves. It is also useful for coaches in identifying sources of blind spots and foibles the client may be having trouble with. Notice the INFJ theme in this excerpt from Dr. Nardi under the heading "Reminders for Personal Growth." . . . Balance what is supportive, friendly, and safe with what challenges the thinking behind your opinions. Have outlets to express life's many layers and levels. (page 33) This could spark a coach in how to help the client with appropriate suggestions or questions.

Temperament

Temperament information is so powerful and profound that people remember it long after they forget other information. It gives information about core psychological needs and values and the talents that help get those needs met and values realized. We usually are unaware of these needs, yet they are so important that when not met, they often unconsciously drive ineffective behavior. As a coach, the most powerful questions you can ask yourself when someone is trying to change or seems blocked in their growth is "How is this problem getting their needs met?" and then "How else could they get their needs met?" Often, what they need is a place to exercise their talents. In the case above, the INFJ client wasn't using his talents of diplomacy in the research job he had set up for himself. No wonder he was dissatisfied!

Some Essential Characteristics of the Four Temperaments [4]				
	Artisan	Guardian	Rational	Idealist
Core Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom to act on needs of the moment Have impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership; belonging a place Responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge and Competence Mastery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep meaning and significance Unique identity
Some Core Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety Skillful Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security Predictability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress Logical Consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authenticity Empathic relationships
Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tactics Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logistics Protecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy Design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diplomacy Advocacy
Type Code	_S_P	_S_J	_NT_	_NF_

It also can serve as a cross-check for type verification. If the client's identified type code is truly the best-fit one, the predicted temperament pattern will match and they will relate to the core needs and values and talents.

Interaction Styles

Temperament tells us why we do things, our deep motivations. Interaction Styles tells us how we do them. The four Interaction Styles gives us information about the psycho-physiological drives we have. These patterns are often the source of conflict as well as dissatisfaction with our roles. Interaction Styles information will open your client's eyes to many ways to adapt and change their behaviors as well as their life choices. Like temperament, this lens can provide a good cross-check for type verification. In the case, INFJ has a Chart-the-Course style and the INTP code, a Behind-the-Scenes style. This helped clarify the client's best-fit.

Some Essential Characteristics of the Interaction Styles [5]				
	In-Charge	Chart-the-Course	Get-Things-Going	Behind-the-Scenes
Drive	Urgent need to accomplish	Pressing need to anticipate	Urgent need to involve	Pressing need to integrate
Core Belief	It's worth the risk to go ahead and act or decide.	It's worth the effort to think ahead to reach the goal.	It is worth the energy to involve everyone and get them to want to . . .	It's worth the time to integrate and reconcile many inputs.
Aim	Get an achievable result	Get a desired result.	Get an embraced result	Get the best result possible
Some stressors	Feeling like the situation is out of control.Nothing being accomplished.	Having no plan of action.Not seeing progress.	Not being a part of what's going on.Feeling unliked or not accepted.	Not enough input or credit.Pressed to decide before information is integrated.
Type Codes	ENFJ, ESTJ, ENTJ, ESTP	INFJ, ISTJ, INTJ, ISTP	ENFP, ESFJ, ENTP, ESFP	INFP, ISFJ, INTP, ISFP

Cognitive Dynamics

This lens is one of the most powerful in coaching. Cognitive Dynamics includes dynamic relationships among preferences for using the cognitive processes (function-attitudes) whether as in Beebe's model or the hierarchy of functions model. It also includes type development. Like the other lenses, it helps greatly in type clarification. In the example above, the coach was able to help her client see how he might have reported preferences for INTP since it was a time in his life where he was likely developing introverted Thinking. In this way, the client was able to feel good about his earlier choices that were growth oriented. It also made sense that there was some appeal to research.

Systemic Influences

Type cannot effectively be used for any application without attention to systemic influences—those aspects of life that often complicate type identification and clarification. These are often the sources of pressure in the client's life. They include culture, gender, responses to developmental spaces, Life Themes and organizational culture or name a few. The professional coach must always use type in relation to these forces. With the INFJ client, reporting INTP as male, HR manager in an administrative role might make a lot of sense. Also, being in a developmental space of values identification, he may have been in a more skeptical wondering mode at the time, rather than a believing mode.

These five lenses work well together and can open up a world of difference to the client and make your work as coach more effective.

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About Linda V. Berens

Linda V. Berens is the founder of Interstrength® Associates, which provides organizational consulting and interventions as well as certification of trainers in the Interstrength® assessments and method and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) Qualification programs. Linda has spent over twenty-five years helping individuals and teams recognize their strengths, transcend their weaknesses, and work together better. Linda is recognized internationally for her theoretical contributions to the field of psychological type and for developing user-friendly training materials for practical application of understanding personality differences. Linda is the author of *Understanding Yourself and Others®: An Introduction to the 4 Temperaments—3.0* and coauthor of *The I in TEAM: Accelerating Performance of Remote and Co-Located Teams* as well as many other publications.