

Should a top manager be extrovert or introvert?

Or How to use “MBTI” as an effective assessment instrument

R: We hear a lot about being extrovert or introvert. What should a top manager rather be?

MT: The answer is not so simple. We all have elements of extroversion and introversion within us, just the weight of these elements is different from person to person. At the same time every management situation requires a different combination of extroversion and introversion. The question is really what is the fitting balance compared to specific requirements.

R: You recently studied the MBTI assessment method. How can this help a manager to find out more about him/herself?

MT: Within MBTI the terms “Extroversion” and “Introversion” are used to describe one of the innate preferences we have got according to the Jungian theory. This preference indicates where we prefer to focus our attention and get our energy. Just for an illustration: People who prefer extroversion receive their energy from interacting with people and from taking action. Whereas people who prefer introversion receive energy from reflecting on their thoughts, memories and feelings. This doesn't mean the second group of people wouldn't have any social skills! Let's take an example of two managers who spent their morning in meetings. The manager with the extroversion preference is buzzing with energy by the lunch time. The energy level of the manager with the preference for introversion, on the contrary, is rather low. They both continue with a solitary activity – writing a detailed report – in the afternoon. This activity helps the manager with the introversion preference to gain his energy back. Whereas the energy level of the manager with the preference for extroversion decreases rapidly and he seeks to balance it back with some group sport activity afterwards. The whole theory is naturally much more complex.

R: What is actually the MBTI about? Can you give us a short summary?

MT: The MBTI stands for Myers Briggs Type Indicator. The indicator is based on the psychological theories of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. The practical assessment model was developed by two non-psychologists (Myers and Briggs). In his theory, Jung explained the normal differences between healthy people. He concluded the differences in behavior result from people's inborn tendencies to use their minds in different way. People differ in the way where they focus their attention and get their energy (as described above), the way they prefer to gather information and the way they make their decisions. The MBTI instrument assesses preferences for four pairs of opposite modes or styles (Extroversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling and Judging/Perceiving). It is important to note that all preferences are equally valuable and they are not the same as abilities and skills.

R: How to make the best use of the MBTI instrument?

The MBTI instrument helps to learn about ourselves and at the same time learn to appreciate differences between people. It also allows us to understand how different types can work together in a complementary way. When talking about the workplace the MBTI finds application in improving working relationships, developing own leadership style, improving communication, helping to manage change and understanding reactions to stress.

Ms Mariana Turanová and the whole TARGET Executive Search team is happy to talk to you about the best ways how to use this unique tool to increase your organization efficiency.

(Based on the interview with Ms Mariana Turanová, Managing Partner Slovakia at TARGET Executive Search. Ms. Turanova is MBTI Step 1 Certified Practitioner.)