



# Contents

## Introduction 1

- Organization of This Booklet 2
- A Note About Type Knowledge 2
- Using This Booklet 3
- Ethical Issues in Using the MBTI® Tool for Retention 3
- Key Points 4

## Why Retention? 5

- The Prevalence of Turnover 6
- The Cost of Turnover 8
- The Benefits of Retention 9
- Key Points 10

## Type and the Retention Process 11

- Type and Attraction 12
- Type and Selection 14
- Type and Development 15
- Type and Decision 17
- Key Points 20

## Type and the Three “Fit Factors” 21

- Fit Between Type and Job Tasks 21
- Fit Between Type and Organizational Culture 23
- Fit Between Manager and Employee Types 26
- Key Points 27

## Descriptions of the 16 Types 29

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| ISTJ 30 | INFJ 38 |
| ISTP 31 | INFP 39 |
| ESTP 32 | ENFP 40 |
| ESTJ 33 | ENFJ 41 |
| ISFJ 34 | INTJ 42 |
| ISFP 35 | INTP 43 |
| ESFP 36 | ENTP 44 |
| ESFJ 37 | ENTJ 45 |

## Notes 46

## Resources 47

# Introduction

**T**he purpose of this booklet is to help you increase retention of talented and valued employees in your organization by *individualizing* your retention efforts through the use of psychological type. Decades of research and practice with the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) instrument have demonstrated that our understanding of such organizational issues as career choice, leadership and management development, team building, selling, and coaching, among others, can be improved by incorporating psychological type.

Likewise, the process and practice of retention can also be enhanced by understanding individual differences. Different employees are motivated by different tasks, prefer different organizational cultures, espouse different values, and respond to different kinds of rewards and incentives. If we can understand these differences, we can improve the fit between the individual and the organization and thus improve the chances of retaining employees.

To put the issue of retention in perspective, think of two organizations in an industry with which you are familiar. Now pretend that both organizations are the same in all respects but one: one organization has high turnover and one doesn't. Which organization would you predict has the best outlook for the future? In which organization would you want to invest? In which one would you want to work?

Consider the following not uncommon scenario.

## The Case of Team Turnover

You are a manager who devoted a year of effort and thousands of dollars to building a high-performance team to oversee a major new business opportunity. You carefully selected the members of the team for their functional capabilities as well as their people skills. You enlisted the aid of an outside consultant to conduct off-site training, resulting in a mission statement, a statement of values, stretch targets, and a rough timeline. To motivate the team you designed a compensation system heavily weighted toward fast growth. After this careful preparation, you turned your team loose, confident that it would produce a highly visible success. You estimated it would take about three years to fully leverage this opportunity. Although you received periodic reports, your involvement with individual team members grew increasingly limited as you turned your attention to other urgent matters.

For the first two years the financials looked good, but in the third year after launch things started to fall apart. Sixty percent of the team members eventually left the organization—some to start businesses of their own, some to work for competitors, others for reasons never disclosed. Some of those who remain still seem committed to the project, while others appear to be just putting in time. Through the industry grapevine you learn that a number of those who left are likely earning less money in their new positions. As you scramble to keep the project going, you wonder what went wrong.

Although most managers loudly proclaim that retention of valued employees is important, few seem to be doing a good job of it, whether measured by internal standards, the perceptions of the employees who are leaving, or the attitudes of the employees who remain but spend their days polishing their resume. For example, in “The Case of Team Turnover,” the

manager undoubtedly would have agreed that retention of the team members was crucial to the success of the project. His mistake was assuming that financial rewards would motivate everyone on the team. Many organizations fail to retain employees because they rely too heavily on what they suppose, and hope, is the universal incentive: money. Increasingly, however, organizations are learning that money alone is not enough to retain valuable talent.

Of course, people want to be paid well and fairly for what they do, but they also want to be fulfilled. In “The Case of Team Turnover,” two team members had taken the MBTI instrument. One had a type code of INTP, and the other ENTP—types that tend to be interested in the latest technology. After about a year on the project they realized that the underlying technology was in danger of becoming outdated. When they pointed this out they were informed that due to resource constraints they needed to move forward with the current technology. These team members gradually lost interest in a project that they did not view as cutting edge. A number of other team members had preferences for Extraversion and Feeling. Although they initially felt honored to be entrusted with such an important project, they began to feel isolated from the rest of the company and abandoned by their manager. Another team member, an ISFP, experienced some family difficulties that required his attention. Believing he had to choose between the family and the project, he left the company. Had the manager understood the implications of type for motivation and retention, some of these problems might have been anticipated and dealt with before it was too late.

## Organization of This Booklet

*Type and Retention* is divided into seven parts.

