



The 16PF[®] and MBTI[®] questionnaires - a perfect match

By John Hackston

Choosing the right personality questionnaire to meet your needs can be difficult. One aspect of this is deciding whether to use one that is 'type'-based, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[®] (MBTI[®]) questionnaire, or one that is 'trait'-based, such as the 16PF[®] questionnaire. They both have their own specific benefits and features, and deliver different insights into human behaviour.

Often, one questionnaire may not provide all the information needed. Human beings are complex and unique creatures. To understand them, we benefit from combining a number of different but complementary approaches and models. In fact, Isabel Briggs-Myers, who co-developed the MBTI questionnaire, has been quoted as saying that the most powerful assessment of behavioural style is achieved through the combined use of 16PF and MBTI analysis.

Type vs. trait

Type-based questionnaires help an individual to decide which of two or more distinct types best fits them. For the MBTI questionnaire, an individual can have a preference for Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I), Sensing (S) or Intuition (N), Thinking (T) or Feeling (F), and Judging (J) or Perceiving (P). Unlike trait questionnaires, each dimension is a dichotomy; the individual is either Extraverted or Introverted. The combination of the four dichotomies gives 16 different types.

Trait-based questionnaires measure a number of traits of human personality. For example, the 16PF questionnaire divides personality into 16 different 'personality factors'. Each of these traits or factors is a continuum – so an individual can, for example, be more or less open to change compared with other people.

Complementary approaches

The two questionnaires were developed with different objectives in mind, and as a result give very different insights into an individual's personality. However, for some applications both can be used and the combination of these two different approaches provides a fuller picture of the person. This combined approach is particularly useful in individual development, teambuilding and career counselling.



The contrasting benefits of each questionnaire are:

MBTI

Based on Jung's well-researched theory of personality.

Provides inside-out approach.

Helps people increase their self-awareness, and hence their understanding of others.

Provides a straightforward way for individuals to grasp the essence of their own personality and of why other people see the world and do things differently.

Gives a rounded picture of the whole personality.

Provides a particular insight into how the individual takes in information and makes decisions.

For individuals who have previously completed trait-based instruments such as the 16PF questionnaire, receiving MBTI feedback provides a useful alternative reference point.

16PF

Based on statistical analysis and observation of human behaviour.

Provides outside-in approach.

Describes the underlying influences on an individual's behavioural style and their impact on real-life situations.

Gives a more detailed picture of how different or how similar the individual is to other people, on a larger number of dimensions of personality.

Gives a detailed and specific picture of the individual.

Provides a particular insight into the feelings and emotions of the individual.

For individuals who have previously completed the type-based MBTI questionnaire, 16PF feedback provides a way of extending the MBTI interpretation in new and more detailed ways.

The MBTI questionnaire looks at personality from an 'inside out' perspective. That is, it defines an individual's behaviour as an expression of their personal preferences. The 16PF questionnaire takes an 'outside in' approach. It infers information about an individual's personality by measuring observable behaviours. The contrasting approaches of these two questionnaires provides added value when they are used together, particularly in application areas such as:

- Development centres
- Management development
- Leadership development
- Coaching



Combined application

After each questionnaire has been completed, maximum benefit can then be gained by interpreting and feeding back the two sets of resulting information together. For example, while looking at the Extraversion/Introversion preference within the MBTI results, it is relevant to discuss the Warmth, Dominance and Social Boldness detail from the 16PF scales.

Real insight and value can be gained when slightly different messages emerge. For example, conflicting results can mean that although an individual shows certain preferences in their MBTI results, their current working environment values and rewards opposing behaviours. Consequently, this person would probably be spending a lot of time and effort adjusting their behaviours. Feeding this back to the individual can be a powerful springboard for highly insightful developmental discussions. When this is part of the development or coaching programme, it can help to significantly enhance levels of self-awareness, and can help the individual to adjust for differences between their personal preferences and expected behaviours.

Practical considerations

Taken together, these two questionnaires provide a powerful and flexible toolkit for the assessment of an individual's personality. To gain maximum benefit, however, it is important to bear the following points in mind:

- although these tools can be combined in many scenarios, selection is not one of them. The 16PF questionnaire was designed to be used in this context, but the MBTI questionnaire was not and never should be. This is because MBTI results provide no information about an individual's ability and also only show an individual's preferences rather than predicting how they might actually behave
- following up the combined administration of these two questionnaires with a feedback session is crucial. As well as providing the opportunity to discuss, understand, and agree the results, the feedback giver can explain how the two questionnaires fit together and how the results complement each other, and relate this to organisational requirements
- it is important to assimilate the results of the two questionnaires. The combination of the output from the 16PF and MBTI questionnaires and the insights gained during the feedback session make for a very powerful development tool for the individual.

Although every person's profile is unique, there are interesting correlations between the 16PF and the MBTI profiles. Recent research conducted by OPP[®] shows that the 16PF scales can be effectively mapped against the MBTI preferences and also reveals interesting patterns of results.



People who have already received this combined feedback state that not only did they have a wider picture of their personality, but also said that by looking at both sets of results together (the inside-out view of the MBTI and the outside-in view of the 16PF), each could be seen in context, giving them a deeper understanding of who they really are

The relationship between the 16PF and MBTI questionnaires

OPP has carried out data analysis with almost 700 UK managers and professionals who completed both questionnaires as part of counselling and development interviews. This research showed not only that the 16PF factors related to each individual MBTI type dichotomy (E or I, S or N, T or F, J or P) in ways which were predicted, but also that there was an extremely neat fit between MBTI's whole type and the 16PF factors.

Analysis of the data further showed that:

- Extraverted (E) types tend to be more Socially Bold, Lively, Warm and Dominant; Introverted (I) types tend to be more Private and Self-Reliant.
- Sensing (S) types tend to be more Perfectionist; Intuitives (N) tend to be more Open to Change and Abstract.
- Feeling (F) types tend to be more Sensitive, Warm and Apprehensive and Thinking (T) types less so.
- Judging (J) types tend to be more Perfectionist and Rule-conscious; Perceiving (P) types tend to be more Abstract.
- Looking at whole type, it is remarkable how precisely type combinations relate to most of the 16PF factors. For example, the four types with the highest score on Warmth all have a preference for Extraversion and Feeling and the four types with the lowest score all have a preference for Introversion and Thinking.

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