- *Introduction* contains important information on how best to use the booklet, discusses the importance of familiarizing yourself with type theory, and covers ethical issues in using the MBTI tool for retention.

- *Why Retention?* discusses why turnover is a major problem for many organizations. Using case examples, it shows you how to calculate the turnover rate in your organization and the cost of turnover. It also uses type to look at turnover and discusses benefits of retention to your organization.
- *Type and the Retention Process* contains important information for use in planning the attraction, selection, development, and decision processes in your organization. It shows how to create a type snapshot of your company image, evaluate the impact of interviewing style, implement development strategies for employees of different types, and identify types needing special attention to increase their job satisfaction or decrease their probability of leaving.
- *Type and the Three “Fit Factors”* offers discussion and action steps for fitting an employee’s type to his or her job tasks, the organizational culture, and his or her manager.
- *Descriptions of the 16 Types* presents a detailed description of each of the 16 MBTI types as they relate to different issues of employee retention.
- *Notes* contains detailed endnotes for material presented in the text.
- *Resources* lists valuable supplementary resources.

Throughout this booklet you will find “Taking Action” sections to help you apply to the organization what you have just learned about type and retention. In addition, “Suggested Resources” are highlighted for easy reference. You may prefer to skim through and note the additional resources you might find useful before reading in depth or preparing to apply to the organization the principles and strategies presented here.

## A Note About Type Knowledge

We assume that most users of this booklet will be type practitioners well versed in psychological type theory, and so we will not review it here. Should you need a review of core concepts, refer to *Introduction to Type*®

or *Introduction to Type® in Organizations*. These sources provide a refresher on the definitions of the eight preferences and an understanding of the differences and similarities among the 16 personality types. You will need this basic type knowledge to get the most value from this booklet and to work most effectively on retention issues with your clients or staff.

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### Suggested Resources

- *Introduction to Type®* (Myers, 1998)
  - *Introduction to Type® in Organizations* (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1998)
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## Using This Booklet

As illustrated in our case example, other factors besides money are recognized as equally, or even more, important in motivating and retaining employees—for example, the culture of the organization, the opportunities for promotion or new responsibilities, the values of the company, and the relationship between the manager and the employee. Psychological type can help managers—and employees—better understand the role these factors play in motivating employees.

While human resource professionals have traditionally been responsible for retention efforts, current approaches emphasize that *everyone* in the organization, but especially managers, must develop a “talent mind-set” and be thinking about how to acquire and retain talent at all times.<sup>1</sup> Following are some specific suggestions for how people with different roles in the organization can use this booklet.

**Human resource professionals can use this booklet to**

- Analyze their recruitment and selection efforts
- Evaluate the organization’s reward and recognition program
- Help design and promote “cafeteria style” incentive programs that offer something for everyone

**Managers can use this booklet to**

- Learn about what motivates people of different types

- Identify how to reward and recognize people of different types
- Better understand their relationships with key employees

**Executive coaches can use this booklet to**

- Coach leaders and managers on the importance of retention
- Coach leaders and managers about what they can do to increase retention
- Coach leaders and managers on how to work with people of different types

## Ethical Issues in Using the MBTI® Tool for Retention

It is vital to understand that MBTI results are “owned” by the individual who takes the assessment, not by the organization that administers it. Results should not be made available to anyone else, even for research or training purposes, without the employee’s express permission. This includes the employee’s manager, his or her colleagues, personnel from the human resources department, and outside consultants or trainers. Unless otherwise specified by the employee, the only person who should have access to the results is the professional who administers and scores the forms and provides the feedback to the individuals. See *Using the MBTI® Tool in Organizations* for explicit approaches and training designs that honor the ethics of use of the MBTI instrument in organizations.

One final note: the MBTI instrument should *not* be used for selection. There are legal issues surrounding the use of psychological instruments for selection and explicit processes that must be followed. However, even if these conditions were met, the ethics of the type community would preclude the use of the MBTI instrument for this purpose. Remember that the purpose of administering the MBTI tool is to help individuals better understand themselves and others. It is the individual who owns the results and who determines how to use the information and with whom to

share it. Furthermore, the MBTI assessment measures preferences, not abilities or achievement. For further information on the selection issue, refer to page 108 of the *MBTI® Manual*.

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### Suggested Resources

- *Using the MBTI® Tool in Organizations* (Hirsh & Kise, 2001)
  - *MBTI® Manual* (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998)
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### Key Points

- You can increase retention of talented and valued employees in your organization by *individualizing* your retention efforts through the use of psychological type.
- Human resource professionals, managers, and executive coaches can use information about psychological type to understand how each type has different incentives to remain with an organization.
- You should have a basic understanding of type theory before using this booklet. Some sources are listed.
- Individuals' MBTI results are private and should not be shared without their express permission.
- The MBTI instrument should not be used for selection.